Poorly distributed rainfall through December limits planting in southern Mozambique

KEY MESSAGES

- In Cabo Delgado, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes persist as most IDPs have lost access to their basic livelihoods due to the conflict. Neighboring areas that were previously classified as Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) now face Crisis (IPC 3) outcomes due to a rapid increase in IDPs. In inaccessible areas affected by conflict, humanitarian food assistance (HFA) has not been delivered. Some of the most affected households that have lost their homes and livelihood assets and face difficulty escaping to safe areas are likely to face greater food consumption deficits.

- In drought-affected areas, households continue to employ coping strategies indicative of Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes, including reducing the quantity and frequency of meals and consuming wild foods due to below-average income and exhausted food stocks. In April 2021, food security is expected to improve to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) or Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes due to the COVID-19 economic shock in urban and peri-urban areas, the poorest households continue to face Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes. However, the recent relaxation of COVID-19 control measures is expected to increase income access.

- In October and much of November, erratic and weak rainfall, interspersed with above-average temperatures, negatively affected planting in the southern region. Through mid-December, rainfall has continued to be erratic, except in northern Gaza, central and northern Inhambane, and the southern tip of Maputo province. However, moderate to heavy rains in late November, and early December encouraged many households to begin planting for the 2020/21 season in the central region. In the north, rainfall and planting started in mid-December.

- Severe tropical storm Chalane made landfall on December 30, 2020 in Sofala province, close to the cities of Dondo and Beira. Winds were over 90 km/hr with over 100 mm of precipitation in 24 hours. Chalane is expected to continue west into Zimbabwe. The cyclone comes less than two years after cyclone Idai. Chalane is expected to be less damaging, but strong winds and heavy rain are expected to drive flooding and damage to homes, crops and infrastructure. Chalane is expected to reduce the pace of recovery of poor households that were affected by 2019’s Cyclone Idai. Analysis of Chalane’s impacts will be included in future reports.

CURRENT SITUATION
In November, WFP provided humanitarian food assistance (HFA) to 632,630 people across Mozambique, approximately 29 percent of FEWS NET’s total estimated needs. Beneficiaries of WFP’s HFA in conflict-affected areas are receiving rations equivalent to 81 percent of their daily kilocalorie (Kcal) requirements, while beneficiaries impacted by the drought and ongoing lean season are receiving rations equivalent to 75 percent of daily Kcal requirements. The ongoing conflict in Cabo Delgado is forcing thousands of people to flee and lose access to typical food and income sources. Despite the presence of HFA at resettlement and accommodation centers, the increasing number of IDPs and volatility of the conflict is continuing to drive area-level Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes despite the presence of HFA. In Cabo Delgado, attacks on villages and public infrastructure continue to result in civilian deaths and people fleeing to safer areas, including Pemba city and surrounding districts, where IDPs either settle or are re-located. According to OCHA and government estimates, at least 355,000 to over 560,000 people have been displaced, but an exact estimate is unavailable due to the situation’s volatility. Anecdotal information indicates that fear of the conflict expanding in surrounding districts has led to banks and other commercial services closing and increases in transport costs. With the start of the seasonal rains in December, poor households in conflict-affected and surrounding districts will likely not take full advantage of the forecast average rainfall due to the lack of security guarantees. Households in conflict-affected areas are expected to focus on traveling to safer areas rather than engaging in agricultural activities. Most IDPs cannot fully engage in agricultural practices in the resettlement or temporary accommodation centers due to a lack of land and inputs. A below-average harvest in April/May 2021 will prolong household reliance on HFA.

There have been growing calls for increased resources for humanitarian assistance needs, particularly in Cabo Delgado. On December 18, the United Nations and partners launched an appeal for 254 million USD to provide assistance and protection to 1.1 million people in Cabo Delgado and neighboring provinces in 2021. As of December, WFP can maintain current rations and assistance levels to IDPs in Cabo Delgado but has warned of a potential "pipeline break" in March 2021 if funding is not secured. In November, WFP provided ration equivalent to 81 percent Kcals to 296,300 people in Cabo Delgado, approximately 56 percent of the planned beneficiaries. Additional concerns facing IDPs are outbreaks of cholera and diarrhea, increased risk of gender-based violence for IDPs living in precarious conditions in refugee centers or family homes, and COVID-19. From December 2020 through March 2021, the rainy season will likely reduce road access to remote areas and hinder the movement of people and goods, particularly people seeking to travel to safer areas. The conflict is also undermining efforts to support the recovery from April 2019’s Cyclone Kenneth.

