



Southern Africa and Indian Ocean

ECHO FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

About **8 million people** in Southern Africa are food insecure.

18 million children are stunted in the region.

34% of the world's population infected with **HIV/AIDS** lives in the region

Source: UN OCHA, UN AIDS

European Commission humanitarian assistance

2015: €20.2 million
2014: €7.5 million
2013: €7.6 million
2012: €32.9 million

Total Funding to date – Over €56 million since 2012, 35% of which for food security.

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Nsanje district in the southern tip of Malawi is one of the four districts most affected by flooding. © EU/ECHO

Key messages

- The region is extremely vulnerable to weather hazards such as tropical cyclones, floods, droughts and strong winds.
- There is lack of resilience and coping mechanisms to the climate-related shocks, which results in heavy social and economic consequences for the population. Improving the local communities' resilience capacities remains central to the EU's humanitarian assistance.
- Food and nutrition security in the region also remains extremely fragile. Following uneven rain performances last season and an expected delayed onset of the 2015-2016 rain season due to the El Niño weather phenomenon, the food insecurity situation is particularly dire and about 8 million people in the region are in need of food assistance.
- Malnutrition levels, particularly stunting levels, in the entire region are very high and a cause for serious concern. All the countries in the region have levels that are above the 20% World Health Organization (WHO) threshold for stunting, and several countries (Zambia, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, and Madagascar) have levels between 40 and 50%.
- Across the region, food insecurity is exacerbated by political instability, socio-economic challenges, the world's highest number of HIV/AIDS cases, and widespread poverty
- In December 2015, the EU announced emergency support of €12 million for Southern Africa as one of the regions most affected by El Niño. The new aid will help meet urgent needs of the populations, but also support resilience efforts to make them better equipped in the future. It brings the total EU support since 2012 to almost €70 million.

Humanitarian situation and needs

The Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region includes the following countries: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe and the Islands of Comoros, Madagascar, Seychelles and Mauritius. The region is prone to recurrent natural disasters such as cyclones, floods and droughts.

For a large number of people there, farming is a base for their livelihoods and they largely rely on rainfall. Consequently poor seasons often cause acute food insecurity and contribute to chronic malnutrition, especially among children. Some of the frequently affected areas include southern Malawi, southern Madagascar and central Mozambique, the southern districts of Zimbabwe and most of Lesotho.

As a consequence of the uneven rain performances of the 2014-15 season and the expected delayed onset of the 2015-16 rain season influenced by El Niño, dire food insecurity situation is currently seriously affecting several southern Africa countries. It is estimated that the number of food insecure people in the countries providing data in the southern Africa region increased by 13% compared to the previous year and it now stands at about 8 million. The most affected countries are Malawi, Madagascar and Zimbabwe and the situation could further worsen during the lean season (November 2015 – April 2016); the period which precedes the harvest is the most critical one in terms of food supply.

Across the region, food insecurity is exacerbated by political instability, socio-economic challenges, the world's highest concentration of HIV/ AIDS cases, and widespread poverty. Malnutrition levels, particularly stunting levels, in the southern Africa region are very high. All this increases the local populations' already high vulnerability to natural hazards and economic pressures.

The lack of resilience to climate-related shocks puts an additional burden to the highly sensitive livelihoods and economies. These repeated shocks erode the communities' ability to fully recover, leading to increased fragility and vulnerability to subsequent disasters.

Additionally, the nature and pattern of weather-related disasters are shifting. They are becoming unpredictable and increasing in frequency, intensity and magnitude as a result of climate change. Thus although some parts of the region have registered marked improvements in cereal crop production, due largely to government subsidies, food and vulnerability assessments indicate that rural populations continue to face critical food shortages because of reliance on rain-fed agriculture, declining soil fertility and land degradation. Cyclones and the associated flooding often contaminate water sources and stagnant water increases the risks of disease outbreaks, such as cholera or malaria.

Heavy rains and tropical storms since December 2014 have led to severe flooding across the Southern African region, affecting more than 1.5 million people, causing the displacement of approximately 430 000, the loss of crops and livestock, and the destruction of crucial infrastructure, including houses, schools, health facilities, roads and bridges. The floods are the worst ones to have hit this region in the last 30 years. Their longer term impact will be leaving the affected communities even more vulnerable than before, if early recovery interventions are not integrated within the general relief work.

