



Ministry of Health
and Child Care
Republic of Zimbabwe

unicef
for every child

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Strengthening Health Systems and Communities for Climate Resilience



This Climate and Health Vulnerability Assessment was commissioned by the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC) and UNICEF to support evidence-based planning for a climate-resilient and healthier Zimbabwe.



BACKGROUND

Climate change poses a growing threat to public health in Zimbabwe. Rising temperatures, water stress, floods and extreme weather events are increasing the burden of disease, disrupting health services and deepening vulnerabilities—especially for the most at risk.

This assessment provides a comprehensive evidence base to inform adaptation planning and investment, strengthen health systems and protect communities from climate-related health risks.



ASSESSMENT PURPOSE

- Identify climate-sensitive health risks
- Assess the vulnerability and adaptive capacity of the health system
- Prioritise evidence-based adaptation actions
- Focus on health care facilities and vulnerable populations



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- WHO Climate and Health V&A Assessment Approach
- WHO Operational Framework for Building Climate-Resilient Health Systems
- Climate Action Accelerator's Climate Resilient and Environmentally Sustainable Health Care Facilities (CRESH) framework

ZIMBABWE CLIMATE PROFILE



Rising Temperatures & Heat Stress

~0.9°C

warming observed over the last century



Trend

- Increasing hot days
- Continued warming projected



Geographic hotspots

- Southern lowveld
- Northern low-altitude districts
- Drought-prone areas
- Major urban centres



Drought, Rainfall Variability & Water Stress

6

major drought episodes since 1991



Trend

- Delayed rainfall onset
- Prolonged dry spells
- Shorter rainy seasons



Geographic hotspots

- Matabeleland South
- Matabeleland North
- Masvingo
- Southern Midlands
- Lowveld districts



Flooding & Extreme Rainfall

Increasing

localised flood exposure



Trend

- Increasing heavy rainfall
- Flash flooding
- Expanding flood exposure



Geographic hotspots

- Eastern Zimbabwe
- River basins
- Northern low-lying districts
- Poorly drained urban and peri-urban settlements



Tropical Cyclones & Severe Storms

Cyclone Idai

>300 deaths and widespread service disruption



Trend

- Episodic but high-severity shocks



Geographic hotspots

- Manicaland
- Chipinge
- Chimanimani
- Nyanga
- Mutasa



Climate hazards are increasing in frequency and severity, placing pressure on health facilities, services and the communities they serve. Proactive adaptation is essential to protect lives, safeguard health systems and build a resilient future.



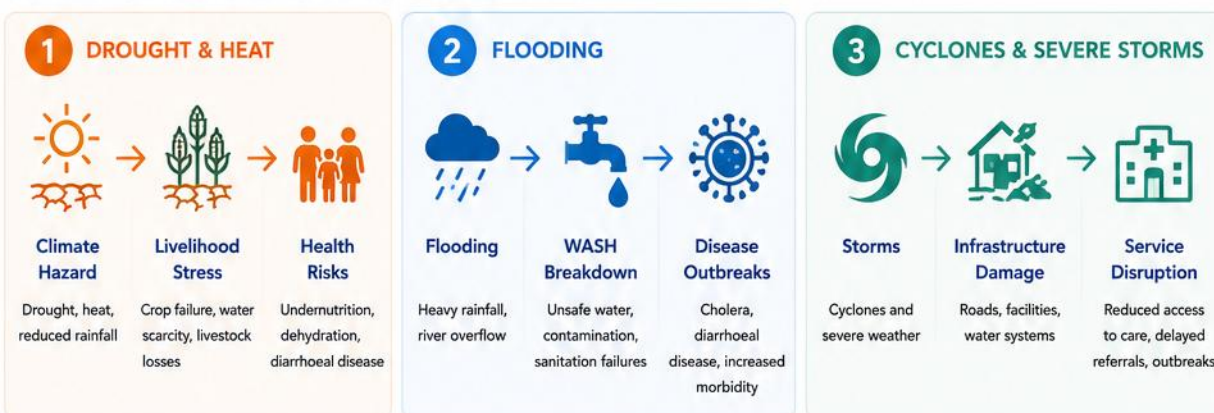
The views expressed in this assessment are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Ministry of Health and Child Care or UNICEF.



Climate Vulnerability

Climate change threatens health, nutrition, food security, water and sanitation, with the greatest impacts falling on already vulnerable populations.

1. THREE CLIMATE-HEALTH PATHWAYS



2. KEY CLIMATE-SENSITIVE VULNERABILITIES



3. WHO IS MOST VULNERABLE?



Vulnerability is socially differentiated. Climate shocks do not affect all populations equally; existing social, economic and health inequalities shape exposure, risk and recovery capacity.





