EARLY ACTION PROTOCOL ACTIVATION

Zambia | Drought

14.10.2026



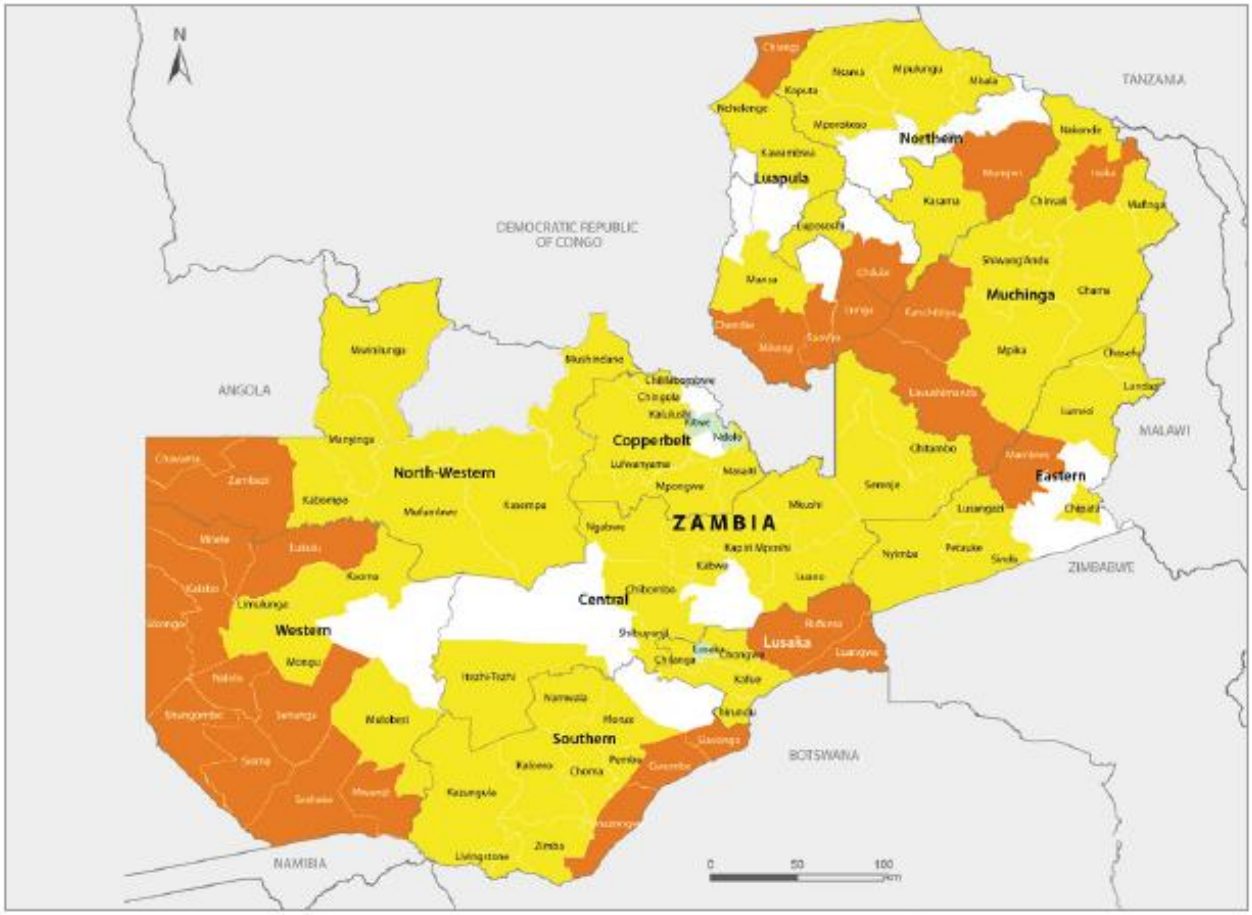
Agriculture Officers pose with ZRCS staff and volunteers show casing the Drought EAP, MHCP SOPs and ZRCS DRM Strategy documents in Sikongo District during readiness activities (Training on Climate Smart Agriculture). Photo capture by: Loveness Lufungulo, DRMD (Sept, 2026)

EAP №: **EAP2024ZMO2**	Operation №: **MDRZM025**	EAP approved: **27/03/2025**	EAP revised timeframe: **N/a**
Trigger date: **14/10/2026**	Early action lead time: **3 months**		Activation timeframe: **3 Months**

Budget: 394,093CHF
To assist: 22,530 people

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Projected Acute Food Insecurity: October 2026 – March 2027



Key for the Map

IPC Acute Food Insecurity Phase Classification

(mapped Phase represents highest severity affecting at least 20% of the population)

- 1 - Minimal
- 2 - Stressed
- 3 - Crisis
- 4 - Emergency
- 5 - Famine
- Areas with inadequate evidence
- Areas not analysed

Evidence Level

*** High

Activation Overview

The Zambia Red Cross Society has activated its Early Action Protocol for Drought

1.0 Background

Following the approval of the Drought Early Action Protocol (EAP), the Zambia Red Cross Society (ZRCS) successfully implemented readiness activities across 16 of the 19 identified high-priority drought-prone districts in Zambia. These interventions aimed to strengthen institutional and community preparedness, enhance operational readiness, and facilitate the timely implementation of anticipatory actions ahead of forecast drought impacts. The activities were undertaken across three provinces, covering the following districts:

- Eastern Province: Mambwe, Lundazi and Chasefu.
- Southern Province: Sinazongwe, Gwembe, Kalomo, Kazungula, Monze, Zimba and Mazabuka.
- Western Province: Mulobezi, Senanga, Mwandi, Sikongo, Sesheke and Sioma.

These readiness interventions contributed to strengthening ZRCS's capacity to operationalise the approved EAP and support timely, coordinated and risk-informed anticipatory action in drought-vulnerable communities.

2.0 Situation Overview and Anticipated Hazard Impacts

Zambia faces an elevated risk of meteorological and agricultural drought during the 2026/2027 rainfall season, associated with anticipated very strong El Niño conditions and unfavourable regional climate drivers. The Zambia Meteorological Department (ZMD) Seasonal Rainfall Forecast, issued on 11 September 2026, projects below-normal rainfall across Southern, Western, Lusaka and much of Central Province, extending into parts of Eastern and North-Western Provinces. Delayed rainfall onset and prolonged dry spells are anticipated, particularly between December 2026 and February 2027, coinciding with critical crop development and flowering stages.

These conditions are expected to adversely affect agricultural production, pasture availability, livestock productivity, water resources and household livelihoods. The anticipated drought coincides with deteriorating food security conditions, with the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) projecting an increase in the population experiencing Crisis-level acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3) from approximately 698,000 people during April–September 2026 to 1.25 million people during October 2026–March 2027. Districts classified in IPC Phase 3 are projected to increase from 4 to 28. Drought impacts are expected to emerge from November–December 2026 and intensify between December 2026 and February 2027, increasing the risk of crop failure, livestock stress, reduced household income and negative coping mechanisms.

3.0 Seasonal Forecast, Trigger Monitoring and Activation Justification

The decision to activate the Zambia Drought Early Action Protocol is informed by two converging forecasts; ECMWF and the ZMD 2026/2027 Seasonal Rainfall Forecast. The ZMD seasonal forecast anticipates very strong El Niño conditions, accompanied by a positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) and negative Subtropical Indian Ocean Dipole (SIOD). These climate drivers are expected to suppress rainfall across much of southern and central Zambia, increasing the likelihood of agricultural drought.

The forecast indicates below-normal rainfall during October–December 2026 (OND) across Southern, Lusaka, much of Central and southern Western Provinces. During November 2026–January 2027 (NDJ), rainfall deficits are projected to extend across Western, Southern, Lusaka, much of Central and parts of Eastern and North-Western Provinces. The December 2026–February 2027 (DJF) outlook indicates continued rainfall deficits across substantial parts of the country, accompanied by prolonged dry spells during critical crop development stages. The convergence of these forecast signals provides a strong technical basis for timely anticipatory action to minimise drought-related livelihood losses and humanitarian impacts.

The approved EAP establishes an October activation threshold of at least 45% probability of below-normal precipitation under the ECMWF SEAS5 seasonal forecasting system. The ECMWF October forecast indicates a 50-60% probability of below average rainfall over Zambia during November 2026–January 2027 (NDJ) season.

4.0 Geographical Coverage and Implementation Duration

Geographical prioritization will be informed by forecast drought exposure, projected food insecurity, historical vulnerability and operational feasibility. Southern and Western Provinces are important priority areas exhibiting significant food security vulnerabilities due to anticipated rainfall deficits, prolonged dry spells and dependence on rain-fed agricultural livelihoods. Final intervention districts and communities will be selected within the approved EAP geographical coverage using district-level risk and vulnerability assessments and following consultations from the National Anticipatory Actions Technical Working Group.

The EAP provides an early action lead time of approximately three months and an implementation period of three months. Subject to authorization, interventions are anticipated to commence in October 2026 and continue for approximately three months, prioritizing delivery ahead of the expected peak drought impacts between December 2026 and February 2027.

5.0 Early Action Targeting

The Zambia Drought Early Action Protocol (EAP) overall targets 3,755 vulnerable households (22,530 people) through anticipatory interventions addressing food security, livelihoods, water access and drought preparedness. Targeting prioritises drought-exposed households with limited coping capacities, including rain-fed smallholder farmers, livestock-dependent households, female- and child-headed households, older persons, persons with disabilities and food-insecure households. Beneficiary selection and verification will employ community-based targeting, vulnerability assessments and local government structures, integrating Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI), Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA), and safeguarding principles.

