

**Alert note****Southern Africa Countries (Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi)****14<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

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**Date completed:** 17<sup>th</sup> May 2024.**Forums:**                      Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia**Type of emergency:** Drought**Date of emergency:** May 2024**Funding Survey**

If the forum indicates a plan to launch an appeal, we request funding members to please fill out this [survey form](#) which will help the **Emergency Steering Committee** assess the funding environment for this response. Please respond to this survey *within 24 hours of Alert publication*.

**1. The nature of the emergency**

Several countries in the Southern Region of Africa are experiencing a severe drought due to significant below average rainfall experienced during the last rainy season October – March ([ReliefWeb](#)).

Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi are some of the most affected Southern Africa countries having received less than 20% of the typical rainfall expected during this season. The poor rains have been attributed to the on-going El Niño Southern Oscillation effects ([World Weather Attribution](#)).

El Niño is a cyclical climate event marked by unusually warm ocean temperatures in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, that impacts weather patterns. El Niño occurrences frequently cause lower rainfall and protracted dry spells, causing food insecurity to rural communities and negatively affecting the agricultural industry; significantly affecting livelihoods food security across the affected countries ([ReliefWeb](#)). The affected areas are primarily rural and rely heavily on agriculture, which makes them particularly vulnerable to variations in weather patterns.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024, Malawi government declared a state of emergency in 23 out of 28 drought affected districts ([afrinews](#)) due to the prevailing drought. In Zimbabwe, there have been failed rains affecting 80% of the country on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2024 the president of Zimbabwe declared the drought in Zimbabwe to be a national disaster ([BBC](#)). In Zambia and the drought was also declared a national disaster on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024 as 84 out of 116 districts nationally have been affected ([afrinews](#)) by drought induced El Niño effects. Zambia continues to experience the driest agricultural season in more than forty years, resulting in significant crop losses, increased livestock deaths, and worsening poverty. Over nine million people in 84 out of the 117 districts are affected according to the government crop assessment data ([ReliefWeb](#) May 7 2025).

**2. The impact and scale of the emergency**

Drought in Southern Africa begun in Botswana in October 2023 and has been gradually intensifying and expanding across Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Namibia, affecting most Southern Africa countries ([EU](#)), classifying it as a large-scale emergency.

Extreme dry conditions are affecting the critical food growing periods leading to acute food insecurity in the affected countries. According to [media](#) reports, the current El Niño event, which developed in June

2023, resulted in low rainfall and extremely high temperatures in the southern part of Africa, was strongest between November and January. This period also coincides with the peak agricultural season in the region, leading to widespread crop failures, limited pasture regeneration and affected water availability for livestock in some parts of the region ([FEWSNET](#)). Information by mid-March from several countries, including Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, indicate that maize crops in many areas had reached permanent wilting point, or were under severe moisture stress and could not recover. Maize yields have also fallen sharply threatening food security for millions of households ([IFPRI](#)). Reports and observations indicated that small grains such as sorghum and millet had fared better than maize ([FEWSNET](#)).

Zimbabwe-On the national scale 80 % rains failed in Zimbabwe according to [the new humanitarian](#) with the worst affected geographic area being the Southwestern provinces of Matabele land where over 9,000 drought-related cattle deaths have been reported, and over 1.4 million cattle were reported as being at elevated risk of drought conditions and death due to lack of pasture and water. In Zimbabwe, communities are depleting their food stocks and staple food is selling at above normal prices especially in Matabeleland and Mashonaland. The Zimbabwe Drought Flash Appeal May 2024 report that the current El Niño induced drought is expected to impact the food and nutrition security situation, reducing food access and diversity, and thereby the overall quality of people's diets. Poor rainfall led to partial or complete crop failure in most parts of the country—40 percent poor and 60 per cent is completely lost [UNOCHA](#).

The 2023 Zimbabwe vulnerability rural assessment index report estimates that 26 per cent of households, equivalent to 5.7 million people, may face food insecurity by January 2024, which is the lean peak period. Women, who traditionally lead households will be most affected (70%) followed by child headed households (10%) displaced and chronically ill persons (1%).

People in Matabeleland depend on livestock for living, but due to the drought earlier-than-normal deterioration of water and pasture conditions. Depletion of household herd either by natural deaths, or voluntary destocking is also highly likely thus robbing people of their source of living. There is anticipated human livestock conflict on water, food insecurity induced conflicts and gender-based violence because of constrained relations in homes. FEWSNET report on Zimbabwe (Feb 2024) notes that the government's 2023/24 lean season humanitarian assistance started in February 2024 across 56 of the country's 60 rural districts.

Zambia- A total of 1 million households are affected in the current drought with 6.6 people needing immediate assistance. Over 70 % of all affected are women and children (ZVAC, 2024). In Zambia, the drought is affecting 84 out of the 116 districts of Zambia (Eastern, Lusaka, Central, Copperbelt, Southern, and Western provinces). Extreme vulnerabilities exist for pregnant women and chronically ill patients. Households with children under the age of five recorded not being able to feed the children three meals a day on a balanced diet (NCA/DCA RNA report 2024). Government crop assessment data estimating over one million hectares of crop land is affected ranging from outright crop failure and significant drop in yields.

The Southern half of Zambia, primarily grassland areas are severely affected ([Relief web](#)) with many of the areas experiencing poor vegetation conditions. In Zambia, the 2023/2024 rainfall season was characterized by late onset, prolonged dry spells, and elevated temperatures ([UNOCHA \(United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs\)](#)). Pasture and livestock were noted to be in poor conditions due to prolonged dry spells recorded in the previous and the current seasons. Maize field in some areas have permanently wilted while some had some yield for small grains in the same vicinity (especially millet and sorghum).

The severe impact on food security in these districts is multifaceted as the crop failure will also cause economic strain as agriculture is a primary source of income in rural Zambia. The increased Food Prices are now being experienced which may lead to food scarcity leading to malnutrition and water borne diseases (NCA (Norwegian Church Aid)/ DCA RNA report 2024 & DHS 2018).

In the drought affected districts in Zambia, social protection for vulnerable populations such as the poor, elderly, children, women, and disabled individuals is critically impacted, highlighting several key areas of concern. There is now a strain on social programs as existing social protection programs, including food aid, cash transfers, and nutritional support are stretched beyond their limit's times of stress. Many communities are lacking access to clean and safe drinking water and safe sanitation and hygiene services. Cholera has also been on the rise since the onset of the drought in Zambia.

In Malawi, the most affected regions are the southern and Central parts of the country. The Malawi's governments emergency declaration which covered 23 out of the country's 28 districts indicated that close to 2 million farming households have been affected by the drought conditions and would require food assistance of around 600,000 MT (Metric Tons) ([FEWSNET](#)). Primary data collected during a Rapid Needs Assessment conducted by ACT Malawi members in Phalombe, Chikwawa, Nsanje and Mulanje districts show that the affected communities are in dire need of food and may also require inputs for the recovery interventions. The rapid needs assessment showed that the most affected are women (about 75%) while 20% of the affected are children under the age of 5. The elderly and the physically challenged people will suffer food insecurity. In Malawi, the impact of El Nino has resulted in wilting of crops in the southern districts (Govt, DODMA (Department of Disaster Management Affairs) report, April 2024) leaving 9 million people in need of food assistance and early recovery (Govt report, April 2024). The lack of food will trigger malnutrition especially among children and other vulnerable groups.

The short- and long-term consequences of drought include widespread negative impact on food security resulting to malnutrition, inadequate resources to recover lost livelihoods, poor harvest of rainfed crop yields, poor livestock production and increase livestock mortality rates and water availability and environmental deterioration due to cutting down of trees. For early recovery, and restoration of livelihoods, there is a need for increasing access to seeds and fertilizer for those that have access to wetlands (maize, cassava, and sweet potato vines), and improved incomes to restore livestock and strengthen protection mechanisms.

### **3. Local and national capacity**

**In Malawi**, the communities facing drought are adapting poor coping mechanisms like selling firewood / charcoal, selling livelihood assets like goats often at below market rates which will overall affect their income eventually.

Local structures that have been set up to respond to the drought include establishment of disaster risk management committees in all the affected districts who are helping in coordination of activities at district council and community levels.

Malawi 's country's drought response plan has been activated and food security Ccluster meetings are taking place at National level coordinated by the Department of Disaster Management Affairs. The UN (United Nations) Clusters have also been activated in preparation to respond when resources are available. With assistance from the World Bank, the Government of Malawi is providing some food assistance in some areas. National and international organisations are mobilising resources to respond to the emergency.

**In Zimbabwe** communities affected by drought are taking reduced number of meals per day to cope with the drought, eating wild fruits and vegetables and cutting down trees to sell firewood and charcoal. The youth are eating wild fruits and vegetables and migrating to urban and nearby countries to seek employment to survive. Households are also selling livelihood assets (especially small livestock) and incidents of child marriage have been reported in some areas as a coping mechanism.

Government and development agencies have initiated an anticipatory action for drought focusing on a multi-sectoral approach where Government and Partners are prioritizing comprehensive, co-targeted interventions including harmonising delivery of services, such as combining school feeding with the provision of water services at educational institutions as agreed in the UN food cluster meeting of the 4<sup>th</sup> of April. The district civil protection units have been activated and are assisting in community needs

assessments, identification of rights holders and assisting Organisations to get permission to operate in communities.

The country’s national emergency response plan has been activated and it has a strong emphasis on protection in alignment with the "leaving no one behind" principle as stated in the April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Presidential pronouncement. Structured interventions are designed to benefit all communities, including, displaced populations, returnees, and refugees, addressing their unique needs and addressing potential barriers related to gender, age, disability, or social and political affiliations to ensure that everyone gets assistance.

Government departments e.g. Department of Civil Protection, (AGRITEX) – agricultural extension department at the national, provincial, district and ward levels have been activated to assist in rapid needs assessments, beneficiary identification, and market analysis.

UN-OCHA has set up an Anticipatory Action group made up of different clusters. WFP (World Food Program) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have convened Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster (FSLC) meetings to discuss the challenges of the 2023–24 agriculture season and the implementation of the Food Deficit Mitigation Strategy (FDMS).

**In Zambia**, the people in need have resorted to consuming wild roots, tubers, and other drought tolerant crops. Due to the failed crop harvest many are cutting trees, selling charcoal, and putting forest resources under immense pressure.

Local structures/resources that are available to deal with the drought include disaster-satellite committees and WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) committees at village level and communal development fund Committees. Zambia is following an emergency response operational plan. This plan is coordinated by the disaster mitigation and management national coordination unit under the office of the vice president. At district level, there are disaster mitigation action plans which provide guidance to response actors. At community level the disaster satellite committee play a key role in identifying beneficiaries and supporting field level support to all actors across the sectors. They work with other existing structures such as Village WASH committees.

International Non-Governmental Organizations are playing a key role in supporting response measures in Zambia. The UN agencies are playing a lead role in resource mobilization and coordination support through established sector clusters. Specifically, there exists the humanitarian country team coordinated by UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) (NCA/ DCA RNA 2024).

**4. Key needs and gaps**

**Malawi**

According to [ROSEA](#) the key priority areas include food assistance, provision of safe water for people and water for animals. There is also need for the provision of agriculture inputs like seeds and fertilizer as those on the wetlands may produce maize seed especially and drought tolerant seeds multiplication for crops like cassava and sweet potato vines.

**Zimbabwe**

According to [UNOCHA](#) Zimbabwe’s drought appeal the major gaps are in Food, WASH and Nutrition and protection issues especially for children.

**Zambia**

People affected by the drought require lifesaving food, water, and livelihood assistance according to UNOCHA updated Multi Hazard Response Plan 2024 which sought to proactively provide a multi sectoral response to the needs of people affected by the El Niño during the 2023/2024 Season.

Please indicate whether you are considering:

	Indicate your intention with an X below
Rapid Response Fund ( <i>intended for small and medium scale emergencies</i> )	

Appeal ( <i>intended for large scale emergencies</i> )			<b>X</b>	
If you indicate an intention to launch an appeal, the secretariat will activate an Emergency Steering Committee meeting within two working days on receipt of this alert.				
Capacity details of forum members with the intention to respond are given below.				
ACT Member	Geographical focus	Sectors of expertise	Support required	Estimated Budget range (USD)
MALAWI CARD (Churches Action in Relief and Development) (Churches Action in Relief and Development)	Nsnaje and Mulanje districts	Cash, Food Security, Early Recovery/livelihood Restoration, WASH, Protection/Psychosocial Support, Disaster Preparedness, Advocacy	Financial Support	500,000
MALAWI Evangelical Lutheran Development Services (ELDS)	Chikwawa and Phalombe Districts	CASH, Nutrition, Early Recovery, Livelihoods, WASH, Protection, Disaster Preparedness	Financial Support	500,000
ZAMBIA Diakonia	Sinazongwe, Gwembe, Choma, Chikankata, Kalomo, Livingstone, Mazabuka, katete	Resilience Building, Climate Change, Community engagement	Financial Support	500,000
World Renew	Mwandi, Chadiza, Lundazi, Chasefu, Lumezi	Food Assistance, Nutrition, Village Savings, Gender	Financial Support	500,000
Norwegian Church Aid/Dan Church Aid	Kalomo, Zimba, Kazungula, Monze Gwembe, Rufunsa, Luangwa, Kafue, Lundazi, Chipata	WASH, Gender Based Violence, CASH, Food assistance, risk Communication and Community engagement	Financial Support	500,000
ZIMBABWE Christian Aid	Insiza, Chiredzi, Mudzi, Mutoko, Gutu, Chimanimani	CASH, Resilience Building and Livelihoods, WASH, Early Recovery, Climate adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction	Finance Support	1,000,000
DCA	Muzarabani, Nyaminyami, Hurungwe, Mbire	Community Based Psychosocial Support, Gender, Safeguarding.	Financial Support	750,000
Methodist Development and Relief Agency (MEDRA)	Buhera, Gokwe,	Food Security and Livelihoods support, livestock protection, WASH, Gender, Safeguarding, Resilience Building,	Financial Support	250,000

		Nutrition, Community Based psychosocial support		
<b>5. Potential responses</b>				
<p>The forum members have all completed their EPRPs (Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan) and working according to their response plans. In addition, the three ACT forums have conducted needs assessments in the affected areas, reporting failed harvests, earlier than normal deterioration of water and pasture conditions and typically low rainfall.</p> <p>The requesting members have a wide range of experience in the sector of response and have present or have had previous programs in the affected areas where they conducted needs assessments. Majority of the requesting members have worked through the ACT appeal process (Appeals and RRFs (Rapid Respond Fund)) and implemented programs outside the appeal.</p> <p>In Malawi, the two national members are requesting financial support of USD 1,000,000 while Zimbabwe requesting members (two international and one national member) with a budget of USD 2,000,000. In Zambia three international members plan to respond with a budget of USD 1,550,000.</p>				