Regional Overview

About 45 million people in ten countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region are facing high levels of acute food insecurity. Across the region, the COVID-19 pandemic with related mitigating measures is a predominant driver of high acute food insecurity in both urban and rural areas, along with high prices for food commodities and declining economies characterised by increasing unemployment and low income.

As of March 16, Integrated Food Insecurity Phase Classification (IPC) analyses show that, 45 million people, out of 188 million analysed, are classified in IPC Phase 3 or above, meaning, people are marginally able to meet minimum food needs but only by depleting essential livelihood assets or through crisis or emergency coping strategies. High acute malnutrition is also prevalent. Urgent action is needed to protect livelihoods, reduce food consumption gaps, and save lives and livelihoods. The countries analysed include, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

About 30 million people or 75% of the population in high acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) in the ten countries in the SADC region are in DRC (19.6 million people), where conflict, economic decline and the COVID-19 pandemic continue to drive this high acute food insecurity, and South Africa, hosting 11.8 million people in IPC Phase 3 or above, mainly due to COVID-19 related drivers including increasing unemployment and economic decline. These include 4.9 million people in DRC and 2.2 million people in South Africa that are in Emergency (IPC Phase 4).

While DRC and South Africa host the highest number of people in IPC Phase 3 or above, Lesotho hosts the largest proportion of people in these conditions (40%), followed by Madagascar and Zimbabwe (35%), Eswatini (31%), and DR Congo (29%). The country hosting the highest proportion of people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) is Zimbabwe (8%), followed by DRC, Lesotho and Madagascar (7%) and Zambia (3%), where households face critical levels of acute food insecurity and need urgent action to save lives and livelihoods. Of concern are also the conflict-affected areas of northern Mozambique, where the fragile security situation is driving thousands of households into desperation.

The IPC Acute Food Insecurity analyses, conducted by National Vulnerability Assessment Committees (NVAC) comprised of government, humanitarian and development partners, recommend the provision of immediate humanitarian assistance in areas where people are facing Crisis or Emergency (IPC Phase 3 or 4) to reduce food deficits, ensure better water and sanitation conditions, housing and COVID-19 mitigation measures, to strengthen household livelihoods.

Key Figures

About 45 million people in ten countries of the southern Africa region are facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above). The 45 million people (24% of the analysed population) are classified in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) of are 188 million people in southern Africa.

Common Drivers of Acute Food Insecurity

1. **COVID-19 Pandemic**
   - The COVID-19 pandemic drove the high levels of acute food insecurity of millions of people in the SADC region where households were already suffering from hunger before the virus hit. Restrictions on movements and other measures drove many households into Crisis.

2. **Dry Spells**
   - Persistent drier than normal conditions across parts of northeastern Namibia, Lesotho, southern and eastern Zimbabwe, southern Mozambique, Madagascar and parts of South Africa continue to affect cropping.

3. **Economic Decline**
   - Further economic fallout in the SADC region, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has driven the economic decline, pushing the economies into recession leading to high unemployment, inflation and high food prices.

Map Source: IPC Technical Working Groups and SADC Vulnerability Assessment Committees.

Top Four Countries Hosting 80% of the Population in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above)

- Democratic Republic of Congo (19.6m)
- South Africa (11.8m)
- Mozambique (3.38m)
- Zimbabwe (2.9m)

About 35.6 million (80%) of the people facing high levels of food insecurity in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) are in DR Congo, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique.
**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

Overview

Hosting the highest number of people in high acute food insecurity, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has 19.6 million people in the projected period (January to June 2021) facing IPC Phase 3 or above, out of the 66.6 million people analysed. Of concern is the significant increase of the proportion of people in IPC Phase 3 or above between the “current” periods July to December 2019 and July to December 2020, which is of 7 percentage points (26 to 33%). The persistently and increasingly high acute food insecurity in the DRC is driven by conflict, economic decline and the COVID-19 pandemic, which is disproportionately affecting urban households, as they are dependent on markets for food and their livelihoods have been more impacted by restriction measures.

**ESWATINI: Current (January - March 2021)**

Overview

About 30% of Eswatini’s population is facing high levels of acute food insecurity between January and March 2021, with about 347,000 people classified in Crisis (IPC Phase 3 or above). This shows a 5-percentage point increase in the proportion of people in IPC Phase 3 or above, compared with a projection analysis of almost the same period in the previous year (October 2019 – March 2020), showing a significant deterioration of the country’s food security.

