



WFP Southern Africa El Niño Situation Report #09

21 February 2017

Food Assistance in Numbers



- Over the three month peak of the crisis (January—March), WFP's aims to reach more than **13 million people** with food assistance in Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.*
- In January, food assistance reached **10.6 million people** in the seven countries.

Highlights

- Emergency assistance to those affected by the drought has reached peak intensity. WFP and its partners have augmented activities and will maintain expanded operations at least through March.
- Additional resources will still make a difference as WFP has mechanisms in place to quickly turn contributions into food and cash transfers for severely vulnerable people in the drought affected countries.

Situation Update

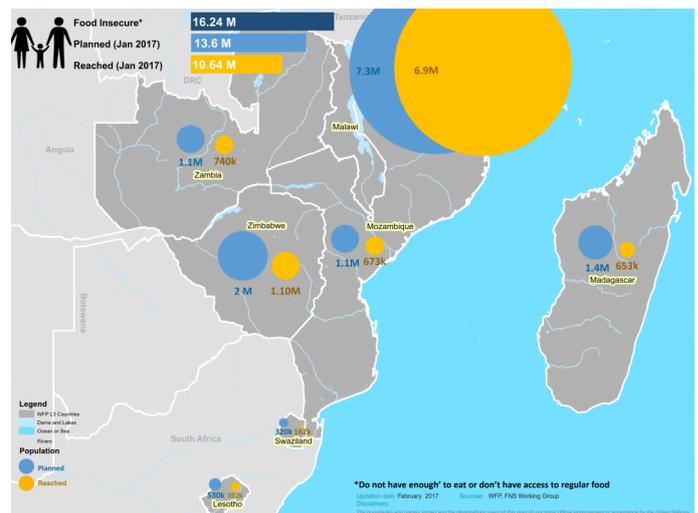
- El Niño conditions during the 2015-2016 planting season have caused the most severe drought in more than 30 years in Southern Africa. With the turn of the year, Southern Africa has entered the peak period of the response. Food stocks have largely been depleted and food assistance is often the only lifeline that exists for vulnerable women, men, girls and boys.
- The nutrition situation has deteriorated in the seven drought affected countries over the last eight months. Acute malnutrition continues to be prevalent with several countries recording wasting levels above 5 percent. Although the nutrition situation in most countries remains below emergency thresholds at national level, pockets of very high acute malnutrition are prevalent in Zimbabwe and Madagascar.
- Meanwhile, HIV vulnerability in the region remains concerning and signs of increased malnutrition among people living with HIV and AIDS on anti-retroviral treatment are emerging along with service delivery break-downs. There is a significant risk that development gains achieved could be lost.

WFP Net Funding Requirements

(February – April 2017)

Total Requirements **USD 280 million**

Net Funding requirement **USD 88.6 million**



Map: WFP Response, January 2017

- After an irregular start, the growing season is now well established. Wetter than average conditions have extended across Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and north-eastern South Africa, leading to localized flooding. Where rainfall is not excessive, conditions are favourable for crop development. In contrast, Tanzania is affected by a severe drought, which extends into northern Mozambique. Madagascar is affected to a lesser degree, with drought conditions particularly intense in the eastern and northern provinces.
- Meanwhile, an outbreak of the fall armyworm is causing considerable crop damage in Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe, as well as Namibia and South Africa. If the damage aggravates, it could constrain prospects for good crop harvests.

Photo: ©WFP/David Orr
Vulnerable children receiving nutritious on-site meals at Zakhele Neighbourhood Care Point, Manzini Swaziland

* WFP's overall portfolio includes relief, resilience, recovery and development programs.

