SADC: IPC Acute Food Insecurity Regional Snapshot as of March 31, 2025

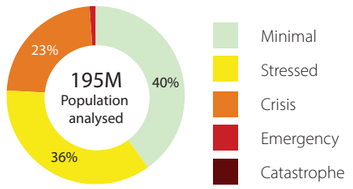
IPC Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
Evidence and Standards for Better Food Security and Nutrition Decisions

Key Figures

48.5M

Over 48 million people in nine countries in the Southern Africa Development Community experienced or are experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) between October 2024 and October 2025.

24 percent of the population analysed in the SADC region are classified in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above).



Regional Overview

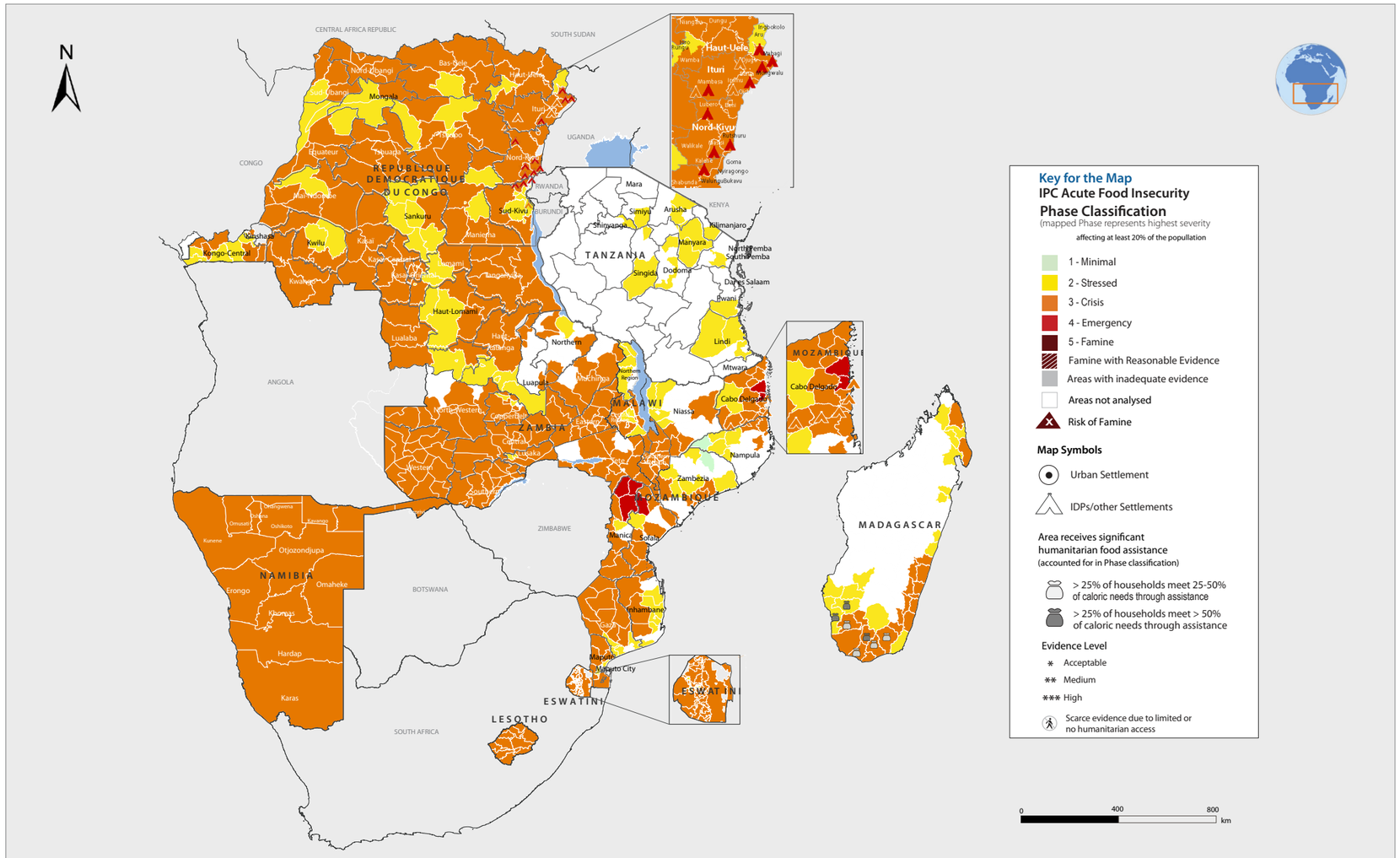
Despite the expectation that the 2024/2025 harvest season will bring reprieve to some countries, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) continues to experience persistent food insecurity. As of March 2025, over 48 million people across nine countries—Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, and Zambia—experienced or were projected to experience high levels of acute food insecurity, classified in IPC Phase 3 or above (Crisis or worse) between October 2024 and October 2025. This includes 4.9 million people classified in Emergency (IPC Phase 4). This is a sharp rise compared to last year when 36 million people were classified in IPC Phase 3 or above from October- March 2024. The deteriorating food crisis is driven by ongoing conflict—particularly in Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mozambique—as well as El Niño-related climatic shocks, and economic shocks.