In the semi-arid zones affected by drought in southern and central Mozambique, households continue to employ coping strategies indicative of Crisis (IPC Phase 3), including reducing the amount and frequency of meals and consuming wild foods more than usual. Most households have exhausted their food stocks and rely on income from self-employment activities for market food purchases. However, increased competition and below-average demand have limited income and reduced household purchasing power. With the rains’ onset, members of the most affected households who had migrated to the main trade corridors searching for better job opportunities have returned to their areas of origin to engage in agricultural activities. Many areas impacted by Cyclone Idai in 2019 face Stressed (IPC Phase 2) acute food insecurity outcomes as households gradually recover from the loss of homes, infrastructure, and livelihood income streams.

Below-average and poorly distributed rainfall, along with above-average land surface temperatures (LSTs), delayed the start of the 2020/21 agricultural season, particularly across much of the southern region. In early November, weak to moderate rainfall in the south and across some southern central areas encouraged many households to engage in widespread planting. However, a dry spell and above 40°C temperatures in mid-November led to widespread crop failure. In late November and early December, moderate to heavy rainfall across much of the central region, northern Gaza, central and northern Inhambane, and the southern tip of Maputo province drove many households to begin planting. However, across much of the southern zone, rainfall has continued to be poorly distributed, resulting in multiple planting attempts. In northern Mozambique, following below-average rainfall in November, effective rains started in mid-December. Households across northern Mozambique have begun planting for the 2020/21 agricultural season. Based on USGS and NOAA forecasts, January to March 2021 rainfall in Mozambique is most likely to be average with above-average rainfall expectations in northern Mozambique. Model forecasts indicate up to a 40 percent probability for below-average rainfall in southern Mozambique. While not FEWS NET’s most likely scenario, this would be an event that would change the scenario and drive a poor harvest for the fourth consecutive year in southern Mozambique.

According to the Watershed Management Department, the main southern dams’ storage levels are well below typical October through December levels. On December 27, 2020, the Pequenos Libombos dam, which supplies water to greater Maputo and its surroundings, was 18.8 percent full, while the Corumana and Massingir dams, which provides water for the main irrigated areas in Maputo and Gaza province, were 25.5 and 40.6 percent full, respectively. This has primarily been
driven by the dry conditions for the past five to six years and gradual increases in water demand in Greater Maputo. Due to the erratic rainfall in October and November, all three dams are not refilling at typical rates. A failure to fill the dams to at least 50 percent will likely drive the adoption of water conservation measures. However, in the central region, heavy rains in early December, combined with strong upstream runoff, along with heavy rains from severe tropical storm Chalane, increased river levels and flows, and exceeded the alert level on the Búzi and Pungoè rivers, temporarily resulting in the impassability of some nearby roads. The heavy rains also resulted in urban flooding in some cities, particularly Beira and Dondo, damaging poorly built houses and roads.

Maize grain prices had a mixed trend from October to November, with prices following seasonal trends and increasing in most markets by 5-15 percent. However, in Chókwe, Xai-Xai, Gorongosa, and Mocuba markets, maize grain prices have either remained stable or have abnormally declined due to end of dry-season products such as sweet potatoes, cassava, and even off-season maize grain from irrigated areas entering markets, particularly in Chókwe market. In November, the price of maize grain was 13-28 percent below 2019 prices and 20-30 percent above the five-year average. Maize grain prices have remained above the five-year average due to successive price increases in recent years driven by multiple shocks that have affected production levels in some areas of the country. However, in the northern zone, maize grain prices in the Pemba market have been rising steadily since June (Figure 1). In November, the Pemba market’s maize price was 57 percent above the five-year average and 12 percent above last year’s prices. Maize grain prices in the Pemba market have been rising abnormally due to increased demand driven by the increase in market-dependent IDPs. Additionally, supply decreased due to reduced production in the districts affected by the conflict. Although following a stable trend, the price of imported maize meal and rice is slightly above the five-year average and last year’s prices.

