

ZAMBIA

DROUGHT EMERGENCY UPDATE No. 01

GENERAL OVERVIEW:

On February 29, 2024, President Hakainde Hichilema of Zambia officially declared the ongoing drought a national disaster and emergency. This declaration highlights the critical severity of the situation, which has wreaked havoc on essential sectors such as agriculture, water supply, energy access, and food security.

Triggered by the El Niño weather phenomenon, the drought has had a profound impact nationwide, affecting 84 districts and impacting approximately nine million people. Among them, over 6.5 million are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, underscoring the scale of the crisis.

The Integrated Food Security Classification (IPC) is rapidly escalating from Phase 3 (Crisis) to Phase 4 (Emergency) in two of Zambia's refugee-hosting districts: Kalumbila in North-Western Province and Kaoma in Western Province.



Ms. Jacqueline Makiko of Block G, Meheba Settlement, Kalumbila District, a former refugee from Angola, lost her harvest due to the severe drought in Zambia (©Shindo-Braaten/UNHCR, July 2024).

COORDINATION CLUSTER:

In response to the government's declaration of a national disaster and emergency, the United Nations (UN) has collaborated with national and sub-national authorities and partners to develop a comprehensive drought response plan. This plan aims to provide aid and support to affected households across 84 districts in seven provinces, involving multi-sectoral interventions designed to address the wide-ranging impacts of the drought and ensure that essential resources reach those in need.

To enhance the effectiveness of the response, UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have implemented a streamlined Cluster system under the Zambia Humanitarian Country Team. This system is intended to strengthen the government's efforts by partnering with governmental bodies to co-lead the clusters. The primary objective is to improve coordination and cooperation among all stakeholders, thereby addressing critical gaps and preventing duplication of efforts.

The Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS) and UNHCR are co-leading the Protection Cluster, which also includes the Child Protection in Emergencies (CPiE) and Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies (GBViE) sub-clusters. Over 20 partners are now actively involved in the Protection Cluster.

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION:

In May 2024, the UN Country Team launched the "Zambia Drought Flash Appeal," seeking \$228.3 million to address the life-saving needs of approximately 6.6 million people affected by the drought, with a target to assist 4.6 million individuals. This appeal involved 47 organizations. Among the requests, the Protection Cluster, in collaboration with seven partners, sought US \$3 million to support 3.7 million people in need.

UNHCR Zambia received a United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund – Rapid Response (CERF-RR) allocation of \$445,000 for protection efforts in the severely affected North-Western and Western provinces. This funding is being used to bolster the national toll-free helpline run by Lifeline/Childline, which helps identify protection issues and is available in several Zambian and refugee languages. Additionally, community-based protection networks are being strengthened and established as needed to identify individuals requiring assistance. This includes providing cash aid to the most vulnerable refugee households, who are not eligible for the social protection cash response available to vulnerable Zambians. As forcibly displaced communities are not included in the drought response, UNHCR Zambia is advocating strongly for the inclusion of refugees and former refugees from the start in an emergency response.

To support the Government's drought response and address the inclusion gap for forcibly displaced persons most affected by the drought under the L1 Emergency Fund for Operations comprising multi-donor core contributions, UNHCR Zambia received a US \$1,000,000 increase to support its drought response efforts in Zambia. This funding will mainly go towards increasing the coverage of cash-based intervention to help refugees and host communities cope with the effects of the drought.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE EMERGENCY:

- **Coordination of the Protection Cluster:** UNHCR regularized coordination of the Protection Cluster through bi-weekly meetings, the endorsement of terms of reference and membership, and consistent reporting. Ongoing joint activities focus on Protection Risk Analysis and Protection Mainstreaming.
- **Protection Mainstreaming Presentation:** On July 25, the Protection Cluster delivered its first presentation on Protection Mainstreaming during the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) meeting. In August, the Protection Cluster plans to conduct information sessions for each cluster to further integrate protection considerations.
- **Protection Risk Analysis Report:** The Protection Cluster is on track to publish the Protection Risk Analysis Report by the end of August 2024.

- **CORE Product Publications:** The first CORE product was published at the end of June, with the second publication scheduled for the end of July, pending release of integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) data by government.
- **Upcoming Meeting on Inclusion:** A meeting on “Inclusion from the Start” is planned for October/November, following the High-Level Dialogue (21 June), Learning Exchange to Uganda (15-19 July), and Berlin Roundtable (23 July). It aims to bring together all stakeholders to develop a joint roadmap for inclusive practices involving UN and government officials. Support from the Regional Bureau for Southern Africa and Headquarters will be essential. A concept note for the workshop will be developed after the arrival of UNHCR’s new Senior Development Officer.
- **Protection Risk Assessment in Refugee Settlements:** The ongoing Protection Risk Assessment aims to verify approximately 20% of persons with specific needs by the end of July, with the assessment expected to conclude by mid-August.
- **Refugee Inclusion in Government Cash Assistance:** UNHCR plans to transition cash-based interventions for refugees and their host communities from direct implementation to the MCDSS government social protection system. Finalization of discussions between MCDSS and UNHCR are ongoing. The drought emergency response has highlighted the critical importance of an opportunity for an in-depth review of this option to further meaningful inclusion using sustainable programming methods.

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