Persistent high food prices, inflation, and weakened local currencies have strained household purchasing power for all countries in the SADC region, making essential foods such as maize and other staples increasingly unaffordable, particularly for the most vulnerable households. Disruptions in supply chains across key markets have further accelerated food price inflation. Cereal prices remain significantly above average across the region, largely due to reduced agricultural output following the El Niño induced shocks to the 2023–2024 growing season.

The SADC region endured severe El Niño-induced climate shocks. Erratic rainfall and prolonged dry spells affected key cropping and pastoral zones which impacted food availability in the 2024/2025 period. In Mozambique and Zambia, an estimated 10.8 million people were expected to experience Crisis level (IPC Phase 3) food insecurity between October 2024 and March 2025 due to delayed rains and prolonged dry spells. In Mozambique, the impact was exacerbated by a high risk of urban flooding triggered by Tropical Storm Filipo. In Malawi, localised dry spells notably affected maize and other staple crop yields between October and March 2025, where approximately 5.7 million people likely faced high levels of acute food insecurity in IPC Phase 3 or above. In Madagascar, cyclone-related flooding during the lean season in the Grand Sud and Grand Sud-Est compounded the effects of ongoing drought from January to April 2025. Although food insecurity is less severe in Lesotho and Eswatini, with approximately 700,000 people in IPC Phase 3 or above, both countries remain vulnerable to weather shocks and decreasing agricultural productivity.

Ongoing armed conflict remains a major driver of acute food insecurity in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Mozambique. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 27.7 million people—nearly a quarter of the population—are classified in IPC Phase 3 or above, facing hunger and livelihood loss, as conflict, insecurity, and mass displacement continue to disrupt food access, especially in North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, and Tanganyika. In Mozambique, although stability improved in Cabo Delgado, intermittent attacks from armed groups continued to displace communities and restricted access to farmland and markets. Nearly 5 million people were expected to face high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) between October 2024 and March 2025.

SADC Acute Food Insecurity Classification | As of March 31, 2025



Publication date: May 2, 2025 | *IPC population data is based on population estimates the statistics agencies of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania and Zambia. | Feedback: IPC@FAO.org
Disclaimer: The information shown on this map does not imply official recognition or endorsement of any physical and political boundaries.

Common Drivers of Acute Food Insecurity

Conflict and Insecurity

Escalating conflict remains a major driver of food insecurity especially in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as northern Mozambique. Displacement and insecurity continue to further restrict household access to food.

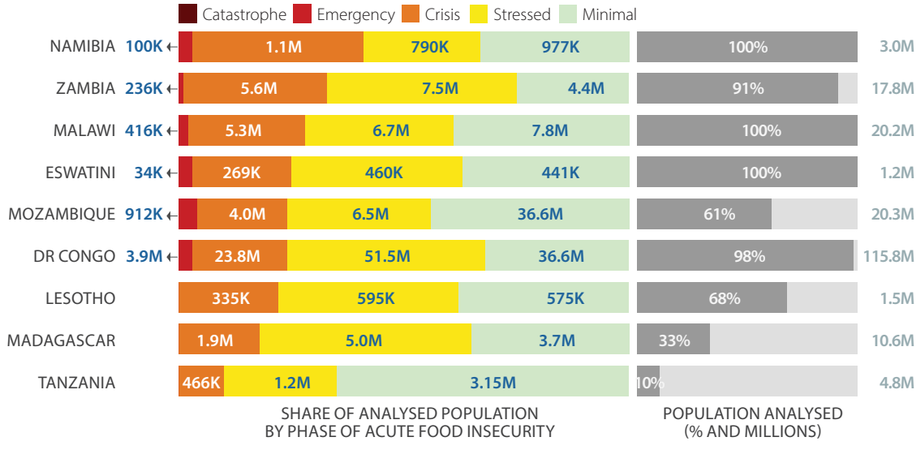
Climatic Shocks

El Niño-induced dry and unpredictable weather patterns have severely impacted food production. These conditions have disrupted livelihoods and left millions of households with limited food stocks and reduced access to income.

Economic Shocks

High food prices and reduced incomes are weakening purchasing power. Inflation, currency depreciation, and job scarcity are forcing families to adopt negative coping strategies to afford basic food and essentials.

IPC Classifications by Population Analysed, 2024



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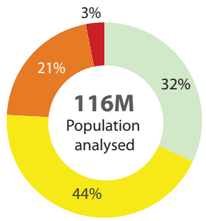
Evidence and Standards for Better Food Security and Nutrition Decisions

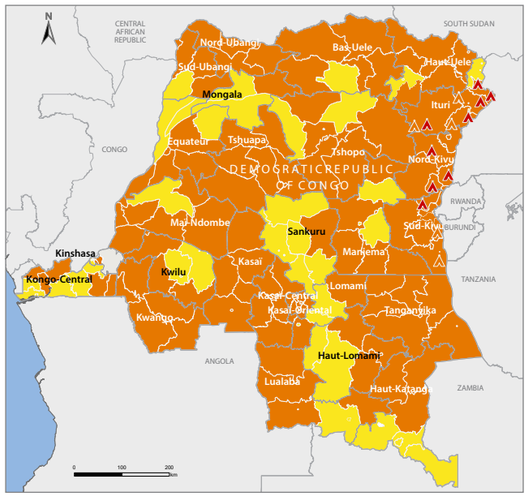
DR CONGO: Acute Food Insecurity Projection | January – June 2025

27.7M

People projected to be in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) between January and June 2025.



