

RIASCO

Regional Inter-Agency Standing Committee
Southern Africa

MILLIONS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA AT RISK UNLESS FUNDING IS FORTHCOMING, SAY HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa, 28 July 2016 - Humanitarian agencies in southern Africa have called on donors to release urgently needed funds to save the lives and sustain the livelihoods of millions of people affected by a severe El Niño-induced drought in the region. Today the agencies, as part of the Regional Inter-Agency Standing Committee (RIASCO), have launched an [Action Plan](#) requesting \$1.2 billion to provide critical aid to 12.3 million people in the 7 most affected countries between now and April 2017. Around a quarter of the required funds have been received or pledged.

The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) declared a regional drought emergency on 26 July, signaling the dire situation in the region, and launched a \$2.4 billion appeal to the international community. The drought has contributed to a 9.3-million-ton regional shortfall in cereal production and hundreds of thousands of livestock deaths. An estimated 579,000 children will need treatment for severe acute malnutrition this year. The RIASCO Action Plan seeks to support the recently launched [SADC Appeal](#).

“Droughts, like the one caused this year by El Niño, are becoming more frequent and more severe, and the trend can be expected to continue if necessary action isn’t taken swiftly”, said Mr. Timo Pakkala, El Niño Coordinator for the Southern Africa Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). “The time to act is now. The international community should support the RIASCO action plan and allocate more resources, not only to save lives now, but to also prevent crises of this scale happening again.”

Families in many parts of the region are exhausting any remaining food stocks earlier than usual due to poor or failed harvests. The decline in access to safe drinking water also has widespread consequences, including on health and education. With at least 70 per cent of Southern Africans relying on agriculture-based livelihoods, it is essential provide seeds and fertilizers for the next planting season, which starts in October 2016.

“We are at a critical point. People are being pushed to the brink, and despite efforts by national governments, more should be done for those who need help the most. Unless donors provide more funding, millions of people will suffer and hard-won development gains will be reversed,” says Emma Naylor-Nguji, CARE’s Regional Director. “We have the expertise to help people survive, build their climate resilience and capacity to respond to future shocks, and with more funding, donors can help humanitarian organizations do their work more effectively.”

The humanitarian response has been ongoing since 2015, with communities, national governments, donors, UN, and NGO partners responding to needs in agriculture, food security, nutrition, access to safe drinking water, and health, helping reverse negative coping strategies. However, there is now an urgent need to scale up assistance to the most vulnerable people in the region, requiring additional funds.

###

For communications materials go here:

https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B3Y0KQMSH4DDZGpZN1E3aEVydnM&usp=drive_web

For more information, or for interviews contact: Hein Zeelie, OCHA Regional Office for Southern and Eastern Africa, zeelie@un.org, + 27 82 908 1441.