

PROCESS EVALUATION TO HELP COUNTRIES IMPROVE THEIR OPERATIONAL PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION : THE IMPACT OF 2022 ARC PAYOUT IN MALAWI



This process evaluation aims to generate information and learning that ARC agency, the Government of Zambia, other Member States and ARC's partners will use to ensure accountability and improve contingency planning and its implementation process. The goal is to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of ARC's payout implementation and its impact on the beneficiaries.

ABOUT ARC

In 2012, the African Risk Capacity was established by Treaty as a Specialised Agency of the African Union (AU) with the mandate to help Member States improve their capacities to better plan, prepare and respond to extreme weather events and natural disasters, thereby building the resilience of vulnerable populations. By linking early warning systems with contingency planning and supported by risk information and innovative financial mechanisms (currently para-metric insurance), the goal was to enable governments to provide targeted responses to disaster in a more timely, cost-efficient, objective and transparent manner, thereby reducing the costs to governments and loss of livelihoods.

THE SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

ARC made a payout of USD14 249 461 to the Government of Malawi for parametric drought risk insurance to support the Malawian Lean Season Food Insecurity Response Plan. Following this payout, ARC commissioned a process evaluation of the 2021/2022 agricultural season payout.

The main objective of this evaluation was to assess whether the Final Implementation Plan drawn by the Government of Malawi and validated by ARC was implemented in line with commitments made in the FIP, evaluate the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation, and generate lessons learned and recommendations. The evaluation took place from October 2023 to March 2024. The methodology for the evaluation relied on a mixed methods approach, consisting of a desk review, 21 key informant interviews, 23 focus group discussions, and a representative survey of 399 beneficiaries (157 men and 242 women).

The distribution followed a monthly ratio of 50 kg of maize or a monthly cash transfer value of MWK 25,000 per household for a duration ranging from one to three months in the districts planned in the Final Implementation Plan (FIP).

THE ARC ASSISTANCE IN FIGURES



25 164 households assisted



2 million people assisted



61% of female beneficiaries



97 % of the FIP targets achieved



89% of beneficiaries are satisfied with the proces

Overall, the implementation demonstrated a high-cost efficiency with a cost-to-transfer ratio of 0.11\$[1].

The geographical targeting followed the Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee assessment, which identified the affected districts and modelled a caseload of affected households per district. The selection of households at the village level relied on two targeting methods. The first method was the vertical expansion of the existing Social Cash Transfer Programme by providing a cash top-up to existing beneficiaries for the lean season, while the second was the temporary enrolment of additional beneficiaries into the programme in other targeted areas.

The programme had planned to distribute assistance in the month preceding the depletion of households' food reserves, which means that the distribution should have taken place between October 2022 and January 2023. The delivery was generally delayed by two to four weeks compared with the original schedule.

Regardless of the modality of assistance, beneficiaries were generally satisfied with the quality and the modality of assistance, and with the distribution process, though recommendations were made by recipients for the district to inform them earlier about the distribution dates. However, there was a low level of satisfaction regarding the quantity distributed stemming from the short duration of the support and the amount of the transfer value/support, which represented 33% of the survival minimum expenditure basket.

Assistance helped 82% of assisted households increase meal quantity/quality and 89% are satisfied of the whole process, regardless of the modality of assistance

POSITIVE PERCEPTIONS FROM THE BENEFICIARIES



61% of the assisted population are women

- This evaluation led to various recommendations aiming to enhance future responses and ensure more effective and efficient assistance delivery during similar crises:
- 1.Revise the budget allocation for a future payout to increase the delivery costs;
 - 2.Improve monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the payout;
 - 3.Review the targeting methodology in order to reduce the exclusion and inclusion error rates;
 - 4.Invest in accountability to affected populations;
 - 5.Improve the timeliness of the response with earlier delivery of assistance to affected households;
 - 6.Internal learning - management response to track the implementation of recommendations from past and present process evaluations.