1 - Minimal
2 - Stressed
3 - Crisis
4 - Emergency
5 - Catastrophe



Key Legend

IPC Acute Food Insecurity Phase Classification

(mapped Phase represents highest severity affecting at least 20% of the population)

1 - Minimal
2 - Stressed
3 - Crisis
4 - Emergency
5 - Catastrophe
Area not analysed

Map Symbols

IDPs/other settlements classification
Urban settlement classification

Evidence Level

** Medium

Key Drivers

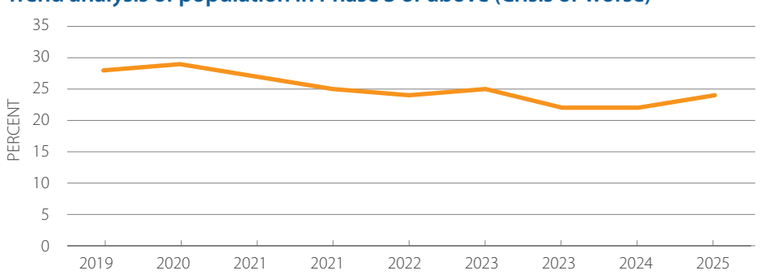
Conflict | High Food Prices | Macro-economic Shocks

Overview

Escalating conflict, climatic shocks and elevated food prices in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo have intensified the food crisis, with 27.7 million people (24 percent of the analysed population) facing IPC Phase 3 or above (Crisis or worse) between January and June 2025. This includes over 23.8 million in Crisis and around 3.9 million in Emergency (IPC Phase 4). The provinces most affected are North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, and Tanganyika, where over 10.3 million people are in IPC Phase 3 or above. Acute malnutrition is expected to worsen through June 2025, with approximately 4.45 million children under the age of 5 and over 3.71 million pregnant and breastfeeding women are currently facing or projected to face elevated levels of acute malnutrition.

See full IPC analysis here

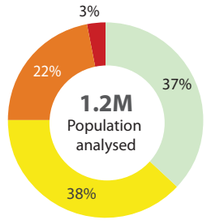
Trend analysis of population in Phase 3 or above (Crisis or worse)



ESWATINI: Acute Food Insecurity Projection | October 2024 – March 2025

304,000

People projected to be in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) between October 2024 and March 2025.



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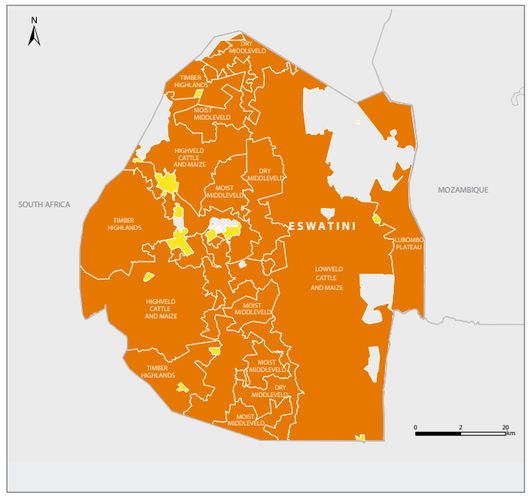

Key Legend

IPC Acute Food Insecurity Phase Classification

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1 - Minimal
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4 - Emergency
5 - Catastrophe
Area not analysed

Map Symbols

IDPs/other settlements classification
Urban settlement classification

Evidence Level

** Medium

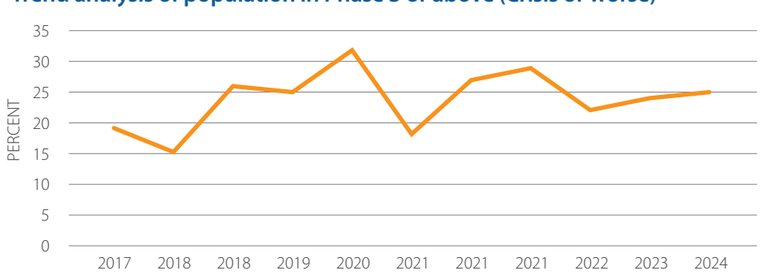
Key Drivers

High Food Prices | Prolonged Dry Spells | Reduced Income

Overview

An estimated 304,000 people likely faced high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) between October 2024 and March 2025. The most affected areas were the Dry Middleveld (DMV) and Lowveld Cattle and Maize (LCM) zones, which were expected to see a 5 percent increase in people facing Phase 3 or above. LCM zones had the highest number of people in IPC Phase 3 or above in both the current and projected periods. Rising food and non-food prices, prolonged dry spells, and reduced income and employment opportunities were key drivers of this crisis. Compared to the same period in 2023, the current food security situation is likely to have worsened, particularly for resource-poor households already facing chronic food insecurity. Inflation and international supply chain disruptions continue to exacerbate the challenges. See full IPC analysis here

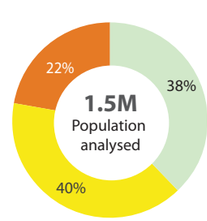
Trend analysis of population in Phase 3 or above (Crisis or worse)



LESOTHO: Acute Food Insecurity Projection | January – March 2025

335,000

People projected to be in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) between January and March 2025.



