

Swaziland: Drought

Office of the Resident Coordinator Situation Report No. 1

(as of 24 Feb 2016)



This report is produced by Office of the Resident Coordinator Swaziland in collaboration with humanitarian partners. It covers the period from 01 to 25 Feb 2016. The next report will be issued on or around 09 March 2016.

Highlights

- On 18 February 2016 the Government declared a national state of emergency due to the drought, as El Nino impacts become more apparent.
- Maize production fell by 31 per cent in 2015, and is expected to be lower in the 2016 crop season, placing at least 300,000 people - a third of the population - in dire need of assistance, specifically with for food and water.
- Hawane Dam, which supplies Mbabane, stands at 17 per cent capacity, with water supply from 20 days to 8 weeks.
- Nation-wide, the drought has affected 189,000 learners and 8,157 teachers and support staff of which 23,633 learners and 1,654 teachers are in Mbabane area.
- A comprehensive joint multi-sectoral drought response and mitigation plan has been developed, led by Government, requiring \$80.5m to cover immediate and medium term needs.



Map Sources: UNCS, ESRI.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Map created in Sep 2013.

300,000

People likely to be affected

300, 000

Targeted for assistance

US \$64 m

Resource Gap to address needs

Situation Overview

The Government of Swaziland declared a national drought disaster on 18 February 2016 in response to extended El Nino-induced drought conditions dating back to 2014. These conditions are expected to continue until March/April 2016 with the effects forecasted to last into 2017. According to the National Meteorology Department, Swaziland received below normal rainfall from Oct 2014 to Feb 2015. This has led to low water levels in dams, poor replenishment of ground water sources, low agricultural yields and poor pastures and vegetation cover. The recently issued Government National Drought Emergency Mitigation and Adaptation Plan estimates that a minimum of 300,000 people, (about one third of the population) will need food assistance starting from March 2016. This number could increase from May 2016 onwards, particularly as most farmers missed the planting window.

Ninety per cent of Swaziland's sugar cash crop relies on irrigation, which has significantly been hampered by the rationing of water. Sugarcane harvests, which accounts for a staggering 21 per cent of Swaziland's GDP, has been hit hard, spelling trouble for government finances and possible service delivery. Maize production was already down 31 per cent in 2015 and expected to be lower in 2016.

Swaziland's situation is part of the regional southern Africa drought, brought about by a powerful El Nino. South Africa, on which Swaziland relies for food importation, has also seen a significant reduction in maize production, leading to price increases of 66 per cent (National Maize Corporation, 2016).

+ For more information, see "background on the crisis" at the end of the report

Nearly one-third of the rural population has a high expenditure on food, thus having little capacity to cope with the combined effects of production shortfalls and increased market prices, and can quickly fall further into food insecurity. Swaziland has seen an increase of food insecurity in the country with many households unable to eat three meals a day. The number of food insecure households has risen to 23 per cent, in 2015. Moderate food insecurity has increased to 18.2 percent from a previous four-year average of 9.8 percent, and acute food insecurity increased to 5.5 percent from an average of 3 percent. Acute malnutrition rates have increased by 2.5 per cent from the average of 3 to 5.5 per cent.

Livestock are important assets of the population not only in terms of social status and livelihoods but also for nutrition. According to the Government, by end of January 2016 about 38,000 had died due to lack of water and fodder, leaving coping mechanisms seriously constrained. The close proximity to water in livestock deaths also carries and increasing potential for the spread of diseases.

The Hawane Dam, which feeds the capital, Mbabane, stands at 17 per cent, enough from one to three weeks only. The city has started water rationing for the first time in its history. Rivers flows are very low in all five major rivers - below critical environmental sustenance levels. The situation is worse than during the great 1992 drought. Government is planning various initiatives to provide its people with enough water, such as drilling boreholes and water trucking.

The reduction of water has impacted the education of children as (especially urban) schools depend on flushing toilet systems; but even in the rural areas, existing boreholes are running dry. In all 189,000 learners and 8,157 teachers and support staff has been affected nationally of which 23,633 learners and 1 654 teachers and support staff are from around Mbabane, according to recent assessments.

