

# Papua New Guinea: Drought

## UN Resident Coordinator's Office Situation Report No. 3

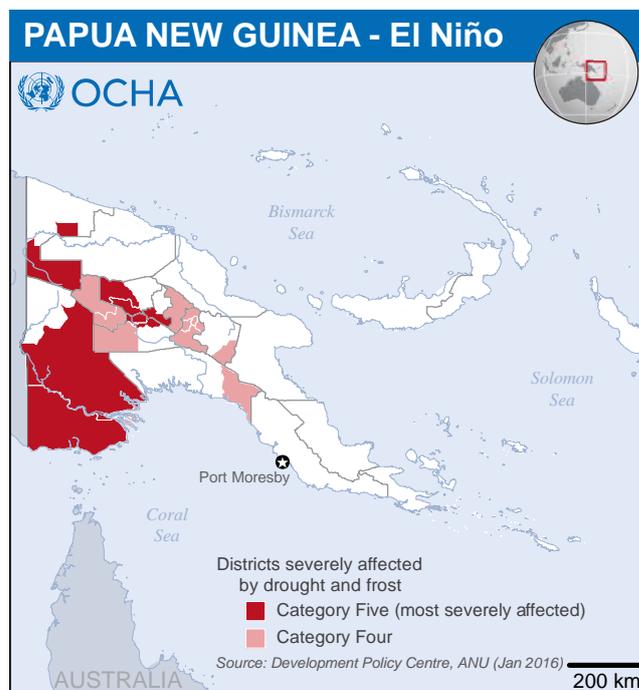
(as of 22 February 2016)



This report is produced by the Office of the Resident Coordinator in collaboration with humanitarian partners. It covers the period from 8 January to 22 February 2016. The next report will be issued on or around 18 March 2016.

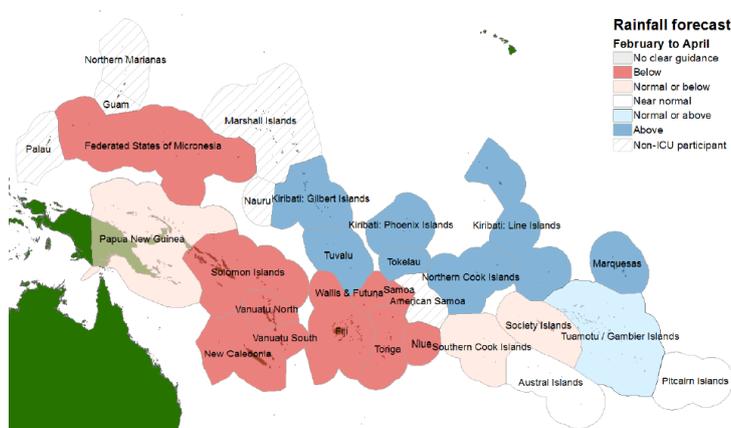
## Highlights

- The 2015–16 El Niño has reached its peak towards the end of 2015 and continues its gradual decline. The impact and after-effect on people and their livelihood remains critical.
- According to most recent estimates, more than 700,000 people live in areas classified as Category 4 and 5, where food production has been severely impacted and may be in need of food assistance and/or agricultural inputs. Of these, approximately 480,000 people are in Category 5 areas and continue facing critical food shortages
- In January and February, many areas in the Highlands and Momase regions have received rains. This has resulted in landslides and floods as sloped areas become unstable due to water saturation and swollen rivers have burst its banks. Areas along the southern coastal provinces and islands continue to experience lower than average rainfall.
- The Government of PNG continues to respond to the needs of affected populations in a decentralised manner through relief activities of local Members of Parliament.
- Priority needs include food, agricultural recovery and water support. Areas continuing to experience high levels of food insecurity include remote Western Province, inland Gulf Province, high-altitude areas in highland provinces as well as highland fringe locations.
- With many severely affected communities living in remote areas, logistics remains a key issue.