Following operational and budgetary adjustments, implementation coverage has been reduced from five to two districts, with sectoral targets revised as follows:

- Livelihoods: Agricultural input support remains same **800 households (4,800 people).**
- Multipurpose Cash Assistance: Coverage reduced from 3,755 to **2,500 households (15,000 people).**
- WASH: Borehole rehabilitation8 (20) coverage maintained at **3,755 households (22,530 people),** alongside WASH kit assistance **for 500 households.** A total of 20 boreholes will be rehabilitated.

These adjustments prioritise available resources towards the most vulnerable populations while maintaining pre-agreed anticipatory actions.

6.0 Planned Early Actions and Expected Outcomes

Subject to activation authorization, ZRCS will implement predefined early actions comprising drought early warning dissemination, distribution of drought-tolerant agricultural inputs, rehabilitation of community boreholes, provision of essential WASH supplies and unconditional cash assistance to eligible vulnerable households to receive ZMW 1,855.

These interventions will strengthen household preparedness, protect agricultural production and livelihood assets, sustain access to safe water, preserve essential food consumption and reduce negative coping mechanisms. Implementation will be coordinated with IFRC and other humanitarian partners and relevant government technical departments through the district disaster risk management structures.

Overall, the proposed activation seeks to reduce anticipated drought-related losses, strengthen household coping capacities and mitigate humanitarian impacts through timely, forecast-informed anticipatory action, while ensuring that formal activation and financing decisions comply with the established EAP governance framework.

Early Action Overview

PLANNED OPERATIONS

 **Livelihoods**	Female:	459	**79,322.20 CHF**
	Male:	306	AP Code: **007**
Indicator:	Number of people reached with livelihoods interventions in advance of a hazard		
Priority Early Actions:	**1.** Drought tolerant seed procurement for 800 households **1.** Warehouse Rentals (short term) **2.** Seed transportation **3.** Conduct Seed Distribution **4.** Validate and register beneficiaries for farming inputs		

 **Multi-purpose Cash**	Female:	1,500	**202, 562. 68 CHF**
	Male:	1,000	AP Code: **081**
Indicator:	Number of people reached with multi-purpose cash in advance of a hazard		
Priority Early Actions:	**1.** Train volunteers and key stakeholders in CVA **2.** Transfer Cash to Financial Service Provider **3.** Conduct Market Assessment in intervention areas **4.** Select and validate beneficiaries in intervention areas **5.** Distribute unconditional cash to 2500 households		

 **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene**	Female:	13,518	**14,120 CHF**
	Male:	9,012	AP Code: **110, 111**
Indicator:	Number of people reached with WASH interventions in advance of a hazard		
Priority Early Actions:	**1.** Procurement of WASH items - chlorine **2.** Identification of beneficiaries for WASH items **3.** Identification and mapping of borehole rehabilitation sites in intervention areas **4.** WASH kit distribution **5.** Borehole rehabilitation		

Protection, Gender and Inclusion	Female:	13,518	**2,193.86 CHF**
	Male:	9,012	AP Code: **114, 116,117**
Indicator:	Number of people reached with PGI interventions in advance of a hazard		
Priority Early Actions:	**1.** Data collection tools are disaggregated by sex, age and disability **2.** Identification of the most neglected and vulnerable groups to inform selection criteria (for cash – wash distribution and seeds distribution)		

Risk Reduction, climate adaptation and recovery	Female:	13,518	**13,127 CHF**
	Male:	9,012	AP Code: **101, 103, 105,106**
Indictor:	Number of people reached with risk reduction and/or climate adaptation interventions in advance of a hazard		
Priority Early Actions:	**1.** Development and translation of country-wide awareness campaign materials **2.** Printing of IEC materials in different languages **3.** Dissemination of early warning messages in high-risk districts and to intervention areas		

Community Engagement and Accountability	Female:	13,518	**1,245.90 CHF**
	Male:	9,012	AP Code: **129**
Indicator:	Number of people reached with community engagement and accountability interventions in advance of a hazard		
Priority Early Actions:	**1.** Awareness raising for communities on CFCM and reporting channels and integrity commitment of the ZRCS (CoC)		

Enabling approaches

Coordination and Partnerships			**5,496.29**
Objective:			
Priority Early Actions:	**1.** Lessons Learnt Workshop		

National Society Strengthening			**34,986.91 CHF**
			AP Code: **124,125,126**
Objective:			
Priority Early Actions:	**1.** Focal Point for EAP **2.** Administrative cost **3.** Vehicle lease from IFRC **4.** Fuel Costs for Project Movement		

Secretariat Services			**41,037.96 CHF**
			AP Code: **122**
Objective			
Priority Early Actions:	**1.** Contribution of Salary to Harare CCD Operations Team (LoE 50% Ops Coordinator and CEA Officer) **2.** Bank Charges Year EA **3.** Travel costs for cluster supervision and Monitoring		

Contact information

For further information, specifically related to this operation please contact:

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Reference
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Click here for:
- EAP Summary and budget
- Annual reports from previous years