The situation also puts almost 197,157 students, teachers and workers nationally, at risk of water borne diseases and malnutrition, due to the water, sanitation/hygiene conditions. Another main concern is the contamination of water which can increase the number of water-borne diseases in the country.

The country has one of the highest prevalence of HIV-infected adults (26 per cent of people aged 15-49). Food insecurity in the country affects anti-retroviral (ARV) intake as ARVs are meant to be taken with food and water. It also affects access to medical facilities as some people are unable to make the journey to the facilities due to illness, weakness or lack of finances.

In order to mitigate the above challenges, Government has developed a National Drought Mitigation and Adaptation Plan (NERMAP) in consultation with diverse stakeholders. The plan takes a sustainable approach towards disaster risk reduction outlining both immediate and mediate term actions (costed at \$80.5 m). NERMAP prioritizes food and water security through intensified local maize production and rehabilitation and expansion of water systems to increase access to potable water.

Funding

For the current drought, Swaziland has stated that \$80.5 m is needed in order to provide live-saving programs and prevent the most negative effects of the drought. The bulk of this budget goes towards agriculture and food security which includes humanitarian food assistance to the vulnerable. There are also water needs including the provision of domestic water supply through rehabilitation and expansion of water systems as well as water harvesting.

Government has already committed \$3 million on food assistance and water allocations to 158 000 people between the period November 2015 – January 2016, as guided by National Emergency Response, Mitigation and Adaptation Plan,

All humanitarian partners, including donors and recipient agencies, are encouraged to inform OCHA's Financial Tracking Service (FTS - <http://fts.unocha.org>) of cash and in-kind contributions by e-mailing: fts@un.org

Humanitarian Response

A UN Technical Working Group for Drought has been established and is actively coordinating UN agencies involved in the drought response of the different sectors (Food Security and Agriculture, Health and Nutrition, WASH, Education, Protection).

The UN Country Team is developing a Humanitarian Needs Overview, which will promote a shared understanding of the impact and evolution of the crisis with the aim of supporting the Government's response plan with credible evidence from recently completed rapid assessments. This will be followed by the development of a humanitarian response plan (HRP) on the life-saving elements of the Government's response plan, to raise emergency resources to cover gaps. In addition to bilateral engagement with donors on these issues, the Country Team together with the Government will hold a round table meeting to sensitize the donor community and to facilitate resource mobilization for the response.

A CERF concept note has been written in order to request CERF funding. The CERF funding will complement existing resources that are currently providing immediate food assistance to 71,564 vulnerable people, supplying water to 64,000 people and nutrition and health assistance to 74,300 people. The UN Country Team is requesting support from the CERF Rapid response window to cover Food Assistance, WASH and Health interventions.



Food Security

Needs:

- 300,000 people are food insecure with that number expected to increase over the coming months.
- Thousands of subsistence farmers could not plant this season and this is expected to affect the next planting season as few will have the resources to produce own food
- Increase in school feedings from the one meal a day to two.
- Based on the available resources and economic prospects, the government response is estimated to not be able to cater for all the projected needs for 2016-2017.

300,000

People food insecure

Response:

- The national response is aiming to provide food assistance to about 75,877 people during the 2015/2016 agricultural lean season (October 2015 to March 2016).
- 11/54 rural constituencies received hay and water supplies for their livestock
- National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) and World Vision to continue with food distribution initiatives to various communities.

Gaps & Constraints:

- Funding remains a major concern.



Health & Nutrition

Needs:

- There is a need for increased capacity building of the health sector in order to effectively respond to the increased case load of diseases.
- Increase water supply to the health facilities such as hospitals and clinics as water shortages affect service provision especially deliveries in the maternity wards.
- There is need for lifesaving SRH commodities

Response:

- The health sector is distributing water harvesting equipment in selected health facilities.
- Conduct a rapid assessment on diarrhea among children, and ensure availability of diarrhea treatment/supplies at clinics and hospitals in the affected areas.
- Rapid assessment on availability of drugs and supplies for management of pneumonia among children at clinics and hospitals in the affected areas.
- Procurement of anthropometric tools.
- Procurement of therapeutic foods (F-100, Plumpy Nut, etc)
- Protect, promote and support appropriate infant and young child feeding through strengthening Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative in all affected constituencies
- Procurement of RH kits and dignity kits

Gaps & Constraints:

- Health facilities and people on lifelong treatment need to be prioritized for water supply.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the health facilities is needed in order to know the numbers of affected and monitor the impacts of El Nino on the health and nutrition of the population.
- Management of Acute Malnutrition in all affected areas must be increased.
- Active Disease Surveillance and Response needs to be strengthened.

