PROPOSED VISIT LOCATIONS: MASONGOLA, CHIRUNGA, MBEDZA, AND NTIYA WARDS

Program Schedule: Tuesday, 10 February 2026

Departure (8:00 AM)	• Mount Soche Hotel → Zomba • Estimated travel time: Approximately 1.5 hours
Courtesy Call (09:30 – 10:15 AM)	• CEO, Zomba City Council 📍 City Council Chambers
Transfer to Field Sites (10:15 – 10:45 AM)	• Travel to assigned wards (~30 mins)
Field Visits (Concurrent) (10:45 – 11:30AM)	• Mbedza | Ntiya | Masongola | Chirunga
Lunch (13:00 – 14:00 PM)	📍 Mulunguzi Riverside Lodge
Plenary Session(14:00 – 16:00 PM)	Lessons learnt • Observations • Challenges Way forward & next steps 📍 Mulunguzi Riverside Lodge

Reminders:

🥗 Dietary needs: Participants are kindly requested to indicate any special dietary requirements in advance to facilitate appropriate arrangements.

👢 Dress code: Field-appropriate clothing and sturdy footwear

🌧️ Conditions: Hilly terrain, rainy season

PROPOSED VISIT LOCATIONS: MASONGOLA, CHIRUNGA, MBEDZA, AND NTIYA WARDS

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Malawi continues to strengthen its institutional framework for climate resilience, supported by strong government commitment, ongoing review of the Meteorological Bill and its finalization, and sustained investment through the CREWS Malawi project. Alongside national-level policy and Acts such the Disaster Risk Management Act, communities across the country are already demonstrating how people-centred early warning systems can reduce risk, save lives, and strengthen preparedness.

In this context, a field visit to the proposed wards in Zomba City is proposed for Steering Committee members to observe, first-hand, how CREWS investments are translating into effective last-mile early warning and early action at community level.
Zomba City as one among the cities supported by the project presents a strong example of a functioning end-to-end early warning system, linking national forecasting (DCCMS), disaster coordination structures (DODMA and City Council), and community-based mechanisms through Ward Disaster Risk Management Committees (WDRMCs) and block leaders.

OBJECTIVES OF THE FIELD VISIT

- Provide an opportunity for Steering Committee members to hear directly from communities on their experiences, challenges, and priority needs in implementing last-mile early warning and early action.
- Demonstrate how CREWS-supported early warning systems operate in practice at community level.
- Showcase people-centred, inclusive, and locally led approaches to early warning dissemination and response.
- Highlight tangible results and lessons learned from CREWS investments in urban and peri-urban contexts.
- Provide Steering Committee members with direct insights to inform strategic decisions, scale-up discussions, and future programming.

RATIONALE FOR SELECTING THE IDENTIFIED WARDS

- They are among the five wards in Zomba City supported under the project.
- Active and trained WDRMCs supported through CREWS.
- Established early warning dissemination chains, including block leaders as community focal points.
- Availability of risk maps, contingency plans, and SOPs developed under the project.
- Demonstrated use of weather and climate information for disaster preparedness and livelihoods.
- Strong coordination between DCCMS, DODMA, Zomba City Council, Malawi Red Cross Society, and community structures.

WHAT THE STEERING COMMITTEE WILL OBSERVE

1. Early Warning Information Flow: How forecasts and alerts from DCCMS are coordinated through DODMA and Zomba City Council and reach communities via WDRMCs and block leaders using community meetings, WhatsApp groups, radio, and household outreach.
2. Community Preparedness and Action:

- Functioning WDRMCs with clear roles and responsibilities.
- SOP-guided actions before, during, and after hazard events.
- Use of risk maps and contingency plans to identify high-risk areas.
- Improved risk awareness and use of seasonal forecasts for preparedness and livelihoods.

3. Tools and Innovations:

- Use of mobile phones for dissemination and coordination.
- The Zanyengo mobile application (in Chichewa and English) providing direct access to forecasts and alerts.
- CREWS-supported basic response equipment, while also highlighting remaining gaps.

COMMUNITY VOICES, CHALLENGES, AND GAPS

As part of the field visit, Steering Committee members will have the opportunity to hear directly from community leaders and WDRMC members on:

- How access to early warning information has changed preparedness and response at community level.
- Practical challenges faced in disseminating warnings and taking early action.
- Key gaps and priority needs identified by communities to strengthen and sustain early warning systems.

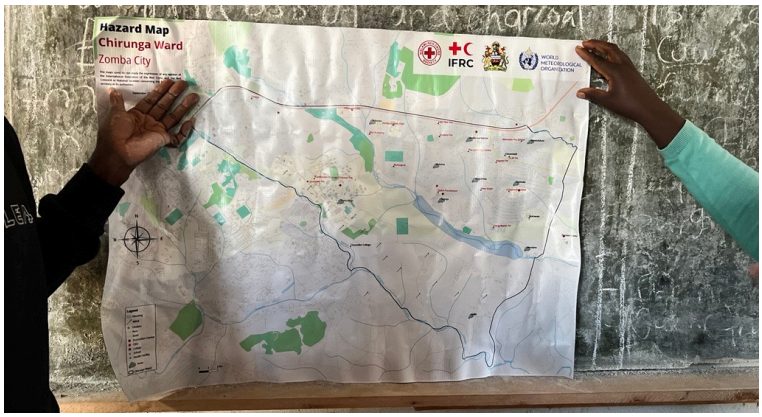
STRATEGIC VALUE FOR THE STEERING COMMITTEE

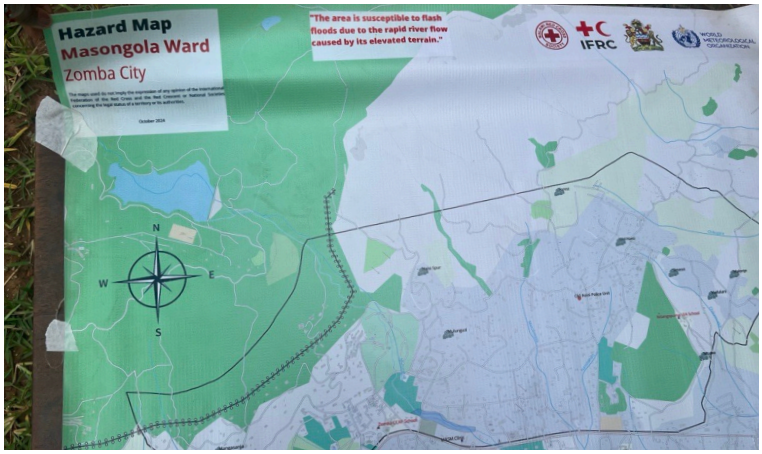
The field visit will enable the Steering Committee to:

- Validate CREWS investments through direct observation of results.
- Identify scalable elements of Malawi's community-based early warning and early action model.
- Gain practical insight to inform strategic decisions, scale-up discussions, and future programming.
- Reinforce Steering Committee oversight of commitments under Early Warnings for All and people-centred climate services.

CONCLUSION

The selected wards illustrate how CREWS Malawi is a turning forecasts into early action through empowered communities and strong institutional linkages. The field visit offers a clear, practical demonstration of early warning systems that work at the last mile.





PROPOSED VISIT LOCATION: MALAWI'S 1ST WEATHER RADAR SITE

Program Schedule: 12, Thursday February

Departure (8:00 AM)	• Mount Soche Hotel → Kasamba Hill, Zalewa • Estimated travel time: 1.5 hours
Field Visit (9:30 – 11:30AM)	• Weather Radar construction site
Return (11.30 AM - 13.00 PM)	• Estimated travel time: 1.5 hours
Lunch (13.00 PM - 14.00 PM)	• Mount Soche Hotel

Reminders:

👢 Dress code: Field-appropriate clothing and sturdy footwear are strongly recommended.

🌧️ Field conditions: The visit will take place in a hilly area during the rainy season; participants should expect wet, muddy, and potentially slippery terrain.

PROPOSED VISIT LOCATION: MALAWI'S 1ST WEATHER RADAR SITE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The installation of Malawi's first weather radar at Kasamba Hill, Zalewa (Blantyre District) is a strategic initiative led by the Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services (DCCMS) under the World Bank–funded Malawi Watershed Services Improvement Project (MWASIP, US$100 million).

The project aims to strengthen observation and forecasting capacity in the Shire River Basin, supporting climate-informed decision-making and disaster preparedness, including the monitoring of thunderstorms, rainfall intensity and severe weather.

The initiative includes the installation of a state-of-the-art solid-state S-band weather radar, construction of supporting infrastructure (office block, staff housing, security facilities, fencing, upgraded access road and power lines), and a data link to DCCMS headquarters in Blantyre for remote operation. The total estimated cost is approximately US$3.7 million.

Civil works are underway, with foundations and tower pillars completed and diversion road works in progress. Radar components are already in Malawi, with final installation planned by May 2026.

