



Southern Africa & Indian Ocean

ECHO FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

Lives & livelihoods of **17 million** people affected by **El Niño**

13.8 million people in need of **food assistance**
(Source: UNOCHA)

Human Development Index ranking (out of 188 countries):

- **Madagascar: 154**
- **Zimbabwe: 155**
- **Lesotho: 161**
- **Malawi: 173**
- **Mozambique: 180**

European Commission humanitarian assistance:

2016: €52 million
2015: €20.2 million

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A villager in Dzikambani, Malawi, after heavy floods in February 2017 affected many parts of the country. ©CARE

Key messages

- Since early 2015, the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region has faced widespread food shortages owing to the worst drought in 35 years which was exacerbated by the El Niño weather phenomenon. Two consecutive failed rainy seasons have left 13.8 million people in need of emergency food assistance.
- In early 2017, regions previously affected by El Niño experienced excessive rainfall, floods and cyclones associated with La Niña. For many families this has meant losing their crops for a third consecutive time. La Niña causes opposite conditions to those associated with El Niño, and is associated with changes in the intensity and distribution of rainfall.
- Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe have been particularly hard hit by extreme weather. Malawi experienced heavy floods, while Mozambique and Madagascar were caught in the eye of tropical cyclones, respectively Dineo and Enawo. Several European Commission humanitarian partners activated the mechanism for rapid response which allowed them to immediately address the fall-out of these disasters.
- After crossing Mozambique, Dineo also moved through Zimbabwe as a powerful storm, leaving 250 people dead and causing extensive damage to infrastructure. Mozambique issued an appeal for assistance for 150 000 affected people while Zimbabwe declared the floods a national disaster. Enawo cyclone in Madagascar left more than 10 000 people displaced.
- The peak of the 'lean season', when food shortages are most acute and are stretching people's coping mechanisms to their limits, is expected to last until the harvest period in April 2017, but in several places may be extended until May/June due to late start of the rainy season. It will however take vulnerable communities many months, if not years, to recover.

Humanitarian situation and needs

The Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region covers a vast area encompassing 15 countries. The region is prone to recurrent natural disasters such as cyclones, floods and droughts. The 2015-16 rainfall season was the driest in 35 years across large swathes of the region. Two consecutive below-average rainy seasons have had a negative impact on crop and livestock production, cereal prices, water availability and livelihoods.

At the beginning of 2016, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique, Lesotho and Swaziland declared a state of emergency appealing for international support. The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) also declared a regional drought disaster, estimating that more than 28 million people were food insecure.

The effects of the drought continue to be felt in 2017 as people await the harvest period in March-April. More than 13 million people are in need of food assistance in the seven most affected countries (Angola, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland and Zimbabwe). Wet and stormy weather linked to La Niña has moreover damaged crops, homes and infrastructure such as roads, bridges, school and clinics.

Heavy flooding in central Malawi in early February washed away crops and displaced hundreds of households in Ntcheu, Salima and Zomba districts. The Dineo and Enawo tropical cyclones which respectively made landfall in Mozambique and Madagascar with winds of up to 230 km/hour left a trail of destruction, leaving hundreds of families temporarily displaced. Cyclones and flooding tend to contaminate water sources and increase the risk of disease outbreaks such as cholera.

Across the region, food insecurity is exacerbated by political instability, limited socio-economic progress, poverty and the world's highest HIV/AIDS rates. Chronic malnutrition levels, which lead to stunting, are very high across the region while severe acute malnutrition continues to be a major concern in southern Madagascar.

With more than 75% of the population living in rural areas and their survival intrinsically tied to rain-fed agriculture, the loss of crops represents a continuous threat to people's income and health. The repeated climate-related shocks are eroding the ability of communities to fully recover and are making them more vulnerable to new disasters.

