European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Southern Africa and Indian Ocean

Introduction

Climatic shocks, on top of economic and political challenges, crop pests and diseases, and conflict, continue to affect millions of people in the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region. Because of poor rainfall and failed harvests, extensive areas are currently suffering from a severe and prolonged drought that is straining food availability. In addition to providing life-saving assistance, the EU is supporting efforts to strengthen the capacity of communities and disaster management authorities to deal with recurrent natural hazards.

What are the needs?

Extreme weather events are a regular occurrence in the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region. They are becoming more frequent and severe as a result of climate change. The region is warming at about twice the global rate and has been buffeted by multiple and compounding shocks, such as the 2 powerful cyclones in 2019 (Idai and Kenneth), the current drought and erratic rains.

A persistent drought in large parts of southeast Africa has undermined food security and livelihoods for almost 15 million people. With the current drought having been preceded by floods, families are left grappling to find food, giving them little time to recover. The effects of the drought are being felt in Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In 2019, the region received its lowest seasonal rainfall on record since 1981, when measurements first started to be kept.

The coronavirus pandemic is increasing hardship amongst the people in need in southern Africa. While different countries have different capacities to respond to the virus, the situation is evolving rapidly.

Mozambique’s northern Province Cabo Delgado has been also affected by armed violence for almost 3 years, where armed groups have been attacking villages and civilians, causing death and displacement and exacerbating the humanitarian situation. There has been a dramatic increase in attacks since the beginning of 2020, leading to some 211,000 internally displaced people as of May. Most displaced live with host populations, putting a strain on already scarce resources as most of these host families are also food insecure.
How are we helping?

EU funding in the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region goes towards emergency relief response, food assistance, education in emergencies and disaster preparedness. In 2020, the EU is supporting humanitarian action in the region with €64.7 million in funding. A significant share of this funding is allocated specifically to address the impact of the spell of drought in the region.

Through its humanitarian aid, the EU prioritises provision of swift aid in the form of emergency cash transfers to vulnerable people affected by disasters. This saves people from having to sell their possessions when food runs out and that could lead them to be less able to cope with the next disaster. In response to the current drought hitting the region, the EU is helping address food and nutrition needs in the affected areas as well as helping small scale farmers to restore their means to earn a living.

With the security situation deteriorating in northern Mozambique’s Cabo Delgado province, the EU is supporting vulnerable displace people with shelter, food and access to healthcare.

The EU has also set aside funding dedicated to supporting local health systems to address preparedness and prevention of the coronavirus, in line with the respective countries’ national response plan. With this support, EU-funded partners in the region are including in their projects activities linked to coronavirus prevention and control, information dissemination campaigns, distribution of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), promotion of access to water and hygiene, and hygiene awareness sessions to households.

Preparedness and prompt action can reduce the impact of natural hazards and help avert loss of life, livelihoods and property. To this end, the EU supports actions that step up the capacity of communities, and local and national disaster management authorities to prepare for and respond to disasters. Several EU-funded projects use technology and innovative approaches, such as drones – used in the response to cyclone Idai in Mozambique and Malawi - to map high-risk areas, or mobile text messages to warn communities of impending dangers. Increasing attention is given to disaster preparedness in schools through promotion of safe learning facilities, training of teachers in early warning and informing children on how to stay safe. Having emergency stocks already present on the ground also makes the response to rapid onset natural hazards faster and logistically easier to manage.