**LESOTHO: Projection (October 2020 - March 2021)**

Overview

Around 40% of Lesotho’s population (582,000 people) are projected to be in high acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) between October 2020 and March 2021. The projected figures represent a 14 percentage point increase compared to the 26% or 374,000 people who faced high acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) from July to September 2020. This deteriorating food insecurity situation is driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the measures put in place to curb it, through impacts such as increases in unemployment, and reductions in income and purchasing power. Even before the pandemic, Lesotho already had serious macroeconomic and social challenges exacerbated by climatic shocks and decelerated economic growth.

See full IPC analysis here
**MADAGASCAR:** Projection (January - April 2021)

**Overview**
In the “current” period (October to December 2020), 1.06 million people (27% of the analysed population) in Madagascar were estimated to be facing high levels of acute food insecurity due to the COVID-19 pandemic and prolonged drought. During the projected period (January to April 2021), the situation was expected to deteriorate, with 1.35 million people (35% of the analysed population) likely facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above). This includes 280,000 people expected to be in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and 1.1 million people in Crisis (IPC Phase 3). The proportion of people in IPC Phase 3 or above reflects a significant increase from 20 to 35%, between the October 2019 and the November 2020 analyses, indicating a medium to high deterioration in food security.

See full IPC analysis here

---

**MALAWI:** Projection (January - March 2021)

**Overview**
Between January and March 2021, around 2.64 million people (15% of the analysed population) are projected to be facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above). This includes poor urban and rural households in the deficit-producing southern region, some parts of the northern and central districts, which experienced floods and erratic rainfall, leading to localized production shortfalls, which exacerbated slow livelihood recovery from previous seasons and impacts of COVID-19 on remittances.

See full IPC analysis here

---

**MOZAMBIQUE:** Projection (January - March 2021)

**Overview**
About 2.7 million people in Mozambique faced high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above), with around 1.9 million people in rural areas and 0.8 million people in urban areas across the country between October and December 2020. The number of people facing high acute food insecurity is estimated to increase to 2.9 million people between January and March 2021, with 2.1 million people in rural areas and 0.8 million people in urban areas. The main factors leading to the increase of people in high acute food insecurity are armed conflict, drought and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on economic activity.

See full IPC analysis here
Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic was a key driver of South Africa’s acute food insecurity, first analysed in 2020. In the “current” period (September to December 2020), around 9.34 million (16%) people faced high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above). This number was projected to increase during the January – March 2021 projection period, with about 20% of the analysed population or 11.8 million people expected to be in IPC Phase 3 or above. Of the nine provinces analysed, seven provinces (Limpopo, North West, Gauteng, Free State, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Eastern Cape, and Western Cape) are classified in Crisis (IPC Phase 3). Whereas a large proportion of the population in IPC Phase 3 or above resides in rural areas (7 million people), a significant proportion lives in urban areas (4.75 million), with provinces such as Western Cape and Gauteng hosting higher populations in IPC Phase 3 or above in urban areas than in rural areas. See full IPC analysis here

Key Drivers

- COVID-19
- High Food Prices
- Economic Decline

ZAMBIA: Projection Update (February - March 2021)

Overview

An updated acute food insecurity analysis in Zambia for the February-March 2021 projection period estimated 1.73 million people (25% of the analysed population) are likely to face high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above). This includes around 1.3 million people in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and around 240,000 people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4), who will require urgent humanitarian action to reduce food gaps, protect and restore livelihoods.

The projection period coincides with the lean season in Zambia when most households rely on the market for food whilst poor households rely on casual labour opportunities for food and income. The impact of COVID-19 as well as dry spells and flooding in selected areas have reduced the capacity of these households to access food. Other factors that have affected these households include above average commodity prices and pests, such as the African Migratory Locusts.

Key Drivers

- COVID-19
- High Food Prices
- Economic Decline

See full IPC analysis here

SADC IPC Acute Food Insecurity Phase Classification by Country | As of 16 March 2021
Zimbabwe: Projection (January - March 2021)

Overview

Between October and December 2020, about 2.61 million people in (27% of the analysed population) in rural Zimbabwe were facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above), while nearly 2.9 million people (29%) were in Stressed (IPC Phase 2). The number of people facing high acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) is estimated to increase to 3.4 million people (35%) between January and March 2021. Food insecurity is primarily due to drought, reduced livelihood opportunities, due to restrictions linked to COVID-19, pests and disease, and high food prices. In the absence of large-scale humanitarian food assistance programmes planned in the country, more households are likely to face higher levels of food insecurity.

For more information, please contact the IPC at ipc@fao.org or the IPC Regional Coordinator for SADC, Kudzayi Kariri at kudzayi.kariri@fao.org