Health Facility Climate Resilience Assessment Results

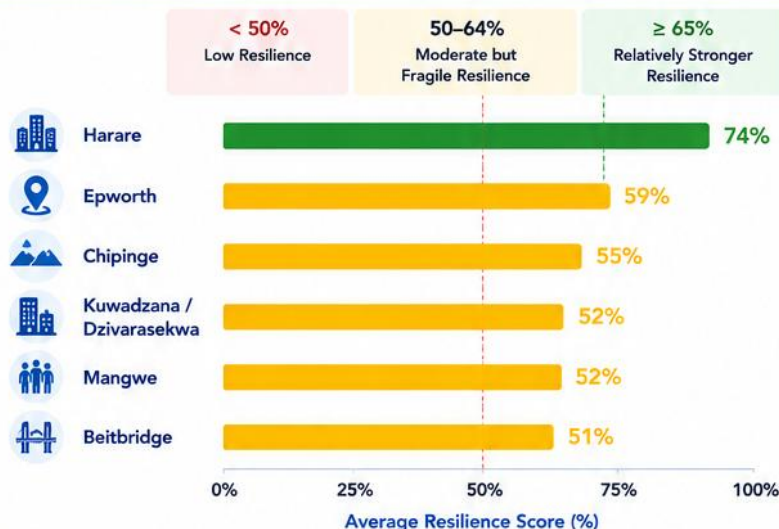
Assessment of 15 health facilities across Harare, Manicaland and Matabeleland South.



KEY FINDING

Most facilities demonstrated moderate but fragile resilience. The strongest performance was observed in infrastructure and energy systems, while the largest vulnerabilities were found in climate-smart equipment, preparedness systems and physical access during climate shocks.

AVERAGE FACILITY RESILIENCE SCORE BY DISTRICT



KEY MESSAGES



Harare was the only district in the relatively stronger resilience category.



Most facilities clustered between 51–59%, indicating moderate but fragile resilience.



No district achieved fully resilient status.

FACILITY RESILIENCE DOMAIN SCORES

DOMAIN	SCORE
Infrastructure & Location Risk	63%
Climate-Smart Energy Systems	59%
WASH & Infection Prevention	58%
Climate-Related Disease Burden & Response Capacity	50%
Service Continuity Capacity	45%
Preparedness & Adaptation Systems	45%
Supplies & Physical Access	44%
Climate-Smart Equipment	28%

● ≥ 65% Relatively Stronger ● 50–64% Moderate but Fragile ● < 50% Low Resilience



Greatest adaptation gap:
Climate-smart equipment.

WHAT FACILITIES TOLD US



“Flooded rivers and damaged roads delay referrals and emergency transport.”



“Flooding disrupts outreach services, vaccination activities and community access to care.”



“Heat stress affects both patients and frontline health workers, particularly during prolonged hot periods.”



ASSESSMENT IMPLICATION

The assessment suggests that basic systems are functioning in most facilities, but resilience remains heavily dependent on staff coping mechanisms rather than institutional adaptation. Future investments should prioritise climate-smart equipment, preparedness systems, referral access and operational resilience.





Health Facility Adaptation Measures

Current actions and priorities for building climate-resilient and sustainable health systems.

1. EXISTING ADAPTATION MEASURES IN HEALTH FACILITIES



STRONGEST

- Vaccine cold-chain protection
- Basic service continuity systems



PARTIAL / EMERGING

- Solar backup systems
- Water resilience measures



WEAKEST

- Heat adaptation
- Neonatal adaptation
- Preparedness testing



Current adaptation efforts remain largely reactive and require stronger investment in climate-smart equipment, preparedness systems and operational resilience.

2. TOP 5 PRIORITY INVESTMENTS

1



CLIMATE-SMART EQUIPMENT

Upgrade diagnostics, cold chain, neonatal care and environmental monitoring equipment.

2



WATER & SANITATION SYSTEMS

Ensure reliable water supply, sanitation facilities and drainage improvements.

3



RESILIENT ENERGY SYSTEMS

Invest in solar power, backup power and cooling and ventilation solutions.

4



PREPAREDNESS & CONTINUITY PLANNING

Strengthen emergency plans, referral systems and outbreak response readiness.

5



WORKFORCE & COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Build climate-health capacity, nutrition support and community adaptation actions.

3. ADAPTATION ROADMAP



SHORT-TERM (0–2 YEARS)

- Improve water reliability and storage
- Upgrade critical equipment and cold chain
- Strengthen outbreak preparedness
- Improve facility cooling and ventilation



MEDIUM-TERM (2–5 YEARS)

- Upgrade resilient infrastructure (roofing, drainage, flood protection)
- Strengthen surveillance and early warning systems
- Improve referral systems and transport access
- Expand resilient outreach and community services



LONG-TERM (5+ YEARS)

- Integrate climate resilience into health planning and budgeting
- Establish sustainable financing mechanisms
- Scale resilient health facility standards nationwide
- Institutionalise adaptation, learning and continuous improvement



Goal: Build climate-resilient, adaptive and sustainable health systems that can withstand and recover from climate shocks while ensuring quality care for all.

4. WHAT COMMUNITIES TOLD US



Communities do not separate health resilience from livelihood resilience.

Health resilience depends on:



Water security



Food security



Livelihoods & incomes



Access to essential services