OBJECTIVES OF THE FIELD VISIT

- Showcase alignment and value of CREWS TA support for radar expansion, with CREWS and DP objectives (e.g., MHEWS, up-downstream coherence, forecasting).
- Understand the utility and operational reality for weather radar installation and use.
- Appreciate complexities of bolstering observation capacity with radar technologies (civil works, power supply, security, transmission, etc.).
- Engage with implementing partners (DCCMS, World Bank, contractor, technical assistance) for discussion on bottlenecks on-site.

RATIONALE FOR SELECTING THE WEATHER RADAR SITE

The active Weather Radar installation site was selected based on the following criteria:

- Its strategic location for improved Shire River basin coverage, filling a critical observational gap in southern Malawi.
- High exposure to severe weather events, including convective storms, making radar data essential for local early warnings.
- Proximity to major population centers (Zomba, Blantyre Rural) that rely heavily on accurate rainfall and flood alerts.
- Alignment with World Bank watershed management focus, allowing integration of hydrological and meteorological data.

WHAT THE STEERING COMMITTEE WILL OBSERVE

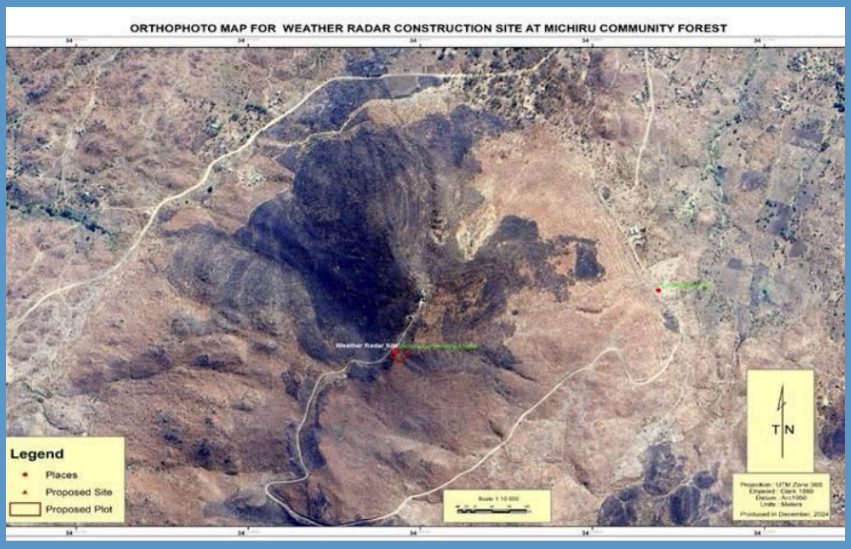
1. Construction progress and value of Technical Assistance: Steering Committee members will observe the radar tower foundation, equipment base, and ongoing access-road works. Engineers will explain structural specifications, installation timelines, and remaining works prior to target of completion in May 2026. TA will explain how TA is integrated into the investment, from site selection to radar design, construction, and completion.

2. Significance and requirement for integration of weather radar data into DCCMS forecasting systems of national and regional significance: Steering Committee members will interact with DCCMS, the TA expert, and the World Bank to appreciate how DCCMS plans to ensure radar data will feed into national forecasting systems, complement satellite and AWS data, and enhance storm tracking and nowcasting capabilities; and how investment aligns with broader water management and resilience programs of support to Malawi.

KEY CHALLENGES AND GAPS TO BE HIGHLIGHTED

While progress is slow and significantly delayed, DCCMS have identified priority needs, including:

- Delayed civil works due to weather, terrain, and procurement constraints.
- Limited operational funding for long-term maintenance, staffing, and power backup systems.
- Data integration challenges across national and local early warning institutions.



STRATEGIC VALUE FOR THE STEERING COMMITTEE

The weather radar field visit offers the Steering Committee an opportunity to:

- Validate CREWS future TA support to radar development through direct observation of outcomes.
- Identify scalable elements of Malawi's early warning observation capacity and model.
- Reinforce commitments under Early Warnings for All and people-centred climate services.

CONCLUSION

The field visit provides a timely chance to verify progress under World Bank support to hydro-meteorology and watershed institutions in strengthening Malawi's meteorological observation and early warning capacity, with the weather radar at Zalewa - now underway and with key installation components in-country - showcasing a step forward for real-time storm tracking and early warning.

The visit will give the Steering Committee firsthand insight into the operational reality of installing complex observation capacity whilst shining light on the potential for enabling DCCMS to boost country-led forecasting and early warning services of value to people at risk from community to regional levels.