Natural disasters are becoming more unpredictable and are also increasing in frequency, intensity and magnitude as a result of climate change. Although some parts of the region have registered improved cereal production, rural populations continue to experience food shortages due to their reliance on rain-fed agriculture, declining soil fertility and land degradation.

In the 2015 Human Development Index, several Southern African countries rank among the world's least advanced in terms of human development and wellbeing. Madagascar, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Malawi and Mozambique are ranked 154, 155, 161, 173 and 180 respectively, out of 188 countries.

The European Union's Humanitarian Response

The European Commission's Humanitarian aid department (ECHO) monitors the humanitarian situation in the region and responds to urgent needs when needed. It supports a variety of UN, NGO and Red Cross partners. Funding goes to the provision of water and sanitation, shelter, food, relief items, health and nutrition care, protection as well as the response to and recovery from natural disasters (floods, cyclones, droughts and disease outbreaks). The Commission is also supporting resilience building among highly vulnerable communities.

Since 2012, the European Commission has supported the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region with nearly €110 million in relief assistance and disaster preparedness, contributing to building resilience among vulnerable communities. In this period, Zimbabwe received over €15 million and about €18 million was allocated to Malawi, Mozambique and Madagascar, including in emergency and recovery aid following the 2014-2015 floods. In 2016 and 2017, the EU helped to address the suffering and food shortages caused by prolonged drought after two consecutive failed rainy seasons. A total of €61 million was released to deal with the El Niño crisis, but also to support resilience efforts aimed at making communities better equipped to deal with drought and other natural disasters in future.



Due to the frequency and extent of damage caused by disasters, the Commission has been supporting Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) activities since 2008, in order to improve response capacities of communities and institutions. In 2016 and 2017 the Commission supported Madagascar, Malawi and Mozambique with €10 million. When floods and cyclones wreaked havoc in the region in early 2017, several partners activated the crisis modifier of their ongoing projects with the Commission. This is a mechanism which allows partners to organise an emergency response in the immediate aftermath of a rapid onset-disaster.

Other small scale intervention to support refugees in Malawi and fight the plague epidemic in Madagascar were also funded by ECHO.

The European Commission's humanitarian aid department (ECHO) is working closely with its development colleagues in the EU Delegations to support resilience efforts and help communities prepare better for future calamities.

Examples of humanitarian projects in Southern Africa



In February 2017, Salima district in Malawi experienced flash floods forcing people to abandon their homes. Five camps were set up to house more than 8 500 people. COOPI runs an EU-funded project in the region to improve preparedness for such disasters. Before the floods, the early warning system helped inform communities living in flood prone areas to evacuate, thus preventing fatalities. After an assessment of the impact, COOPI decided to activate the 'crisis modifier' of its ongoing contract with the European Commission allowing them to rapidly respond. They provided each displaced family with a household kit containing soap, water treatment, a mosquito net, sanitary pads, a plastic pail with tap and blankets. ©COOPI/ Darius Chiwaula

The European Commission has partnered with the Finnish Red Cross in Swaziland to help families seriously affected by the drought. Beneficiaries receive cash transfers through mobile cash agents. Beneficiaries without phones are assisted with starter packs. Cash distributions have proven to be cost-effective and minimise disruption of the local economy. In response to the current drought in southern Africa, the Commission is also promoting the use of multipurpose cash transfers in Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Lesotho. In addition to the cash, families are also being helped through home gardens, training on fuel efficient cooking stoves and the production of animal feed. ©Finnish Red Cross



In Madagascar and Zimbabwe, UNICEF is responding to the effects of El Niño through intensified nutrition surveillance and implementation of community management of acute malnutrition (CMAM) with the ministry of health and other partners like WFP. The projects mitigate the impact of El Niño on the nutrition status of the most vulnerable children aged 6 months to 5 years. Children are constantly screened for under nutrition and those identified with severe acute malnutrition are treated. The projects provide training and nutrition supplies like Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF). © EU/ECHO/Bertha Wangari