1 - Minimal
2 - Stressed
3 - Crisis
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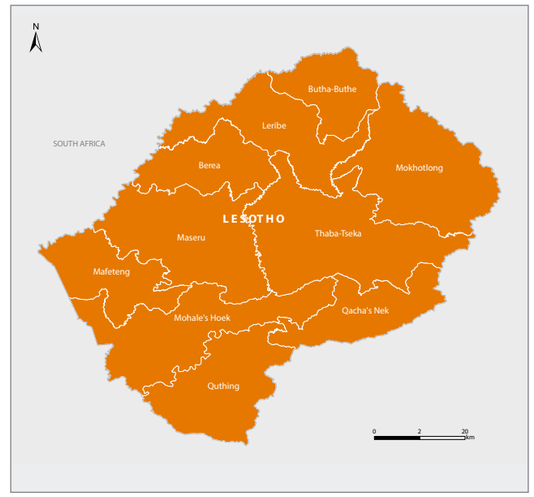

Key Legend

IPC Acute Food Insecurity Phase Classification

(mapped Phase represents highest severity affecting at least 20% of the population)

1 - Minimal
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4 - Emergency
5 - Catastrophe
Area not analysed

Map Symbols

IDPs/other settlements classification
Urban settlement classification

Evidence Level

*** High

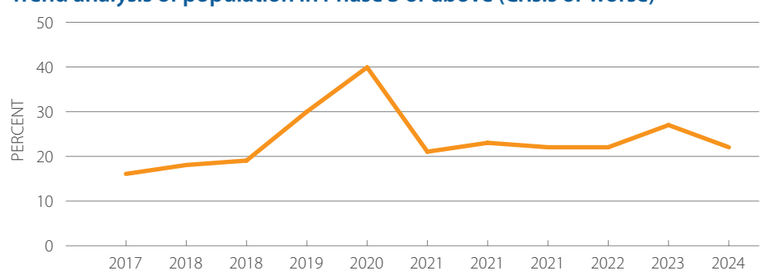
Key Drivers

High Food Prices | High Temperatures | Reduced Income

Overview

Based on the November 2024 assessment, food security conditions may have improved compared to May 2024, largely due to humanitarian assistance—particularly cash and food transfers—from the government, UN agencies, and partners. As a result, approximately 335,000 people (22 percent of the rural population) likely faced IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) conditions between January and March 2025, down from the 403,000 estimated earlier. However, all ten districts were still likely classified in IPC Phase 3. Hazards such as heavy rainfall, high temperatures, reduced income from livestock sales due to cross-border restrictions, and high food prices likely continued to erode household purchasing power. See full IPC analysis here

Trend analysis of population in Phase 3 or above (Crisis or worse)



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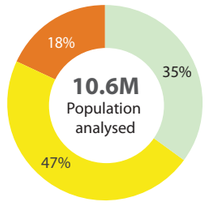
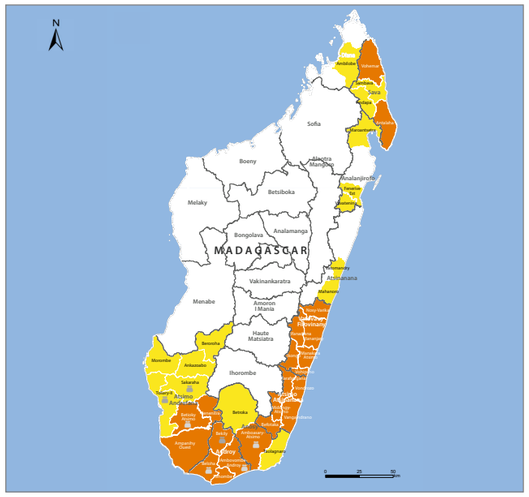
MADAGASCAR: Acute Food Insecurity Projection | January – April 2025

1.94M

People projected to be in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) between January and April 2025.





Key Legend

IPC Acute Food Insecurity Phase Classification

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- 1 - Minimal
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- 4 - Emergency
- 5 - Catastrophe
- Area not analysed

Map Symbols

- IDPs/other settlements classification
- Urban settlement classification

Evidence Level

** Medium

Key Drivers

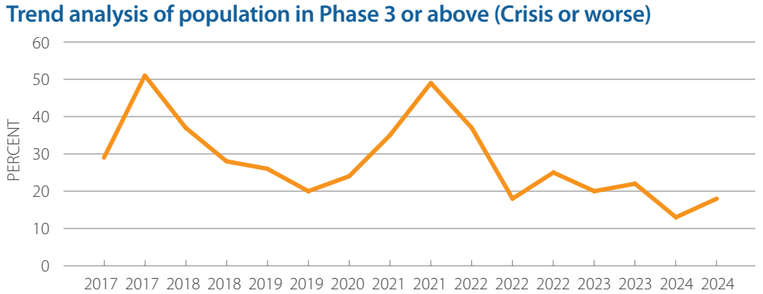
High Food Prices | Climatic Shocks | Reduced Income