**Education****Needs:**

- Currently some schools offer school feedings that are limited to one meal a day per student. However in light of the increase negative effects of the drought, these schools feedings need to be increased to two meals a day in order to prevent increased malnutrition rates.
- Proper sanitation facilities on the school grounds.

639
primary and secondary
schools countrywide
affected by learning
disruptions

Response:

- Drilling of new boreholes in schools to constantly provide portable water.
- Provision of water supply through tanks to schools and education institutions.
- Supply of food commodities for breakfast to the school to supplement current government school feeding program.
- Awareness raising campaigns on the drought situation and how to respond (behaviour change, saving water techniques).
- Provision of alternative sanitary and hygiene facilities.
- Supply hygiene kits to children in schools and soap to schools.

Gaps & Constraints:

- The Government has still not committed resources to education. Although the Drought Response Plan has estimated that the cost for the education sector is SZL 30 million (1,946,613.48 USD).
- Schooling facilities are currently lacking appropriate facilities such as sanitation and water.

**Water, Sanitation and Hygiene****Needs:**

- There is currently insufficient awareness on water quality as communities still wash inside streams and rivers with low flows.
- Rural communities need support with borehole pumps at strategic points where there is sufficient groundwater as an alternative.
- Investments in drill boreholes and pump installations at schools around the city are needed.
- Water storage tanks are currently lacking and investments need to be made to improve them as well as mobile latrines.
- Delivery of services are hindered due to lack of water, this includes schools and health facilities. Therefore, need for proper water storage as well as increased water trucking to schools and health facilities are needed as well as proper sanitation in schools.

197,157
students, teachers and
workers nationally, at
risk of water borne
diseases

Response:

- 15 boreholes are being drilled in urban areas.
- 43/141 tanks (10,000 L each) have been distributed and resources are sought for the remaining 98 tanks.
- Procurement and placement of tanks and portable water distribution to strategic areas through mobile tankers
- Conduct a rapid assessment to identify functional and none functional rural water schemes
- Drilling and installation of new boreholes to meet urgent potable water needs
- Procurement of water tankers/bowsers
- Provide household water treatment kits to households with access to untreated water supply

Planned response:

- Drilling, decommissioning and installation of boreholes in Mbabane city
- Harnessing water from Mbabane River to Mbabane Treatment Plant
- Promote rainwater harvesting and recycling at household and community levels

Gaps & Constraints:

- There is lack of water storage capacity as well as mobile latrines in the cities.
- Cleaning up of animals that have died close to water sources as there are health concerns related to water pollution if they are not removed.
- Funding is currently lacking for WASH projects.
- There is an information gap regarding the vulnerable populations and districts which will allow for more concentrated responses which will allow for both immediate support as well as more long term.

Protection**Needs:**

- Protection and psychosocial support is needed by all affected vulnerable groups, especially children, OVC's and women from exploitation, violence, abuse and neglect resulting from the drought situation.

Response:

- Protection services, including case management, psychosocial care and social protection provided to children and women through temporary buildings (One Stop Centre).
- Protection messages to expand knowledge on protection services and service points disseminated with children

Gaps & Constraints:

- There is only one One Stop Centre in the capital, Mbabane, with plans to roll out nationally.

General Coordination

Government convenes an inter-sectoral coordination forum to deliberate on critical issues and provide strategic direction for the response. There are various sector coordination meetings which are co-Chaired by the UN. The forums provide technical support for the coordination mechanism.

Multi Sectoral rapid assessments were completed on 16 February 2016 and analysis of the results is currently ongoing in preparation for development of a Humanitarian Needs Overview and subsequently an HRP. The Country Team will convene a donor round table to present and discuss the appeal.

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