



## WFP Southern Africa COVID-19 Response

### Situation Report 20 July 2020

### Situation Overview

With COVID-19 infections surging but still to peak, cash-strapped governments struggling to cope with growing hunger, and the pandemic's socioeconomic consequences set to outweigh its health impacts, WFP continues working to ensure help reaches the most at-risk.

Pending the results of national vulnerability assessments, our analysis indicates that as many as 52 million people in 12 operational countries<sup>1</sup> will need food assistance in the next 12 months – nearly double a pre-COVID projection of 27.5 million.

The pandemic is aggravating deep-rooted problems underpinning protracted hunger in Southern Africa: high rates of population growth<sup>2</sup>, poverty<sup>3</sup>, inequality<sup>4</sup>, malnutrition<sup>5</sup>, HIV<sup>6</sup> and environmental degradation<sup>7</sup>.

It is also compounding the widespread devastation now routinely inflicted by climate change<sup>8</sup>: recurring drought and frequent flooding.

Key sources of income for families, communities and governments have disappeared or diminished significantly. As joblessness has soared, remittances from migrant breadwinners in South Africa and elsewhere, vital for millions in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique and Lesotho, have slumped.

So, too, have the prices of exports some countries heavily depend on: oil for the Republic of Congo and Angola; copper for Zambia. The region's crucial tourism industry has all but ground to a halt.

COVID-19 has intensified conflict – and hunger – in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and northern Mozambique. Elsewhere, it risks fuelling political tension and instability.

While better harvests this year (in South Africa, Zambia, Tanzania and Malawi) bring some relief, especially in rural areas, we are concerned that, going forward, smallholder farmers – many of them women – may not have enough access to markets, inputs or their land.

### WFP Response

Beyond assistance to the traditionally vulnerable – subsistence farming families, refugees and IDPs, among others – WFP's scale-up includes support to millions of now destitute people in urban areas.

This is in line with our push to capitalise on decades of experience globally to strengthen national social protection systems in a region where they have had limited coverage among the food insecure.

It is also consistent with our accelerating transition to preventive, anticipatory action: building resilience to shocks before they strike. We have a solid foundation in the food-assistance-for-assets programmes already helping to propel threatened communities to self-sufficiency.

In its capacity as global humanitarian logistics lead, WFP has set up a regional staging centre in Johannesburg, South Africa, for aid cargo and personnel – part of a worldwide network of dedicated COVID-19 air transport hubs.

Traffic through the hub has increased substantially since it became operational in June. Passenger flights now serve Lilongwe, Maputo and Addis Ababa, with Antananarivo, Windhoek and Luanda to be added soon. Freight volumes are rising too.

While virus-induced port and border closures have somewhat slowed the movement of humanitarian freight and workers into and around southern Africa,

<sup>1</sup> Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

<sup>2</sup> Excluding South Africa, the region's annual population growth is more than twice that of the global population.

<sup>3</sup> More than half the population of Southern Africa suffers from chronic poverty.

<sup>4</sup> Six of the world's ten most unequal countries are in the region: Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia.

<sup>5</sup> One-third of all children under five years are stunted; eleven of the 16 members of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) have stunting rates of over 30 percent.

<sup>6</sup> The region has the world's highest rates of people living with HIV/TB; there are 17 million in total – 6 million of whom are not on anti-retroviral treatment and therefore especially vulnerable to COVID-19.

<sup>7</sup> Southern Africa's annual deforestation rate is more than seven times the global average.

<sup>8</sup> Temperatures in Southern Africa are rising at twice the global average; and the region has had just one normal rainy season in the last five years.

as have lengthier quality controls and document processing, WFP continues to be able to receive and dispatch food and other essentials relatively freely thanks to the support of SADC and its governments.

This must continue, given that most countries in the region are heavily dependent on food imports, many are land-locked (Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Lesotho and Eswatini) and WFP has limited in-country stocks to sustain key operations – notably those in DRC, Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

Anticipating COVID-related supply chain disruptions, WFP has worked since the outset of the crisis to procure and pre-position up to three months of food to meet the increased needs of especially vulnerable communities. Thanks in part to the better harvests in some countries, much of the planned 70,000 tonnes of commodities has been sourced and delivered.

The more pronounced hunger the pandemic and its socioeconomic impacts are set to inflict presage a significant surge in WFP funding needs. Our unmet requirement for the next six months (July-December) for all operations amounts to US\$881 million.



Half of that is to meet anticipated needs arising directly from COVID-19. Three-quarters is accounted for by our three biggest operations: DRC, Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

Yet, because of COVID-19, needs in smaller countries – Namibia, Lesotho and Eswatini among them – are accelerating even more rapidly.

In the **Democratic Republic of Congo** WFP is increasing the number of people it assists this year by almost one million, to over 8.5 million, to address greater food needs linked to COVID-19. Three months of food/cash is being provided to the most vulnerable recipients. Assistance to poor people in Kinshasa is being considered.

In the **Republic of Congo** cash transfers are being provided to 30,000 poor people in Brazzaville (US\$17 per person/month), part of a broader plan to support 365,000 people in the capital and Pointe Noire, the country's second city. More than 61,000 school children are receiving take-home rations (rice, peas and vegetable oil).

WFP **Zimbabwe**'s COVID-19 response plan envisages a more than five-fold increase, to 550,000, in the number of vulnerable people in urban areas receiving cash transfers.

WFP **Zambia** is this month initiating a three-month cash programme for poor people in four cities – Lusaka, Kitwe, Kafue and Livingstone – starting with 37,000 households (184,000 people) in the capital.

In **Mozambique**, WFP plans to assist up to 500,000 people in urban areas with up to three months of cash transfers (US\$46 a month per family), funds permitting. Take-home rations are being provided to school children, in lieu of hot meals.

WFP **Malawi**'s six-month, US\$34.2 million COVID-19 response plan provides for three months of take-home rations to 600,000 schoolchildren, starting this month. Support to a government-led social protection initiative for vulnerable residents of the country's four largest cities – Lilongwe, Blantyre, Zomba and Mzuzu – is also envisaged.

As part of a three-month, US\$17.8 million COVID-19 response plan, WFP **Madagascar** is giving two months of cash transfers to up to 250,000 vulnerable people in three major cities: Antananarivo, Toamasina and Fianarantsoa (US\$27 per household per month). Take-home rations (cereals, pulses and vegetable oil) are being provided to 230,000 schoolchildren.

In **Tanzania**, WFP is planning cash transfers for nearly 500,000 urban poor people in 10 high-risk locations and nutrition assistance for 45,000 vulnerable women and children.

In **Eswatini**, 1,700 so-called Neighbourhood Care Points accommodating over 52,000 HIV/AIDS orphans and other vulnerable children have been supplied with three months of food commodities (maizemeal/rice, beans and vegetable oil). The registration of urban residents for the extension of a cash assistance programme to an additional 15,000 people is being finalised.

In **Lesotho**, WFP is this month rolling out a cash assistance programme for 8,500 vulnerable urban families (34,000 people) in the capital Maseru and the districts of Maseru's Hoek, Mafeteng, Quthing and Qacha's Nek. We are also increasing, by 80 percent – to over 2,500 – the number of families benefiting from food-assistance-for-assets programmes.



In Epworth, a suburb of Harare, Zimbabwe's capital, WFP provides e-vouchers to help food insecure people afford diverse, nutritious diets. Photo: WFP/Claire Nevill

Photo front page: Three-year old Onward tries on a WFP hat while his single mother Oppah Kanongara prepares food provided through WFP's e-voucher programme in Harare South, Zimbabwe. WFP/Claire Nevill