Overview

Between January and April 2025, 1.94 million people (18 percent of the analysed population) experienced high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above). Despite anticipated humanitarian aid, the lean season, compounded by low rainfall and cyclone-related flooding, likely increased household vulnerability. This is an increase from the previous period (September to December 2024) where around 1.63 million people (15 percent of the analysed population) faced high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above), with 1.58 million in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and 48,000 in Emergency (IPC Phase 4). The hardest-hit areas included Androy and Atsimo Andrefana in the Grand Sud, and Befotaka and Farafangana in the Grand Sud-Est. See full IPC analysis here

Note: The trend does not necessarily reflect the change in FiS population but also includes the changes in the number of analysed areas

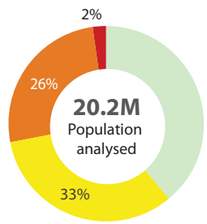
Trend analysis of population in Phase 3 or above (Crisis or worse)

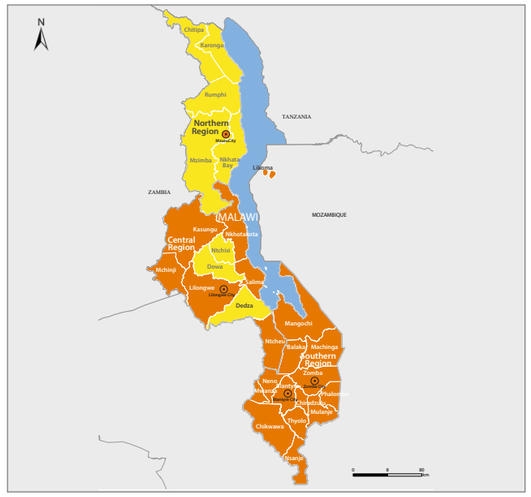


MALAWI: Acute Food Insecurity Projection | October 2024 – March 2025

5.7M

People projected to be in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) between October 2024 and March 2025.





Key Legend

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- Area not analysed

Map Symbols

- IDPs/other settlements classification
- Urban settlement classification

Evidence Level

*** High

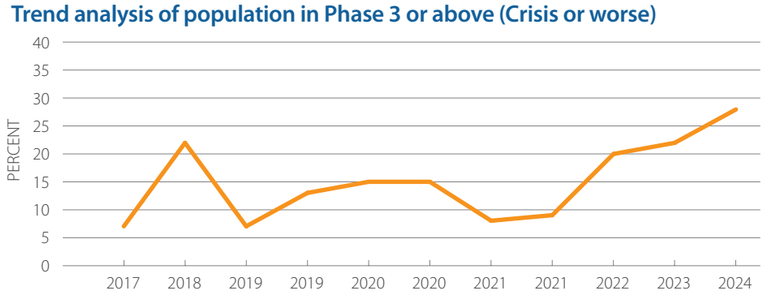
Key Drivers

Geo-Political Factors | Climatic Shocks | Economic Decline

Overview

Approximately 5.7 million people likely faced high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) in Malawi between October 2024 and March 2025. The highest concentrations were in Chikhwawa, Mangochi, and Zomba districts. This marked an increase of roughly 1.3 million people in Crisis or worse compared to the same period last year. The deterioration was driven by prolonged dry spells and below-average harvests during the 2023/2024 season. Additional contributing factors included high food prices, an ongoing economic downturn, and political instability in neighbouring Mozambique, which disrupted cross-border trade and labour migration. Border districts that traditionally relied on these activities for income experienced reduced economic opportunities, further compounding the crisis. See full IPC analysis here

Trend analysis of population in Phase 3 or above (Crisis or worse)

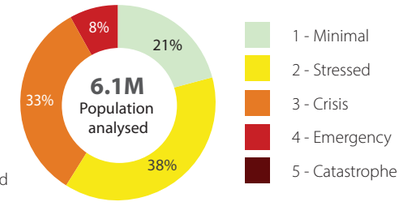


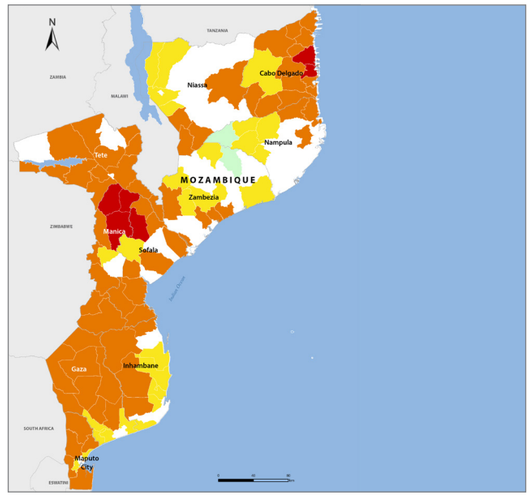
MOZAMBIQUE: Acute Food Insecurity Projection | October 2024 – March 2025

4.9M

People projected to be in IPC Phase 3 or above between October 2024 and March 2025.

NOTE: The figures for Mozambique represent the combined results of two valid reports covering the same period Oct – Mar 2025 (Post-Harvest and Post-Shock analyses)





Key Legend

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- Area not analysed

Map Symbols

- IDPs/other settlements classification
- Urban settlement classification

Evidence Level

** Medium

Key Drivers

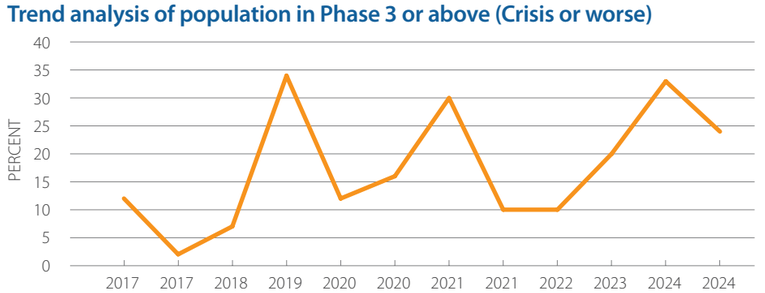
Conflict | Climatic Shocks | High Food Prices

Overview

Mozambique likely entered the lean season with nearly 5 million people projected to face high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) between October 2024 and March 2025. Climatic shocks—such as El Niño-driven drought, cyclones, and Tropical Storm Filipo—likely devastated crops and livelihoods in over 100 districts, particularly in central and southern regions. Ongoing insecurity in Cabo Delgado and nearby provinces also likely continued to displace people and disrupt food systems, with about 580,000 internally displaced people and 610,000 returnees facing difficult conditions. In stable areas, high food prices and low incomes likely weakened household purchasing power. See full IPC analysis here

Note: The trend does not necessarily reflect the change in FiS population but also includes the changes in the number of analysed areas.

Trend analysis of population in Phase 3 or above (Crisis or worse)



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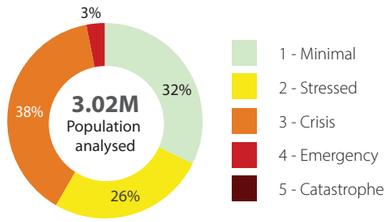
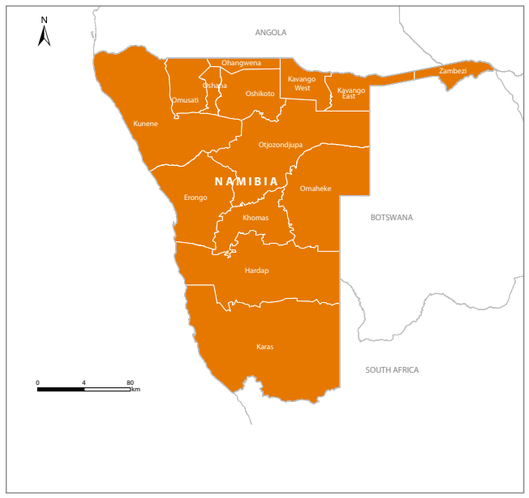
NAMIBIA: Acute Food Insecurity Projection | October – March 2025

1.26M

People projected to be in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) between October 2024 and March 2025.





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- Area not analysed

Map Symbols

- IDPs/other settlements classification
- Urban settlement classification

Evidence Level

*** High

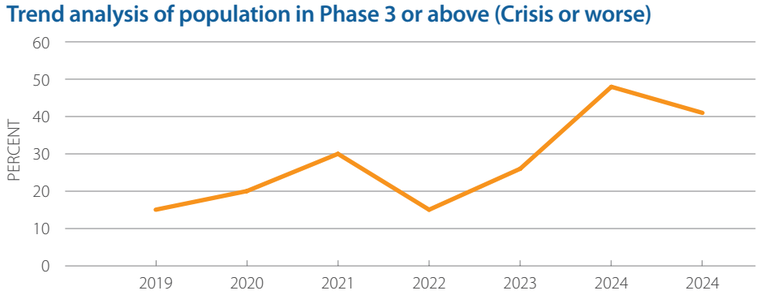
Key Drivers

High Food Prices | Climatic Shocks | Unemployment

Overview

In Namibia, the food security situation remained worrying, where 1.26 million people likely faced Crisis or worse food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) between October 2024 and March 2025. Prolonged dry spells linked to El Niño, poor rainfall, and declining water availability have negatively impacted both crop and livestock production. Families already struggling with high unemployment and inflation are now facing soaring food prices that further erode their purchasing power and access to food. Conditions were expected to improve through April 2025, as La Niña-driven rainfall supports agricultural recovery. As a result, the number of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity is projected to decline to 776,000 by June 2025. See full IPC analysis here

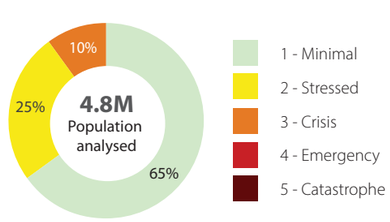
Trend analysis of population in Phase 3 or above (Crisis or worse)

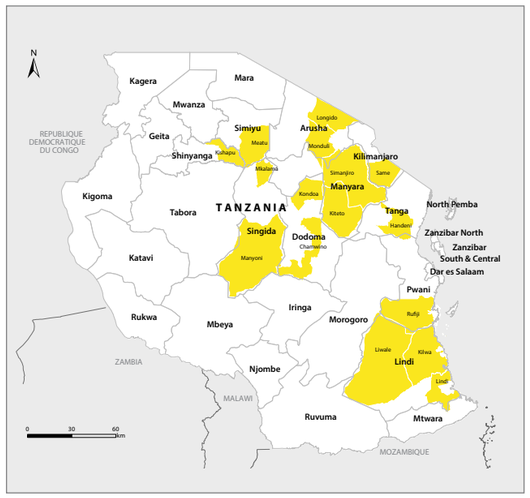


TANZANIA: Acute Food Insecurity Current | February – May 2025

466,000

People experiencing Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) between February and May 2025.