WFP's Response

- WFP and its partners have steadily extended operations over several months to meet the immense food needs of those affected by the El Niño induced drought.
- Heavy rains after the drought period have affected has created issues problems of access impacting the humanitarian response.
- Since mid-2016, WFP has multiplied the number of people reached with food and nutrition assistance, with **10.6 million** people reached through combined relief, resilience, recovery and development programmes in January in the seven countries.
- To respond to the worrying nutrition situation, WFP has provided treatment for moderate acute malnutrition to more than **280,000** children, pregnant and lactating women and people living with HIV, and nutrition support to prevent acute malnutrition among more than **500,000** children aged 6-23/59 months and pregnant and lactating women.
- WFP's response to the El Niño-induced drought has demonstrated that the use of cash based transfers is not only appropriate but also an important tool in an emergency response. Market conditions have allowed WFP to use cash based transfers in five of the seven countries with successful results.



Supply Chain

- While recent contributions have allowed WFP to reinstate full rations in some cases where half rations or less had been necessary, there is still a need for urgent additional funds to maintain rations and make sure that cash transfers continue.
- Heavy rains in Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and southern Madagascar have impacted WFP's ability to deliver food on time. Prepositioning of food and other contingency mechanisms have prevented food assistance from being discontinued for the most part, but the situation is challenging and WFP and partners are working hard to minimise the negative effects.

Regional Cooperation

- Collaboration with governments and the Southern Africa Development Community's (SADC) Secretariat has been key to the drought response. A regional Special Operation included support to the SADC El Niño Response Cell in Botswana, together with OCHA, FAO and UNICEF.

Resourcing

- WFP recognizes the significant support of its donors and contributors which have made the scale-up possible.
- Since the beginning of the year, contributions of more than USD 20 million have been received from the governments of Germany, Iceland, Sweden and the United States.
- Closing the current funding shortfall of **USD 88.6 million** will be critical to ensure that the scale-up can be sustained over the peak of the crisis.



Looking Ahead

While at least another two months of emergency assistance is vital to save lives and protect livelihoods, WFP is currently expanding resilience-building activities to prevent future risk and adapt to climate change to break the cycle of seasonal hunger.

The evidence for intensifying efforts to avoid future El Niño and other weather related crises is clear. Even though weather phenomena cannot be prevented, their adverse effects can.

WFP will enhance efforts to support community and household resilience, while maintaining capacity to act early and robustly should the need arise.

Activities such as the R4 Resilience Initiative provides an opportunity to shift towards long-term rural resilience. The comprehensive risk management approach to help communities be more resilient to climate variability and shocks has broken new ground by enabling the poorest farmers to pay for crop insurance with their own labour. Protected by insurance, families no longer find themselves forced into desperate measures, such as selling their farm animals or taking their children out of school.

Shock responsive safety nets systems are also slated with the view to create more sustainable solutions.

Photo: @WFP/Fiona Guy
'Women collect water for the construction of a weir dam in Zvishavane, Zimbabwe'



Lesotho

- WFP has scaled up relief activities in recent months to cover the increasing needs caused by the drought. Where markets are functioning, WFP has used cash based transfers to meet food needs of vulnerable populations. Close to half of relief activities are carried out through this mechanism, which has proven to be time and cost efficient. The project portfolio also includes an extensive school meals programme and, across all activities, WFP reached close to 400,000 girls, boys, women and men in January.
- Projections in the updated Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee report indicates a significant drop in the number of food insecure people as a result of humanitarian assistance and existing safety net programmes. The analysis also indicates that crop conditions are favourable thus far and there is potential for a good harvest.

- Prospects for the coming harvest season remain uncertain and WFP may extend its emergency response in the south until the end of April if supported by assessment recommendations.

Malawi

- In what has become the longest and largest humanitarian response on record, WFP and partners are now at the peak of the drought response having reached 6.9 million Malawians across all activities in January. While provision of lifesaving assistance remains crucial, WFP and partners are also prioritizing complementary productive asset activities to help break the cycle of food and nutrition insecurity in the long run.
- In January, WFP introduced a commodity voucher for maize targeting close to 700,000 beneficiaries. The transfer mechanism was introduced in response to food price increase projections during the peak of the lean season which coincides with the rainy season.
- Meanwhile, heavy rains, particularly in the southern region, have exacerbated challenges of weak infrastructure, hampering access to distribution points. WFP has prepositioned 35,000 mt of food, which is now being drawn on to mitigate the impact of current access constraints. These stocks are essential to ensure uninterrupted assistance to the most vulnerable during the rainy season.
- Humanitarian assistance has played an instrumental role in stabilizing the food security situation, particularly for the most vulnerable. Continuation of support remains critical, particularly during the peak lean season when poor households are expected to fall into Emergency (IPC Phase 4) according to FEWSNET. This indicates that even with food assistance, households will still face large food consumption gaps resulting in high malnutrition and extreme loss of livelihood assets.



Madagascar

- Southern Madagascar has been hard hit by the El Niño induced drought. Despite logistical challenges as road conditions have deteriorated due to heavy rains, WFP reached 650,000 people across all activities in January.
- WFP programmes includes emergency relief assistance combined with early recovery assistance through food for asset activities from March onwards. Early recovery activities will aim to restore household assets and diversify income generating activities, while ensuring appropriate food consumption.

Mozambique

- WFP's drought response is currently being scaled-up in southern and central areas. Activities are designed to address immediate food needs, while at the same time help vulnerable communities to withstand future weather-related shocks. In January, WFP reached 670,000 people with various kinds of assistance – among them, food for people building and restoring community assets, emergency school meals and treatment of moderate acute malnutrition among children, and pregnant and nursing women.

Photo: @WFP/Naval Ravoavison

'In one of the most drought-affected communes of Ranopiso district (Tolagnaro), a beneficiary receives a cash transfer through mobile phone'

- WFP's supply chain for the drought response has faced significant challenges, threatening to affect the delivery time. The demand for cereals has outweighed the capacity of both local and regional markets, while lengthy customs clearance procedures for imported food at Mozambican ports has affected response time. WFP is working with partners to improve the situation for the short and long term.



Swaziland

- In 2016, WFP's operations in Swaziland expanded significantly due to the emergency response. WFP is currently scaling up its assistance to reach an overall 250,000 people during the lean season. In January, WFP reached 160,000 people across all programmes.
- A significant proportion of food assistance is carried out through cash based transfers. This is a first for Swaziland and its success can be attributed to effective collaboration with implementing partners and a conducive local context with well-functioning markets and infrastructure. There will be a rapid expansion of cash based transfers in the first quarter of 2017 and WFP aims to reach 128,000 people through this transfer modality.

Zambia

- While not as hard hit as the other six countries, WFP Zambia plays a crucial role bringing much needed food to neighbouring countries. Zambia has approved maize exports and initiated a series of convoys carrying maize from last year's harvest to support people in need in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. More than 80,000 mt of much needed food has been sourced through this channel for neighbouring countries.

- Meanwhile, WFP Zambia aims to reach one million children across the country, including those in hard-hit districts, during the school year.

Zimbabwe

- In January, WFP assisted 1.1 million through the LSA, whilst providing specialised nutritious products to an estimated 105,000 children aged between 24 to 59 months. Some 94,400 people also benefited from the creation of 52 assets through the PAC programme, and 77,000 students continue to receive daily school meals.
- To exacerbate the already serious food security situation, Zimbabwe is experiencing a worsening liquidity crisis spurred by declining revenues, low growth, negative trade balance, increasing disinvestment and a rising fiscal deficit. In view of these challenges, WFP made efforts to maintain maximum operational flexibility by using a series of different transfer modalities, including direct cash, e-voucher, mobile money and in-kind assistance.
- The outlook for the 2017 agricultural season is indicating an average-to-good harvest, following a good rainfall season to date. Despite the positive outlook, the ZimVAC Rapid Rural Assessment, conducted in February 2017, recommends an extension of the LSA programme by two months (through May 2017) in selected districts to prevent farmers from prematurely harvesting their cereal crops. From April/May onwards, to support the recovery efforts, WFP will increasingly focus its resources and attention on strengthening resilience and social protection mechanisms.



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