Map Sources: UNCS, PNG NSO  
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 on 23 February 2015

## Situation Overview



Potential Water Stress, Feb – Apr 2016 (NIWA)

The 2015–16 El Niño continues its gradual decline although strong El Niño conditions continued in January 2016. El Niño has probably reached its peak towards the end of 2015 with a highly likelihood (96% chance) to continue over the coming season (February– April 2016).

Based on the 26 El Niño events since 1900, around 50% have been followed by a neutral year, and 40% have been followed by La Niña. International climate models suggest neutral is most likely for the second half of the year. However, according to the Australian Bureau of Meteorology, La Niña in 2016 cannot be ruled out, and a repeat El Niño appears unlikely.

While Papua New Guinea (PNG) has experienced below to well below normal rainfall over four of the past six months, normal or below normal rainfall is forecasted for PNG over the next 3 months (NIWA). Estimates of rainfall from January to February indicate that numerous parts of the country have received significant amounts of rain particularly in the Highlands and Momase regions.

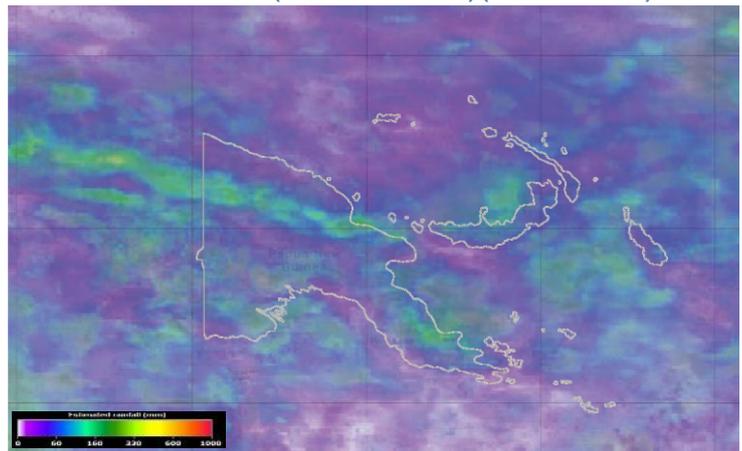
Current assessments of locations that remain impacted by drought-induced conditions include remote Western Province, inland Gulf Province high-altitude areas in highland provinces as well as highland fringe locations. These estimates will be further corroborated by an ongoing remote food security assessment to map food insecurity as well as planned field assessments to particularly impacted locations.

As many affected communities live in particularly inaccessible areas which can only be reached by foot or air, the logistics sector is working closely with the National Disaster Centre (NDC) and specific provincial authorities to overcome logistical challenges associated with distribution of relief with the support of private sector.

In addition to earlier relief items supplied by the PNG Government in highly impacted communities, local Members of Parliament in several locations (Morobe and Milne Bay Provinces) have provided their electorate with food relief by accessing their District Service Improvement Programme funding.

Many partners continue undertaking agricultural recovery support activities. These include capacity building on water conservation, drought adaptation, small-scale irrigation techniques and conservation agriculture/farming; distribution of agricultural kits, planting materials, and agricultural drought mitigation messages; and planned implementation of agricultural resilience support packages.

Rainfall Estimate (8 Jan – 7 Feb 2016) (FireWatch PNG)



## Funding

The Government of PNG continues to support the drought response through previously reported provincial and district development funds (Sitrep 2). These funds are programmed in a decentralised manner based on the response priorities of local politicians.

Humanitarian partners continue supporting through targeted funding to assist with delivery of the Government's relief efforts. In addition to the financial contributions of bilateral and multilateral donors, several private sector actors have also contributed financial and in-kind support. 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](mailto:fts@un.org).