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Map Symbols

- IDPs/other settlements classification
- Urban settlement classification

Evidence Level

** Medium

Key Drivers

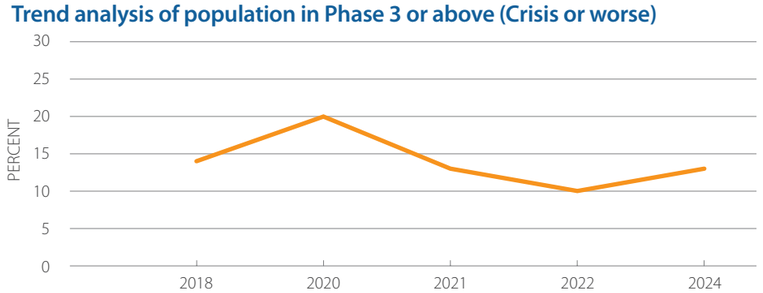
High Food Prices | Climatic Shocks | Pests and Diseases

Overview

Despite its vast agricultural potential, factors such as climate change, limited access to resources, and inadequate infrastructure have worsened food insecurity and malnutrition. Prolonged dry spells, floods, high food prices and low income continue to affect food security in Tanzania. Latest IPC results revealed that during the current period (February – May 2025), approximately 466,000 people (10 percent of the analysed population) in 16 districts experienced Crisis levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3). See full IPC analysis here

Note: The trend does not necessarily reflect the change in FiS population but also includes the changes in the number of analysed areas.

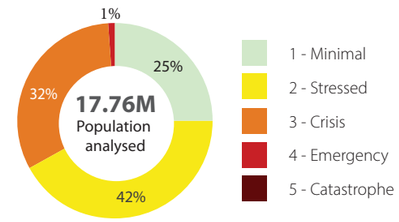
Trend analysis of population in Phase 3 or above (Crisis or worse)

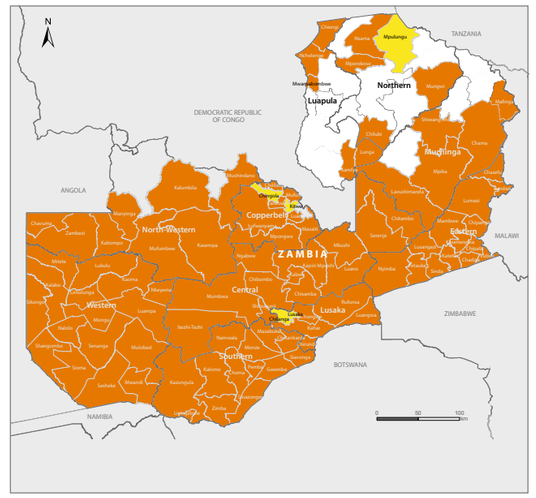


ZAMBIA: Acute Food Insecurity Projection | October 2024 – March 2025

5.83M

People projected to be in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) between October 2024 and March 2025.





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Map Symbols

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- Urban settlement classification

Evidence Level

** Medium

Key Drivers

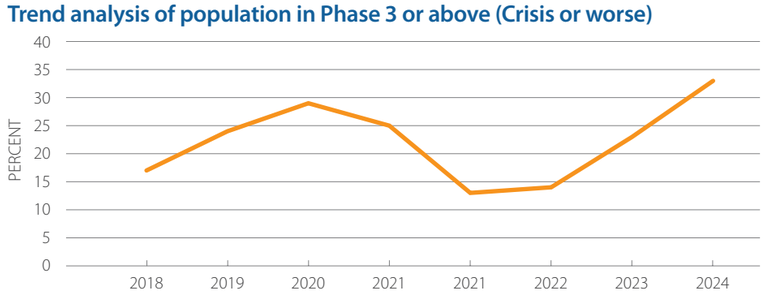
Human-Wildlife Conflict | Climatic Shocks | Pests and Diseases

Overview

Zambia likely faced a worsening food crisis between April and September 2024, with around 5 million people (29 percent of the analysed population) experiencing acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above). Households were likely affected by multiple shocks, including pest outbreaks, crop disease, and rising human and wild animal interactions due to prolonged drought. The situation was compounded by high food and input prices, economic instability, and global supply chain disruptions. Conditions were expected to worsen during the October 2024 to March 2025 lean season, with 5.83 million people (33 percent of the analysed population) expected to face acute food insecurity. The number of people classified in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) was expected to nearly triple to 236,000. See full IPC analysis here

Note: The trend does not necessarily reflect the change in FiS population but also includes the changes in the number of analysed areas.

