



CARE-FANRPAN PRESS RELEASE



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SADC member states need to invest in disaster risk management during the coming season of recovery.

CARE International in Southern Africa and the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) welcome the climate early warning statement for the 2019/2020 rainfall season from the 23rd Southern African Regional Climate Outlook Forum (SARCOF-23) and the prediction of a recovery season with normal to above normal rainfall especially for the period October – December.

During the 2018/2019 season, SADC member states witnessed unprecedented damage caused by the occurrence of weather-related phenomena such as Tropical Cyclones Desmond, Enawo, Idai and Kenneth in the Union of Comoros, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

Cyclone Idai was recorded as one of the worst tropical storms to ever affect Africa and the southern hemisphere. The cyclone claimed hundreds of lives and left a trail of destruction, including severe damage to key infrastructure such as roads, bridges, schools and clinics. Over 800 000 hectares of cropland as well as crops and seed stocks were destroyed by the cyclone, while about 3,3 million people were left in need of immediate humanitarian assistance such as food, shelter, clothing, potable water, sanitation and medical support. Following the occurrence of drought and floods in the 2018/19 season, the region has an estimated cereal deficit of more than 5,4 million tonnes this year. As usual, smallholder farmers, women and children were disproportionately affected by the cyclones.

The SADC Climate Services Centre together with national meteorological services continues to play a crucial role in monitoring and predicting extremes in climate conditions to enable improved disaster risk management in the region, and help ensure Member States to better prepare for weather and climate disasters. Despite their importance, many national meteorological services (met services) in the region lack the capacity to provide services of a basic level.

The massive underfunding of met services has led to a deterioration of meteorological observation networks characterised by outdated technology, a lack of modern equipment and forecasting methods, poor quality of services, insufficient support for research and development, and an erosion of the workforce (resulting in a lack of trained specialists). As a result, substantial human and financial losses have occurred, which could have been avoided if weather and water agencies were more developed.

Climate resilient development requires stronger institutions and a higher level of observation, forecasting, and service delivery capacity. In addition, successful adaptation to the existing and future weather and climate variability is impossible without reliable and well-functioning NMHSs.

Whilst the prediction of a recovery season with normal to above normal rainfall especially for the period October – December (OND) from the just concluded SARCOF-23 is a welcome relief for the region, there is still a lot of work that the region needs to do given the recurrent incidences of cyclones and floods. The prediction of above normal rainfall may easily result in severe flooding in the region, which would affect crops. Against this background, disaster risk reduction and preparedness are of utmost importance. Given that the events are occurring with increased frequency, neither the Governments, the people living in the southern Africa region, nor the donor community can afford expenditures in billions of dollars per disaster.

Current recovery operations in the aftermath of recent disasters provide important key lessons about the risks affecting the region, as well as opportunities to identify specific measures to address them.

Reacting to the outcome statement of the Forum, CARE's Deputy Regional Managing Director Mr. Matthew Pickard said, "We hope that the recommendations from SARCOF-23 do not remain in Luanda in the conference room, but that all the SADC member states will implement them so that the region is better prepared to deal with the impacts of cyclones than we were this past season. We are hoping for solutions that will, in particular, protect women and girls as they are disproportionately affected by climate change and extreme weather events".

Participants at the Forum agreed that member states must develop and strengthen infrastructure for agriculture, including water harvesting techniques, as most rain will come in OND. In addition, Governments should rehabilitate community watering points and irrigation systems. Governments must closely monitor pest and diseases especially in the first part of the season, as the onset of the rains tends to promote outbreaks. Seed marketing should prioritize and promote early maturing crop varieties to take advantage of the early rains in OND. Further, respective ministries of agriculture should coordinate with meteorological departments for short-term weather forecasts to inform decisions on investment.

The Chief Executive Officer and Head of Mission of FANRPAN, Dr Tshilidzi Madzivhandila welcomed the news of the recovery season and said, "It is during the good seasons that we should prepare for the bad ones. As a region we should not be complacent because we are expecting good rains. We should accelerate efforts to come up with strategies of building resilience of our agriculture and food systems to ensure that our farmers are better prepared for when the next cyclone hits". Dr Madzivhandila further stated that the issue of building resilience of the agriculture sector in the face of climate change and related risks and addressing the challenges of malnutrition was central to FANRPAN's work and would be the main focus of the upcoming FANRPAN Regional Policy Dialogue that will take place from 5 – 7 November 2019 in Kigali, Rwanda under the theme Enhancing Climate Resilience and Food and Nutrition Security'.

The two organisations hope that governments in southern Africa, and their partners, will agree on and implement practical actions to avert the impacts of the various weather phenomenon affecting the region.

About CARE

Care International is a confederation of 14 member and 4 affiliate organizations working together to end poverty. In Africa CARE is working in 27 countries implementing poverty-fighting, development and humanitarian aid projects. In 2016 Care International reached out to 80 million people directly and 256 million indirectly. Care International focus is on women and girls because poverty cannot be overcome until all people have equal rights and opportunities. [Website: www.care.org](http://www.care.org)

About FANRPAN

The Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) is a pan-African network that provides independent evidence to inform policy processes at national and regional levels. FANRPAN's membership includes food, agriculture and natural resources (FANR) related government departments, parliamentarians, research and farmer organizations, private sector, civil society organizations and the media. [Website: www.fanrpan.org](http://www.fanrpan.org)

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