## Humanitarian Response



### Food Security

#### Needs:

- A precise estimate of number of people in need is not available, but according to most recent estimates, over 700,000 people live in areas classified as Category 4 and 5, where food production has been severely impacted by the drought and may be in need of food assistance and/or agricultural inputs. Of this number, approximately 480,000 are in Category 5 areas and continue facing critical food shortages;
- Of particular concern to humanitarian actors are populations living in extremely remote communities that are not accessible by land or water transport. Media coverage in recent months has indicated that there have been reports of mortality in remote areas;
- Due to recent rains, populations in some areas have begun re-planting staple crops and vegetables, although it is expected that agricultural support, such as seeds and planting materials, are required to facilitate recovery. The precise number of households requiring agricultural recovery assistance has yet to be determined.

**Response:**

- Ongoing relief responses include food assistance efforts by the Government of PNG, although an update on the exact locations, type and quantity of assistance is presently being prepared. Humanitarian and private sector actors have distributed small quantities of food assistance in some areas and it is widely agreed that there remains a significant gap in food assistance coverage;
- The cluster is conducting assessments to obtain more accurate estimates of current needs; an mVAM is currently being conducted the food security situation in Category 3, 4 and 5 areas. Findings are expected by early Mar 2016;
- Information on partners' presence and on ongoing relief responses is being consolidated;
- Other food security interventions by government and partners include the provision of seeds, agricultural inputs and planting materials but remain limited in geographic scope and in terms of coverage;
- The cluster, supported by the logistics sector, is working to support provincial authorities in the distribution of up to approximately 3100mt of food relief (purchased by a private foundation) in Western Province;
- The National Agriculture Research Institute (NARI) is bulking up planting materials (sweet potato, cassava, corn etc.) in four centres starting with fast-maturing crops in enable access to food and money within three months;
- NARI in close collaboration with Food Security Sector Partners is distributing foundational planting material across various part of the country;
- Humanitarian partners are distributing seeds in several Highlands provinces while also collaborating to implement adaptive agriculture training targeting extension workers and other key stakeholders in several districts in the Momase and Highlands regions;
- In view of increased insect infestation damaging the growth of food crops after the drought, the Department of Agriculture and Livestock has received an offer of technical assistance to investigate and control the infestation.

**Gaps & Constraints:**

- Coordination gaps continue to exist where food relief was reportedly dispatched without a well-developed distribution plan and clear instructions beneficiaries resulting in non-distribution or significant delays;
- Several isolated communities have reported received little to no food supplies so far. Information gaps remain on where and when food assistance has been provided to date;
- Accessibility difficulties and high transportation costs, especially where airlifting is the only way to access communities in need, continues to be a challenge for most humanitarian actors.

**Health****Needs:**

- Large numbers of persons in El Nino affected areas are suffering from lack of water (leading to diseases associated with poor hygiene) and food (leading to health conditions associated with undernutrition). Many health facilities are also functioning below expected capacity due to lack of sufficient water, and in some cases, lack of supplies due to transportation challenges caused by drought.

**Response:**

- The Health Cluster is focused on restoring functionality to health facilities affected by the current El Nino crisis, as well as direct support to affected beneficiaries primarily through the NGO and faith-based partners within the Cluster.

**Gaps & Constraints:**

- Logistical constraints in reaching the most remote (and, in some cases, most severely impacted) areas have limited both assessment and provision of support;
- Insufficient response to food security issues has contributed to poor health outcomes in affected areas.



## Logistics

### Needs:

- Due to lack of resources, some provincial governments (e.g. Western Province) continue experiencing challenges in last mile distribution of privately-procured food relief centrally to respective districts and communities;
- Many drought-affected communities are located in particularly inaccessible areas which can only be reached by foot or air.

### Response:

- The sector is coordinating logistical needs of various sectors/clusters with the contributions from private sector;
- A regular logistics bulletin is being produced for enhanced logistics information sharing across humanitarian partners.

### Gaps & Constraints:

- Significant funding gaps remain to enable logistics support to locations accessible only by air.