Trend analysis of population in Phase 3 or above (Crisis or worse)



SADC: IPC Acute Food Insecurity Regional Snapshot as of March 31, 2025

IPC Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
Evidence and Standards for Better Food Security and Nutrition Decisions

Recommended Actions

Provide Immediate Humanitarian Assistance

Immediate humanitarian assistance is required to address the needs of the most vulnerable populations in affected areas. Humanitarian food assistance should be prioritised in areas classified in IPC Phase 3 or above (Crisis or worse), especially in conflict-affected areas, notably in the Democratic Republic of Congo and northern Mozambique. This may include mobilising additional resources to enhance emergency aid delivery and support the reopening of essential infrastructure such as airports, as well as the revival of financial and banking services.

Livelihood Support

Supporting smallholder farmers is critical to reducing future vulnerabilities and dependency on Humanitarian Food Assistance (HFA). Key interventions including providing drought-resistant seeds, expanding access to irrigation systems, and training farmers in climate-smart agriculture. Strengthening early warning systems and disaster preparedness will also improve community resilience to climate shocks. Prioritising the recovery of rural livelihoods—through income diversification, strengthened household economies, and the development of productive community assets—is essential.

Market-Based Interventions

Addressing food price inflation and gaps should be a priority by implementing appropriate mitigative actions to guarantee community access to food and agricultural inputs. Governments and partners should explore market-based interventions, such as supporting local food production and distribution systems.

The IPC in the SADC Region

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) was introduced in Southern Africa in February 2008, during an awareness-raising workshop held in Gaborone. The event was hosted by the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) multi-agency Regional Vulnerability Assessment Committee (RVAC), which leads critical improvements in food security and vulnerability analyses at the regional and country level.

In 2009, a Technical Working Group (TWG) was established within the RVAC of the SADC, taking on the coordination role of IPC activities in the region. Awareness was raised among all the VACs in the region, and four countries requested support to introduce the IPC: South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Mozambique.

The 2015/16 El Niño occurrence in the Southern Africa region led to an increase in calls for IPC adoption to classify the severity of food insecurity. To date, 11 countries have taken up the IPC Acute Food Insecurity Classification (Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zambia) and have integrated it as part of their annual Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (VAA). Besides, Mozambique and Madagascar undertake the IPC Acute Malnutrition (AMN) analysis once a year, after completion of the nutrition surveys. IPC AMN analyses have also taken place in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The main objectives of the Southern Africa IPC TWG are to: ensure a demand-driven and regionally owned process; implement the regional IPC strategy; develop technical capacity at the country and regional levels; coordinate and facilitate country and regional level events; provide technical and institutional support; and consolidate, disseminate and internalise lessons learned.

The IPC TWG in this region is permanently chaired by SADC (FANR Division) and a cooperating partner, with a two-year co-chairing term. Currently, FAO is the co-chair of SADC. Other members include FEWSNET, Oxfam, Save the Children, UNICEF, WFP and World Vision. Members of the regional IPC TWG provide a range of support to SADC member states implementing any of the three IPC scales, including the reviewing of survey tools, indicators, and data analysis. The IPC Global Support Unit (GSU) provides funding and technical support for countries that want to undertake any of the IPC classifications. A Southern Africa regional team in the IPC has been established to coordinate the implementation of IPC in the countries and works in close collaboration with all IPC partners and countries.

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

Acute Food Insecurity Phase Names and Descriptions

IPC Phase 1 (None/Minimal): Households are able to meet essential food and non-food needs without engaging in atypical and unsustainable strategies to access food and income.

IPC Phase 2 (Stressed): Households have minimally adequate food consumption but are unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures without engaging in stress-coping strategies.

IPC Phase 3 (Crisis): Households either have food consumption gaps that are reflected by high or above-usual acute malnutrition; or are marginally able to meet minimum food needs but only by depleting essential livelihood assets or through crisis-coping strategies.

IPC Phase 4 (Emergency): Households either have large food consumption gaps that are reflected in very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality; or are able to mitigate large food consumption gaps but only by employing emergency livelihood strategies and asset liquidation.

IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe/ Famine): Households have an extreme lack of food and/or cannot meet other basic needs even after full employment of coping strategies. Starvation, death, destitution and extremely critical acute malnutrition levels are evident. For famine classification, area needs to have extreme critical levels of acute malnutrition and mortality.

What is the IPC Acute Food Insecurity Scale?

The IPC is a set of tools and procedures to classify the severity and characteristics of acute food and nutrition crises as well as chronic food insecurity based on international standards. The IPC consists of four mutually reinforcing functions, each with a set of specific protocols (tools and procedures). The core IPC parameters include consensus building, convergence of evidence, accountability, transparency and comparability. The IPC analysis aims at informing emergency response as well as medium and long-term food security policy and programming.

For the IPC, Acute Food Insecurity is defined as any manifestation of food insecurity found in a specified area at a specific point in time of a severity that threatens lives or livelihoods, or both, regardless of the causes, context or duration. It is highly susceptible to change and can occur and manifest in a population within a short amount of time, as a result of sudden changes or shocks that negatively impact on the determinants of food insecurity.

Publication date: May 2, 2025 | *IPC population data is based on population estimates the statistics agencies of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania and Zambia. | Feedback: IPC@FAO.org | Disclaimer: The information shown on this map does not imply official recognition or endorsement of any physical and political boundaries.

The IPC TWG Chairs

The IPC Analysis Partners in SADC

The IPC Global Partners

IPC Funding Partners