According to the 2014 Human Development Index, some Southern African countries are among the poorest countries of the world. Madagascar, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Malawi, and Mozambique rank 155, 156, 162, 174 and 178 respectively out of 186 countries.

The European Union's Humanitarian Response

Funding

Since 2012, the European Commission has supported the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region with nearly €70 million in relief assistance and disaster preparedness, contributing to building resilience among the most vulnerable. In this period Zimbabwe received over €11 million and about €9 million was allocated to Malawi, Mozambique and Madagascar, including in emergency and recovery aid following the 2014-2015 floods. In December 2015, the EU also announced emergency support of €12 million for Southern Africa (Angola, Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, Madagascar, Malawi and Zimbabwe) as one of the regions most affected by El Niño.



The new aid will help meet urgent needs of the populations, but also support resilience efforts to make them better equipped in the future.

Of the total funding in the region in the period 2012-2015, 35% has gone to supporting food security programmes, and 28% has been used for Disaster Preparedness.

Outreach and coordination between humanitarian and development partners

The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil protection department (ECHO), together with partner organisations, monitors the humanitarian situation in the region and responds to the immediate needs by funding the provision of water and sanitation, shelter, food, relief items, primary health, protection and livelihoods recovery following natural disasters (floods, cyclones, droughts, and disease outbreaks). The Commission is also supporting [disaster risk reduction](#) initiatives and resilience building among highly vulnerable communities and local institutions through its DIPECHO (Disaster Preparedness ECHO) programme.

Rural populations of the region continue to face critical food shortages due to poor rainfall, pest attacks, and declining soil fertility. By funding disaster preparedness programmes, the Commission supports the introduction of appropriate agriculture techniques, improved seeds and new varieties of crops, aiming to increase food and nutrition security in the most food insecure parts of the region.

Examples of humanitarian projects in Southern Africa

When floods hit particularly **Malawi and Mozambique** in early 2015, the European Commission supported partners to be able to respond immediately to the most urgent needs through lifesaving emergency operations. Partners have supplied tents, food and water and sanitary facilities to the flood affected communities. On top of the lifesaving operations and due to the frequency and extent of damages caused by disasters **in Southern Africa**, the Commission has also been supporting the implementation of [Disaster Risk Reduction](#) activities since 2008, in order to improve response capacities of communities and institutions.



Thanks to EU funding, UN-Habitat supported communities exposed to recurrent disasters in **Mozambique** to learn how to live with the hazards, reduce risks, prepare and (re)construct better after disasters hit. The activities included awareness raising, training master builders on better building techniques, and advocating for better building codes and standards. In partnership with the Commission, UN-Habitat developed know-how in the country on building and/or readapting school buildings - often highly exposed to floods and cyclones - through appropriate architecture technique. The Ministry of Education, as well as other key stakeholders, recognised the importance of UN-Habitat's work in Mozambique. Elevated flood-resistant schools were recognised as a key strategy

for keeping children safe and improving the community's resilience. The outdated Mozambican building codes were reviewed and **disaster-resistant construction** measures are to be applied in all school constructions in the country. The **upscaling of the DIPECHO interventions** demonstrates that pilot experiences can be exploited to the maximum to reach long term results, and to contribute to the transformation of relief and recovery measures into sustainable development.

In **Malawi**, a health disaster risk reduction initiative supported by the Commission and called the **Village Health Monitoring System** was introduced in 2012. It enables community health workers to collect health related data and transmit it through mobile phones to a web server managed at a district hospital. This has made it possible to improve drug stock monitoring, disease surveillance, and the timely transmission of nutritional data for children below the age of five. The system has improved the interaction among health personnel and increased the response capacity for remote areas.



In **Lesotho**, during a period of extreme food insecurity, the EU supported WFP and FAO to jointly implement a **resilience programme** focusing on income generation (cash and food for assets). The main assets were erosion control structures and conservation agriculture techniques. They were designed to increase production, improve soil structure and ultimately reduce erosion. WFP led the component on reversing environmental degradation of natural resources and Climate Change adaptation. It focussed on terracing, reforestation and conservation of soil and water. Communities were empowered by FAO through

the effective promotion of concrete Climate Smart Agriculture technologies. The programme developed early warning systems and enhanced disaster risk reduction capacities at all levels.