According to the Ministry of Health, as of December 17, Mozambique has 17,256 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 145 COVID-19 related deaths. The country continues to observe an indefinite State of Public Calamity and a gradual resumption of social and economic activities in coordination with health authorities. On December 19, the government announced new measures including the resumption of tourism visas; coordinating with the South African government to reopen the Ponta de Ouro border; extending market opening hours to 6 pm; and reopening bars, kiosks, and alcohol sales booths from 9 am to 4 pm from Sunday to Thursday, and from 9 am to 7 pm on Fridays and Saturdays. However, the announced measures are subject to change depending on the evolution of the pandemic. These measures are expected to increase income-earning opportunities in petty trade, tourism, and transport. According to estimates made in early December by the World Bank, around 120,000 jobs in Mozambique were lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the hotel and tourism, transport, education, and informal sectors. Since early November, South Africa has been rapid-testing border crossings for COVID-19 on the Limpopo side of the Ressano Garcia border post. This process has accelerated border crossings of people and goods from both sides, though the levels are still below normal levels.

**UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS**

Overall, the assumptions used to develop FEWS NET’s most likely scenario for the Mozambique October 2020 to May 2021 Food Security Outlook remain the same, except for the following updated assumption:

- Based on USGS and NOAA forecasts, January to March 20201 rainfall in Mozambique is most likely to be average with above-average rainfall expectations in northern Mozambique. Model forecasts indicate up to a 40 percent probability for below-average rainfall in southern Mozambique.
MOST LIKELY PROJECTED OUTCOMES THROUGH MAY 2021

In Cabo Delgado, poor households in conflict-affected districts and surrounding areas are expected to be unable to take full advantage of the expected above-average rainfall due to a lack of security guarantees. Due to a lack of land and inputs, households in resettlement or reception areas are expected to be unable to engage in agricultural activities. The conflict is expected to increase the number of IDPs who have lost access to their typical subsistence activities and income-generating opportunities and drive Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes through May 2021 in conflict zones and surrounding areas.

In the southern and central drought-affected areas, from December 2020 to January 2021, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes will persist through the peak of the lean season. However, humanitarian food assistance is expected to mitigate the most severe outcomes, driving Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) outcomes in some areas. During this period, non-beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance will continue to intensify coping strategies indicative of Crisis (IPC Phase 3), such as reducing the quantity and frequency of meals and excessive consumption of wild foods. Agricultural labor opportunities are expected to increase with the seasonal rains, but income is likely to be below average until the harvest in April 2021. The seasonal rains will create favorable conditions for the emergence of various wild and seasonal foods. Poor households are likely to continue to consume wild foods until the start of the green harvest in late February. During February and March, poor households are likely to continue to expand livelihoods and survival strategies to meet food needs, particularly in semi-arid southern and central areas affected by the ongoing three-year drought. The green harvest from February in the southern region and in March in the central region is expected to improve food consumption among poor households gradually. Planned HFA for these areas will continue to drive Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) outcomes, while areas with less HFA will continue to face the Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes. From April, with access to food from the main harvest, most poor households’ food security will gradually improve to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) or Minimal (IPC Phase 1). In urban and peri-urban areas, the poorest households engaged in petty trade are expected to remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) as income-generating opportunities remain below average. However, the recent relaxation of COVID-19 control measures is expected to drive the gradual resumption of some income-generating activities. The rest of the country is expected to face Minimal (IPC Phase 1) or Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes.
MOST LIKELY FOOD SECURITY OUTCOMES AND AREAS RECEIVING SIGNIFICANT LEVELS OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE*

Each of these maps adheres to IPC v3.0 humanitarian assistance mapping protocols and flags where significant levels of humanitarian assistance are being/are expected to be provided. 🌻 indicates that at least 25 percent of households receive on average 25–50 percent of caloric needs from humanitarian food assistance (HFA). 🌻 🌻 indicates that at least 25 percent of households receive on average over 50 percent of caloric needs through HFA. This mapping protocol differs from the (!) protocol used in the maps at the top of the report. The use of (!) indicates areas that would likely be at least one phase worse in the absence of current or programmed humanitarian assistance.

Projected food security outcomes, October 2020 to January 2021

![Map](image1)

Source: FEWS NET

FEWS NET classification is IPC-compatible. IPC-compatible analysis follows key IPC protocols but does not necessarily reflect the consensus of national food security partners.

Projected food security outcomes, February to May 2021

![Map](image2)

Source: FEWS NET

ABOUT THIS UPDATE

This report covers current conditions as well as changes to the projected outlook for food insecurity in this country. It updates the FEWS NET’s Food Security Outlook, which is published three times per year. Learn more about our work [here](#).