On 6 May, the President of Namibia declared a State of Emergency over drought conditions in the country.

According to Government estimates, around 556,000 people (close to one in five Namibians and almost half of whom are children), will be affected by the drought.

UNICEF will continue to closely coordinate its support to the emergency response with the Government, the United Nations Country Team and other key stakeholders.

UNICEF Namibia is developing a response plan and preparing emergency relief materials to support the Government’s response to the humanitarian situation as it unfolds. The UNICEF Namibia team is closely monitoring the situation, along with partners, and will respond accordingly.

The President of the Republic of Namibia, Dr. Hage Geingob, declared a state of emergency on 6 May 2019, after a Cabinet meeting on the current status of the drought, which affects approximately 556,000 people. The drought is also reported to affect the essential livelihood for many families, with livestock dying and decreased crop production. This is the fifth time in six years that the country is faced with a drought. This phenomenon is reported to be caused by the La Niña effect, causing constant periodic warmer winters and drought spells in Namibia. The drought emergency, which has affected all regions of the country (with the north central regions, the west, central east and the southern regions mostly affected), is announced at a time when the Government, through the Ministry of Agriculture, recently completed a food security assessment, which reported that the country is expecting a substantial reduction in harvest of at least 53 per cent of last season’s harvest and over 42 per cent below the average production. This reduction is largely attributed to the poor overall rainfall received during the 2018/2019 rainy season.
According to the Namibia Meteorological Services rainfall report, March 2019 was the fifth consecutive month with suppressed rainfall over the large part of the country (Figure 1). Provisional crop estimates, indicated that all crop-producing areas are expecting massive reductions in the harvest of 2019. The hardest hit regions are Kunene North and Erongo, which both lost 12,200 and 11,800 head of cattle, goats and sheep, respectively. They are followed by the Ohangwena and Otjozondjupa regions, which both lost more than 4,700 cattle, sheep and goats during the past six months. The Omaheke, Omusati and Oshana regions each lost around 2,500 livestock, while the Kunene South, Khomas and Oshikoto regions combined lost about 1,266 livestock.

Pockets of food insecurity are being reported in various areas especially those that suffered poor agricultural production due to prolonged dry spells or floods during the 2017/2018 rainfall season coupled with the current ongoing drought conditions in the country. The Government with support from the UN is currently conducting a Food Security Assessment to determine the magnitude of the problem and ascertain the families, children and women mostly affected by the drought and the implication this has on the survival and protection of the most vulnerable, especially children and women.

In 2013, former President Hifikepunye Pohamba declared a drought emergency, which was reported to have killed 4,000 animals and affected about 300,000 people. The lessons learned from the past drought, support is shaping this current emergency response.
HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

In response to the declared drought situation, the Cabinet of Namibia has approved comprehensive drought relief interventions worth N$442,700,000 (around 30.8 million USD) to assist drought affected communities for the period of 1 April 2019 until end of March 2020 (or until the budget is depleted). As of 3 May 2019, N$304,900,000 (around 21.2 million USD) is available and N$137,800,000 (9.6 million USD) needs to be mobilized. Drought relief funding will be managed by National Emergency Disaster Fund.

The UN team in Namibia took an urgent note of the declared state of emergency in the country and the need of assistance. The UN expressed readiness to provide rapid response to assist the Government of Namibia and its people in addressing the grave situation.

The UN support will be in the form of technical expertise in dealing with emergencies, particularly in the area of planning and coordination of assistance. The UN is also in the process of reallocating existing funding and mobilizing resources to provide humanitarian response in the areas of food and livelihood support, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health, and protection services for the most vulnerable people.

The UN will negotiate with Government to support real time monitoring of the situation through on-going vulnerability assessment. It is important that the humanitarian assistance arrives promptly. In the immediate instance, the UN pledges to support to the Government to respond to the needs of the affected people.
HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

UNICEF Namibia’s humanitarian strategy targets vulnerable children and their families and focuses on an integrated approach to programme delivery to reach the most vulnerable populations in line with UNICEF’s Core Commitment for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs).

UNICEF’s strategy consists of interventions in health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), education, child protection and communication for development (C4D). UNICEF will continue to work closely with key stakeholders both at national and regional levels to ensure that all vulnerable children and their families have access to essential services.

UNICEF’s strategy aims at providing timely humanitarian assistance to children and women in line with the Government’s Drought Emergency Response Plan, while addressing longer term development needs by focusing on:

• Ensuring the most vulnerable children, lactating mothers, and HIV positive pregnant women receive the necessary nutritional supplies, which will also include nutrition education, counselling as well as support and screening of children for malnutrition.

• Ensuring that safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services are provided to the most at risk communities. WASH interventions are particularly essential in light of the ongoing Hepatitis E outbreak.

• Ensuring continued access to school through the promotion of school feeding schemes in collaboration with WFP, especially in hard-to-reach drought affected areas. Special attention will also be given to younger children through Early Childhood Development (ECD) interventions.

• UNICEF will continue to work in close coordination with national and regional counterparts, to review and update the existing annual plans and ensure that the plans are aligned to respond to the drought emergency.

• UNICEF will disseminate zero tolerance messages against sexual exploitation and abuse, and will provide required trainings and capacity to key stakeholders, and further strengthen systems for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA).