Two major storm systems have impacted Madagascar this cyclone season, affecting at least 212,000 people. In January 2018, Tropical Cyclone Ava affected 161,000 people in the north-eastern and south-eastern parts of the country and damaged 50 per cent of the high season rice crops. While the humanitarian response to Ava was ongoing, the same areas where hit by Severe Tropical Storm Eliakim in mid-March, which impacted 51,000 people. The response to these storms has significantly depleted emergency stocks, while access to affected communities is challenging due to significant damage to roads and bridges and the chronic inaccessibility of some the most impacted districts.

About 810,000 people were estimated to be facing crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity in the Grand Sud between November 2017 and March 2018, while Fall Armyworm (FAW) is now affecting 35 districts. A new Integrated Phase Classification food insecurity analysis is due to be conducted in April/May, while the Ministry of Agriculture and the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) are conducting an assessment to determine the magnitude of FAW’s impact on crops.

The first quarter of 2018 saw lower admissions of acutely malnourished children in outpatient feeding programmes compared to the first quarters of both 2016 and 2017. Out of six drought-prone districts assessed by the newly piloted Nutrition Surveillance System proxy global acute malnutrition (GAM) rates were less than 10 per cent in four and less than 11.5 per cent in two, while proxy severe acute malnutrition (SAM) rates ranged from 0.4 per cent to 1.1 per cent. Nine pockets of malnutrition were identified at the commune level with proxy GAM rates above the emergency threshold of 15 per cent. Separately, preliminary results from SMART nutrition surveys conducted in February and March 2018 in four districts of southern Madagascar (Amboasary, Ampanihy, Beloha and Tsihombe) revealed improved levels of GAM as compared to the same period in 2017.

By the end of April 2018, some 2,671 cases of the plague had been recorded since the first case of the plague season was reported in August 2017, including at least 239 deaths. Although the plague is endemic in Madagascar, the number of cases in the 2017-2018 season is at least six times the annual average of around 400 cases, the outbreak began earlier than usual, and the predominance of pneumonic plague in urban areas this season differs from the usual trend of bubonic plague in rural areas. Since the official announcement of the containment of the urban pneumonic plague outbreak on 27 November 2017, 194 cases of plague, bubonic (60) and pneumonic (128), have been reported, including 23 deaths. The current plague season is expected to end in April 2018, with the future plague season due to start in September 2018.

At least two people have died following clashes between police and protestors in the country’s capital, Antananarivo, on 21 April. The protestors had gathered to object to recent changes to the electoral law which are perceived to impact the planned 2018 presidential election. The United Nations has called on all political leaders in Madagascar to preserve peace, security and human rights and to engage in dialogue.