Southern Africa

EL NIÑO DROUGHT RESPONSE

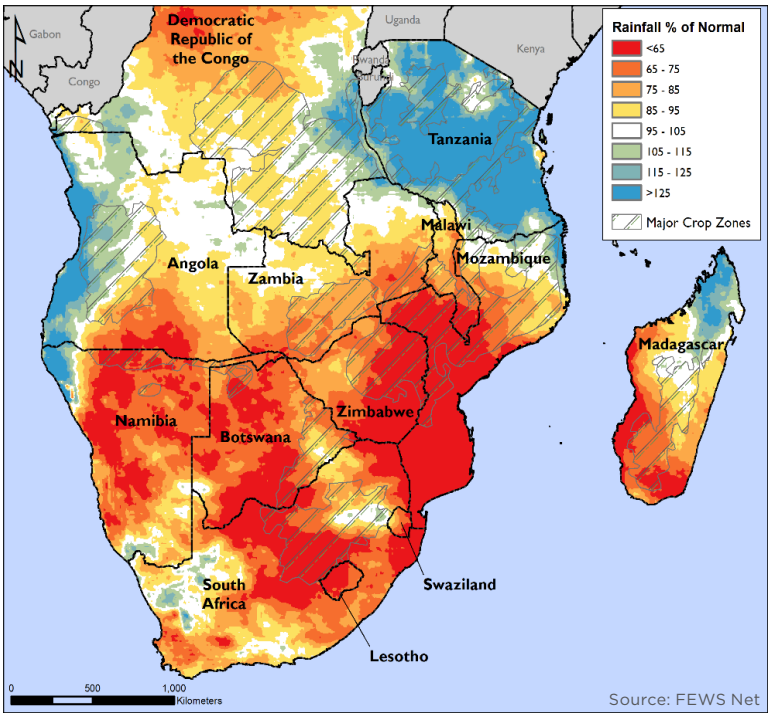
CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES faith. action. results.

The Runde River has had little to no water this year after Zimbabwe was hit with a terrible drought. *Photo by Elie Gardner for CRS*

WHAT IS EL NIÑO?

El Niño is a regular occurring weather pattern characterized by unusually warm ocean temperatures in the equatorial Pacific.The 2015-2016 El Niño has caused severe droughts in East and Southern Africa, Central America, and parts of Southeast Asia. Millions of smallholder farmers in these regions depend on rain fed agriculture for their livelihoods, making them particularly vulnerable to this drought. Over 60 million people have been impacted by El Nino worldwide, and according to the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 80% of emergency needs stemming from El Niño pertain to food security in the agriculture sector.

Oct. 2015–Feb. 2016 Rainfall Anomaly
Percent of the 1981–2014 avg.for Southern Africa



EL NIÑO IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The 2015–16 El Niño has led to irregular and markedly reduced rainfall across most of Southern Africa. By February 2016, extensive areas of the region were experiencing the driest conditions seen in 35 years, leading Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland, and most of South Africa to declare States of Emergency, and Mozambique to issue a "Red Alert." As of June 2016, 31.6 million people in Southern Africa were food insecure, among them 3.8 million acutely malnourished children under five. The excessive dryness will severely cut yields, causing the number of food insecure people to continue to increase through at least the first quarter of 2017. This is the second consecutive year the region has experienced sharp declines in crop production due to drought. Food access for poor households is further reduced due to steep food price increases.

RECOMMENDED INTERVENTIONS THROUGHOUT SOUTHERN AFRICA

SHORT TERM: Given the acute food insecurity challenges, Catholic Relief Services recommends the U.S. take the following actions:

- Provide emergency commodities through Food for Peace (FFP) in impacted areas, with priority for vulnerable groups like the elderly and children in the 1,000 days window. While depleted food stores and increasing prices may limit use, unconditional cash and voucher transfers funded through the Emergency

Food Security Program (EFSP) should also be made available where appropriate.

- Provide funding through the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) for emergency distribution of seeds since many households have resorted to eating their planting seeds to address immediate food needs. In particular, we recommend implementation of Diversification for Nutrition and Enhanced Resilience (DiNER) fairs as a means to distribute seeds. DiNERs is a market-based approach using vouchers to provide seed of a range of crops (cereals, legumes, vegetables) to increase crop diversity for better resilience and for better nutritional outcomes.
- Increase use of food-for-assets through existing FFP Development Food Assistance Programs (DFAPs). Food-for-assets provides food to community members during lean periods, in exchange for their work on community assets, like building irrigation systems. Due to the drought, this year's lean period has begun early and will last longer. More food-for-assets will help vulnerable households through this period while improving their future agricultural prospects.

LONG TERM: In addition to continued and expanded use of multi-sectoral development programming (inclusive of agricultural production, livelihood diversification, sanitation and hygiene, among other things) Catholic Relief Services recommends increasing focus within development programming on natural resource management that improves soil productivity, water availability, and overall small farmer resilience, including:

- Watershed restoration techniques, like check dams and contour trenches, that replenish local aquifers and help collect and manage rainfall, so that water is available year-round.
- Planting green manure/cover crops like lab-lab beans and short-cycle cow peas alongside staple crops. This improves soil health and water retention, benefiting staple crops, and gives farmers a nutritious secondary crop to supplement their diets.
- Use of trees on-farm (i.e., agroforestry), which can reduce field temperatures, provide animal fodder, and improve soil moisture and reduce soil erosion.
- Greater use of irrigation farming systems, supported with inputs where appropriate.
- Homestead gardens, or small elevated vegetable gardens that improve nutrition, require little water and provide plants protection from the elements.
- Broader dissemination of drought and disease resistant crop varieties.

CRS RESPONSE BY COUNTRY

COUNTRY	RESPONSE
Malawi	CRS leads a FFP DFAP serving 248,200 households, that includes food-for-assets, nutrition, and natural resource management and hopes to temporarily increase food-for-assets to an additional 143,000 people.
	Using FAO, FFP, and OFDA resources, CRS is supporting 87,000 households with DiNERs.
	Using private resources, CRS is complementing other programming with cash-for-assets, trainings to reduce post-harvest losses, and small livestock fairs.
Madagascar	CRS leads a FFP DFAP serving 70,000 households, that includes food-for-assets, nutrition, and natural resource management and has used program commodities for emergency distributions outside program areas, to 50,000 additional households.
	Using OFDA resources, CRS is supporting 225,000 households with DiNERs.
	Using private resources, CRS is providing additional emergency food assistance.
Lesotho	Using OFDA resources, CRS is supporting 8,000 households with DiNERs and homestead gardens.
	Using private resources, CRS is providing food vouchers and mobile transfers to 650 households, and helping 2,700 households adopt homestead gardens and access shade nets to protect crops from the heat.
Zimbabwe	Using OFDA resources, CRS is reaching 9,000 households with DiNERs, improved natural resource management techniques, and nutrition support.
	With private resources, CRS is funding natural resource management programming serving 1,000 households and providing direct food distribution to 1200 households.

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