

# SOUTHERN AFRICA: HUMANITARIAN KEY MESSAGES



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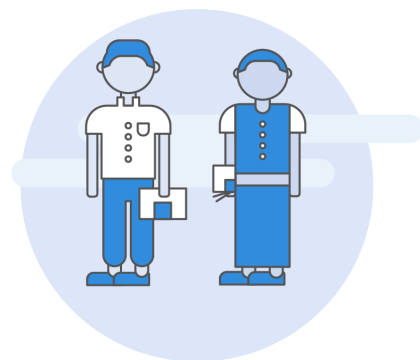
## HIGHLIGHTS



The climate crisis is having devastating consequences in Southern Africa, with parts of the region experiencing their lowest rainfall since 1981 while others have endured the destruction of cyclones, pests and disease.



More than 9.2 million people across the region are now severely food insecure, and this figure is expected to grow to 12 million at the peak of the lean season (October 2019-March 2020).



Rising humanitarian needs and increasing suffering have exacerbated protection concerns, particularly for women and children, and heightened the risk of transmission of HIV.

## KEY MESSAGES

- 1. Southern Africa is experiencing the devastating consequences of the climate crisis first-hand.** Over the past year, large parts of central and western Southern Africa have experienced their lowest seasonal rainfall totals since 1981, and the region overall received less rainfall than during the 2015/2016 El Niño. At the same time, Comoros, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe were all hit by the Cyclone Idai and/or Cyclone Kenneth weather systems. Angola, Botswana, Lesotho and Namibia have all declared drought disasters, while Comoros, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe declared States of Emergency due to the impact of the cyclones. Since 2012, Southern Africa has seen only two favourable agricultural seasons.
- 2. There are now 9.2 million severely food insecure people (IPC Phases 3 and 4) in nine countries\* across the region and this figure will rise to around 12 million at the peak of the upcoming lean season (October-March).** In Zimbabwe, the devastating combination of floods, dry spells and economic downturn have driven rapidly rising hunger. In both Eswatini and Lesotho, a quarter or more of the rural population will face Crisis or Emergency levels of food insecurity at the peak of the lean season. In Zambia, more than 2.3 million people are expected to be severely food insecure during the lean season and the country—normally a net cereal exporter—has placed a ban on maize exports. In Mozambique, drought, two cyclones and violence in the north are expected to leave nearly 2 million people severely food insecure from October to March. Meanwhile, Namibia has received its lowest rainfall in 35 years and at least 290,000 of the poorest and most vulnerable people in the north of the country are suffering from an acute food security crisis and up to 90,000 livestock are reported to have died due to drought.

3. **People's livelihoods and production capacity have been eroded, jeopardizing the 2019/2020 season.** Most affected households and communities depend on agriculture for their livelihoods and food and nutrition security. Southern Zambia and northern Namibia suffered crop failure, while the bulk of Zimbabwe, central Mozambique and southern Angola have had poor crops, culminating in poor harvests. Community watering points for livestock and agriculture have dried-up in many places, while pasture has been depleted, resulting in increased movement of livestock and people searching for water and grazing. Outbreaks of foot and mouth disease and other transboundary livestock diseases have increased. If nothing is done, the impact of the drought situation will seriously erode the capacity of affected farming households and communities to produce in the 2019/20 season which starts in three months' time.
4. **Acute malnutrition has risen in multiple countries putting the lives of thousands of children at risk.** While levels of acute malnutrition do not typically reach emergency thresholds in Southern Africa, any rise in prevalence increases the risk of stunting and death for young children. Increasing numbers of acutely malnourished children have been reported in parts of Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Angola, through survey/screening and programme data. In Madagascar, acute malnutrition is expected to remain high, despite improved food security, and will likely be exacerbated as critical programs for moderate malnutrition have not received funding. In Mozambique, the first outbreak of pellagra—a disease caused mainly due to the lack of specific vitamins—in many years highlights the chronically poor-quality diets of young children.
5. **Drought, floods and diminishing access to clean water have increased the risk of communicable disease outbreaks.** Already in 2019, Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia have experienced cholera outbreaks, and as the rainy season approaches, the threat of cholera will rise. The hepatitis E outbreak in Namibia, with a high mortality rate especially among pregnant women, and dengue fever in Mauritius and Tanzania, are also closely linked to flooding. There are ongoing measles outbreaks in Angola, Comoros and Madagascar. Angola continues to record cases of vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2.
6. **Deteriorating economic prospects have exacerbated poverty and inequality and hampered access to essential services, including healthcare.** In Zimbabwe, fuel prices have increased more than 500 per cent this year, while prices of basic goods and services have more than doubled since June and stocks of essential medicines, diagnostics and supplies have been depleted due to foreign currency shortages. The deteriorating economic situation has triggered discontent and protests that have been accompanied by reports of increased restriction on the exercise of freedom of expression, association and assembly. In Lesotho, food prices have risen since January due to the anticipated poor harvest in South Africa, where the economy is also struggling with high inflation rates. In Eswatini, access to basic services, including health and education, has been compromised by high inflation rates and civil servants have gone months without pay while hospitals are running out of medication.
7. **The risk of gender-based violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect, particularly for women and children, has risen due to disasters and food insecurity.** Extreme coping mechanisms during times of household stress, including transactional sex, exacerbate the situation, with girls particularly vulnerable to family separation, early marriage, teenage pregnancy and domestic violence, with dire consequences for their sexual and reproductive health. In Zimbabwe, rising food insecurity and the economic crisis pose protection risks for an estimated 840,000 women and 150,000 vulnerable children. In Angola, school dropout is reportedly on the rise, as children are accompanying their parents hundreds of miles in search of water and pasture for cattle and are engaged in child labour. Resource-based tensions have also been reported as communities move in search of water and pasture, including across the border to Namibia. In Lesotho, there are reports of women and girls crossing into South Africa in search of jobs, some of whom experience trafficking and sexual exploitation. In Mozambique, many families lost everything during cyclones Idai and Kenneth—their homes, their livelihoods and productive family members—and this has heightened the risks of adopting negative coping strategies, including pushing women and children into child labour, child trafficking, child early forced marriage and transactional sex, to survive the months ahead.
8. **Southern Africa has one of the highest rates of HIV prevalence in the world, and crisis conditions exacerbate the risk of transmission.** Food insecurity can pressure people into harmful coping strategies, including transactional sex, which drive new HIV infections, and there is a negative correlation between food insecurity and HIV treatment adherence, retention and success. A 2014 study of 18 countries in sub-Saharan Africa—including Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe—found that infection rates in HIV endemic rural areas increased by 11 per cent for every recent drought. In Zimbabwe, there has been a significant increase in households where at least one family member is living with HIV/AIDS, 27 per cent compared to 12 per cent in 2018. In Mozambique, after Cyclone Idai, women engaging in transactional sex reported that men would pay more for sex without a condom.
9. **There is an urgent need to scale up life-saving relief efforts as well as to invest in longer-term efforts to address the root causes of rising needs in the region.** Without this, developmental gains made over the past years in Southern Africa may be quickly eroded, requiring even more costly humanitarian response in the years to come. To date, there has been limited donor support for humanitarian response in middle income countries. However, while Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Eswatini, Lesotho and Angola are officially classified as upper and lower-middle income countries by the World Bank, this label often masks extreme inequalities within the countries, and it is the poorest and most vulnerable who are bearing the brunt of rising food insecurity.

\*The nine countries included in the severely food insecurity figures are: Angola, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, Malawi, Madagascar, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe.