



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



World Food  
Programme



Investing in rural people



OCHA

United Nations Office  
for the Coordination of  
Humanitarian Affairs

One-day El Niño event, Rome, 17 March 2016

## **El Niño: Impacts and Priorities for Action**

### Event Summary

#### **Introduction**

On 17 March 2016, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) hosted a one-day meeting on El Niño Impacts and Priorities for Action. The event was well attended by representatives of member states, resource partners, UN agencies and NGOs, among others.

Opening remarks were given by the Director General of FAO and high-level representatives from WFP, OCHA and IFAD, stressing the need for collective action to address the impact of the current El Niño, and also future El Niño/La Niña events. It was highlighted that a multi-stakeholder approach is required, bringing together national governments, humanitarian and development stakeholders at both national and international levels, donors and the private sector. Collective investment to meet current funding gaps while supporting longer-term flexible funding mechanisms was recommended as well as developing functioning early warning-early action systems and building resilience to future shocks.

Presentations by a keynote speaker<sup>1</sup>, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), FAO, WFP, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and several representatives from Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) outlined the current El Niño event and its multi-sectoral impacts. The afternoon sessions of the event focused on the preparedness and response strategies within the four most affected regions: Southern Africa, East Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific. Based on the presentations and discussions throughout the day, the event concluded with a joint statement by the hosting four agencies which summarized the key issues arising from the event and stated joint commitments to strengthen early response to, and mitigation of, future El Niño events.

#### **Key Issues discussed during the event**

*El Niño itself is subsiding, but its effect on people's lives is increasing.*

Even though the El Niño phenomenon is now subsiding, the impacts will continue and even increase in the coming weeks and months. At present, the crisis is already affecting 60 million people and it is expected that these figures will continue to rise. New analysis presented at the conference projected that food insecurity in the most affected regions will reach its peak in December 2016. While the humanitarian community is fully engaged in response actions, more needs to be done. Noting the unprecedented number of simultaneous emergencies in different parts of the world, it is critical that the 60 million affected are not forgotten. Allowing the emergency to continue without adequate attention, could undermine important development gains made over many years. It is therefore important to step up our advocacy efforts.

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<sup>1</sup> Former Secretary General of the WMO, Mr Michel Jarraud

*In all regions and sectors affected by El Niño, funding levels are far below what is needed for an effective response.*

Currently, the overall funding gap for El Niño response stands at USD 1.5 billion.

Southern Africa: Largest number of people affected (28 million<sup>2</sup>). The greatest impact has been in southern Angola, Lesotho, Southern Malawi, Swaziland and north-eastern Zimbabwe. The overall funding gap for government and humanitarian partners in the most affected countries is in excess of USD 472 million (joint/HCT plans alone have a funding gap of USD 255 million)<sup>3</sup>. Current and planned food security and agriculture activities in the region are 32 percent funded.

Horn of Africa: 15 million people are affected of whom over 10 million are in Ethiopia. Most affected countries are Ethiopia, followed by Somalia and Sudan. The drought in Ethiopia is the worst in 50 years. The funding gap in Ethiopia alone is USD 656 million. The overall gap including Sudan and Somalia is USD 797 million. Current and planned food security and agriculture activities are 24 percent funded.

Latin America and the Caribbean: The “dry corridor” (Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras) as well as Haiti are most affected. El Niño coincides with the rapid spread of the Zika virus. The overall funding gap for Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Haiti is USD 229 million. Current and planned food security and agriculture activities are 26 percent funded.

Asia and the Pacific: Countries of greatest humanitarian concern include Fiji, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. Vietnam has just announced its worst drought in 50 years, a severe winter following a summer drought in Mongolia is linked to El Niño. The frequency and strengths of tropical cyclones in the Pacific, such as Severe Tropical Cyclone Winston that recently hit Fiji has increased due to El Niño. The humanitarian appeal for the response to Tropical Cyclone Winston is 28 percent funded. The Marshall Islands national drought response plan has received no funding. Current and planned food security and agriculture activities are 39 percent funded.

Given that economic losses attributed to the 1997/98 El Niño were around USD 30-100 billion and could be worse for this El Niño, there was a call for a macro-economic analysis of this event to support the case for investment in early action.

*The need to switch from crisis management to risk management.*

Information and alerts from countries have been slow coming, there needs to be a better link between early warning science/evidence and action, particularly early action to mitigate disaster impacts. Independent studies suggest that a dollar spent on preparedness and early action significantly reduces response costs afterwards. It is therefore important to switch from crises to risk management. A paradigm shift is required within the development community, from a linear approach to development towards a cyclical approach that manages risks. In cyclical drought zones for example, managing drought needs to be an integral part of long-term development strategies.

*The approach to El Niño needs to be multi-sectoral and well-coordinated*

Coordination, leadership and a multi-sectoral and appropriately sequenced approach on the El Niño crisis needs to be strengthened at all levels, including with the private sector. The El Niño

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<sup>2</sup> This is the SADC estimate as at March 1 2016. The number is increasing.

<sup>3</sup> This figure includes only Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. All other affected countries are not included here, as such the overall Southern Africa figure will be considerably in excess of this.

phenomenon is having significant effects in several sectors beyond food security and agriculture, including health, WASH and Nutrition, and increasingly, protection. El Niño related floods and droughts are increasing rates of cholera and diarrhoea, and exacerbating the morbidity and mortality due to HIV/AIDS. El Niño is also resulting in substantial new population displacement, primarily within borders. There was a general recognition that responding to El Niño is as much a development effort, as it is humanitarian, and needs to link short-term interventions with medium and longer-term interventions. This should be reflected in the approach of all stakeholders contributing to solutions for this crisis, and includes the need for more flexible funding, so that implementing agencies can switch from development to emergency interventions and vice versa, as conditions dictate. Investments in long-term resilience building need to be stepped up, including increasing the scale and depth of social protection, agricultural reform, climate smart livelihoods options, and natural resource and water management. It was also recommended that there be a lessons learned exercise to learn collectively from this experience for future events.

### ***Commitments made by FAO, IFAD, OCHA and WFP.***

The four co-organising agencies agree that whilst humanitarian actors and national governments are already responding, further urgent actions need to be taken now to combat the impact of the current El Niño event whilst also laying a firm platform for more effective response to similar events in future. In this regard, the following commitments were made:

#### