



World Food Programme

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LIVES

Climate Change and WFP Support in Southern Africa Region

CONTEXT

The southern African region is among the most susceptible to the effects of climate change on the African continent. The region continues to experience various climate hazards, such as cyclones, heat waves, strong winds, droughts, and extreme rainfall. The occurrence and severity of droughts are expected to worsen due to rising temperatures and changes in rainfall patterns. In 2021, climate extremes were the leading cause of acute hunger in eight African countries, affecting over 23.5 million people¹.

IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Synthesis Report of the IPCC 6th Assessment Report states that climate change already affects many global weather and climate extremes in every region. The most significant impacts are noticed in Africa, Asia, and Central Asia, particularly among smallholder farmers and low-income households². Between 2010 and 2020, regions that were highly vulnerable, such as Southern Africa, had human mortality rates from floods, droughts, and storms that were 15 times higher than regions with very low vulnerability.

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Climate shocks and stresses destroy crops and livestock, degrade soils, deplete fisheries, damage infrastructure and agricultural assets, and cut off transport links to markets. This reduces food supplies, causes prices to rise, and endangers livelihoods.

Additionally, for the African region, the predicted biodiversity loss under future climate change scenarios will increase with every 0.5 °C above the current 2001–2020 level of global warming. For southern Africa, climate change and land-use change are the main drivers of potential biodiversity loss³. Southern Africa relies mainly on Rain-fed agriculture and climate variability results in low productivity.

For southern Africa, **climate change and land-use change** are the main drivers of potential **biodiversity loss**.

In the Southern African Development Community (SADC) 2022 Synthesis Report on the state of food and nutrition and vulnerability in the region, an estimated 57 million people are food insecure, and child malnutrition continues to be of great concern in the region. Stunting rates remain high, averaging above 25 percent in most countries, with extreme weather events remaining a threat in the region⁴. In 2022, the International Monetary Fund's (IMF)

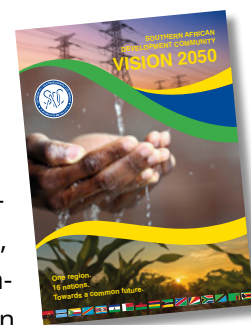
An estimated **57 million people** are food insecure, and **child malnutrition** continues to be of great concern in the region.

Climate Change and Chronic Food Insecurity in Sub-Saharan Africa paper estimated 123 million people (12 percent of Sub-Saharan Africa's population) to be food insecure and suffering high malnutrition, with climate change set to intensify food insecurity further.

Climate change then accentuates existing risks, particularly for vulnerable groups such as the rural and urban poor, small-scale farmers, and internally displaced persons. Women and children are also disproportionately affected due to unequal access to productive assets, such as land and water, and to decision-making processes in the region⁵.

SADC FRAMEWORKS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTER

- **SADC Vision 2050⁶:** The strategy calls for a peaceful, inclusive, competitive, middle- to high-income industrialised region where all citizens enjoy sustainable economic well-being, justice, and freedom, and underlines that SADC Vision 2050 is complementary to the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063⁷.
- **SADC Regional Indicative Sustainable Development Plan 2020–2030:** Food and nutrition security, climate change resilience, and the strengthening of climate adaptation and mitigation measures are emphasised as issues in the SADC Regional Indicative Sustainable Development Plan 2020–2030 (RISDP)⁸.
- **Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2020–2030 (CCSAP)⁹:** It provides a broad outline of coordinated regional actions to address the impacts of climate change and plan for a low-carbon, resilient future. The overarching objective of this strategy is to enhance the adaptive capacities and resilience of SADC Member States (MS) to minimise their vulnerability and pursue a low-carbon growth path dictated by the principles of poverty reduction, sustainable resource use, knowledge systems, and planning.



WFP SUPPORT TO SADC GOVERNMENTS

The WFP Regional Bureau in Johannesburg, South Africa, supports SADC governments to reduce vulnerabilities to climate change. It has established various initiatives, which, among others, include:

- **Climate research:** WFP has partnered with governments and research institutions to undertake climate research and gather data to assess climate vulnerabilities and risks in the region. In Tanzania WFP partnering with Tetratech jointly worked with the government to undertake climate analysis that will inform the development of multi-sectorial climate adaptation programmes.

- **Early warning system and anticipatory actions:** WFP supports the delivery of high-quality forecasts, early warning systems, and climate information services to prepare for climate risks, plan for the management of floods and droughts, and support river basins with climate-informed management plans. Approximately USD 12.8 million has been allocated to alleviate the anticipated impact of the drought caused by El Niño in Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. Most of the funds will be used to implement a range of anticipatory actions to protect the lives of more than half a million people and 550,000 individuals across the four countries.
- **Infrastructure for climate-resilience:** Improving irrigation and water harvesting is critical for food security and smallholder farmer livelihood diversification. In Madagascar, the Rapid Rural Transformation (RRT) intervention has provided running water, electricity, and innovative technologies to four remote villages since January 2023. This initiative combines electricity and water to catalyse grassroots development while addressing pressing needs in rural communities. In Zimbabwe, the WFP supports communities in creating and restoring small dams, irrigation systems, fruit and vegetable gardens, feed lots, and cattle dip tanks. These activities are supplemented with efforts to restore degraded watersheds, focusing on women's participation.
- **Climate adaptation:** WFP is contributing to the fundamental priority of safeguarding food security by designing sustainable and climate-resilient programmes. This includes supporting communities and households to adopt climate smart agriculture techniques, efficient utilisation of natural resources including water, ecosystem rehabilitation and financial inclusion activities. WFP, through its Country Offices, is supporting governments to contribute towards developing, implementing, and financing climate change adaptation.
- **Climate financing:** The Nairobi Declaration, which was adopted during the Africa Summit held in 2023, recognises the significance of climate financing for both adaptation and mitiga-

tion, which includes just energy transition, in addressing the consequences of climate change. To accelerate progress towards this goal, WFP advocate with governments for:

- a. Honouring the commitment to provide \$100 billion in annual climate finance.
- b. Swift operationalise the Loss and Damage Facility agreed at COP27.

The Rapid Rural Initiative
combines electricity and water to
catalyse grassroots development.

WFP in the region has managed to directly mobilise funding for five countries - Lesotho, the Republic of Congo, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe - from the global climate financing mechanism (Adaptation Fund and Green Climate Fund) totalling USD 50 million at the community level and in supporting the government with capacity strengthening. WFP, through the Climate Risk Insurance (CRI) implemented as part of Africa Risk Capacity (ARC) Replica and WFP micro-insurance programming, has taken out insurance policies with a total value of USD6.24 million to protect 2,34 million people against floods, droughts, and cyclones in Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe for the 2023–24 cropping season.


- **National Adaptation Plans (NAPs):** Four countries within SADC—the DRC, Madagascar, Mozambique, and South Africa—have registered their NAPs with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). WFP is working with partners to support governments in developing and operationalising the NAPs in the different countries.
- **Gender-transformative climate actions:** through the design and implementation of programmes that aim to build climate resilience, considering climate change's different impacts on women, men, girls, and boys, WFP promotes resilience building through locally appropriate


adaptation practices around agriculture, water, energy, and biodiversity conservation. Additionally, through integrated programming women and men are supported to access financial services including the formation of Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA).


- **Youth and innovation:** As climate change continues to impact food security and livelihoods in rural areas, it is crucial to engage rural youth in climate action. WFP recognises this and has taken steps to empower young people to tackle climate change through its rural transformation programmes. This includes promoting innovation and providing access to digital education.

Urgent climate action is needed to enable Southern Africa region to conserve its natural resources while sustaining livelihoods.

CRUCIAL FACTS

 Tropical cyclones have caused considerable damage in Madagascar, Mozambique, Malawi, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. Cyclone Freddy impacted an estimated 2.7 million individuals, leading to 876 fatalities, 916,000 displacements, and 1.1 million people needing food aid¹⁰.

 In Madagascar, Freddy brought strong winds and heavy rain to the island, impacting over 299,000 people and flooding, damaging, or destroying more than 41,000 houses in the south-east and south-west.

 El Niño is expected to hit the SADC region, with around 60 million people experiencing food insecurity. The peak climatic impact of El Niño is forecasted to be between November 2023 and January 2024 while the impacts on food and nutrition security will peak during the 2024-25 consumption season.

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Regional Office for Southern Africa

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KEY WFP RBJ MESSAGES TO COP: CONSERVATION AND BIODIVERSITY

1

The Southern Africa region has the largest carbon sink in Africa – Congo Basin. Urgent climate action is needed to enable the region to conserve its natural resources by establishing alternative livelihoods to avoid further deforestation.

2

Climate change and droughts are posing threats to wildlife including the big 5. To avoid loss of biodiversity, urgent action is required to find alternative livelihoods so that ecosystems can accommodate competition between people and wildlife.

3

Rain-fed agriculture productivity is low, leading to increased land usage and deforestation. Improving irrigation and water harvesting is critical to increase productivity.

- 1 Global Report on Food Crises 2022 - <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-report-food-crises-2022>
- 2 Acute food insecurity can occur at any time with a severity that threatens lives, livelihoods or both, regardless of the causes, context or duration, as a result of shocks risking determinants of food security and nutrition, and is used to assess the need for humanitarian action.
- 3 Investing in biodiversity – the case for finance to take action in Southern Africa: WWF South Africa 2022
- 4 <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-backgrounders/2022/climate-related-security-risks-sadc-region>.
- 5 <https://www.sadc.int/document/sadc-rvaa-synthesis-report-2022-eng>
- 6 Southern Africa Development Community vision 2050.
- 7 https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-01_background_note.pdf
- 8 <https://www.sadc.int/pillars/regional-indicative-strategic-development-plan-2020-2030>
- 9 https://www.sadc.int/sites/default/files/2021-11/SADC_Climate_Change_Strategy_and_Action_Plan-English.pdf
- 10 <https://reliefweb.int/report/malawi/southern-africa-snap-shot-tropical-cyclone-freddys-impact-february-march-2023#:~:text=Freddy%20brought%20strong%20winds%20and,-east%20and%20south-west>

Photo page 1: WFP/Gabriela Vivacqua