## Protection

### Needs:

- The severe food shortages persist during the reported period have an impact on affected communities, including children, women, elderly, sick, and persons with disabilities. These persons continue to be at risk of having their key rights denied and be discriminated against;
- Differing needs of individuals need to be addressed through targeted response approach;
- There are indications that communities, including vulnerable members, affected by the drought are not meaningfully consulted and informed on ongoing relief and their respective entitlements.

### Response:

- Partners continue to advocate for the mainstreaming of protection of human rights in humanitarian responses;
- Partners contribute to the shaping of humanitarian decision-making through ongoing human rights monitoring and the provision of necessary information.

### Gaps & Constraints:

- Current drought response plans do not specific account for special requirements of vulnerable groups and concerns remain for possible communities and especially vulnerable groups missing out on food supplies with the blanket distributions;
- Ongoing tribal violence in certain provinces coupled with crime and popular unrest indicate the volatility of the operating environment;
- Poor rule of law continues to threaten creating a permissible environment for humanitarian response.



## Shelter

### Needs:

- Despite the ongoing drought-impacts, there has not been any significant displacement of communities being reported.

### Response:

- A CCCM training was conducted in December 2015 to build the capacity of government officials;
- The cluster, together with the NDC, continue to monitor closely reports relating to displacement.



## Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

### Needs:

- The Highlands and Momase regions have received significant rainfall in the recent months. However, many sections of the Southern region have not, compounding the current food shortage issue in the remote areas of Western Province.

### Response:

- Partners have undertaken several WASH technical assessments.
- Cluster partners have implemented WASH interventions through provision WASH NFIs (including water containers and water purification); construction and rehabilitation of water supply systems (boreholes, rainwater harvesting systems, etc.); and hygiene promotion training;
- Partners have delivered assistance in the Highlands region, the Momase region and the Southern region. Aggregated figures are not currently available.
- All planned WASH assessments by partners have been completed.

### Gaps & Constraints:

- Remote areas of the Southern region (beneficiary numbers not presently available) have yet to receive any WASH assistance.
- Distribution of NFIs are hindered by logistical challenges and security issues

## General Coordination

The National Disaster Committee (NDCComm) is the Government of PNG's nation-level disaster management mechanism and is supported by the National Disaster Centre (NDC) as the lead coordination agency. Provincial disaster management is led by respective provincial disaster committees in consultation with both the NDCComm and NDC and supported by provincial disaster coordinators (PDCs).

Humanitarian partners' support continues to be coordinated through the Disaster Management Team (DMT), co-led by the Acting Director of NDC and the UN Resident Coordinator. Partners support PNG Government-led sector responses through informal clusters. These sectors have been actively supporting the Government's drought response at both National and sub-National levels.

DMT meetings take place regularly to coordinate the joint response. Coordination of partners and information sharing are further supported through platforms such as [Humanitarianresponse.info](http://Humanitarianresponse.info) and [Humanitarian.ID](http://Humanitarian.ID). With regular coordination meetings in place, humanitarian partners are encouraged to update the online meeting calendar at [www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/papua-new-guinea](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/papua-new-guinea).

### Background on the crisis

Papua New Guinea (PNG) has been experiencing a significant drought since Jul/Aug 2015, with impacts likely to persist until Q3 2016. The National Disaster Committee previously stated that around 2.7 million people are affected by drought, frost and forest fires. With the beginning of the dry season in May, rivers and rain water catchments have dried up, while staple crops, such as sweet potato and sago, have perished in the arid conditions as well as killer frost in high altitude areas. This has led to a food crisis given that more than 80 per cent of the nation's 7.3 million people live in rural areas and rely on subsistence agriculture for their food needs. Accessing the most severely impacted locations (e.g. remote Western Province, inland Gulf Province high-altitude areas in highland provinces and highland fringe locations) continues to be a challenge given the physical remoteness of these locations. Current priority needs include food, agricultural recovery and water support.

### For further information, please contact:

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For more information, please visit [www.unocha.org](http://www.unocha.org), [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int). & [www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/papua-new-guinea](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/papua-new-guinea)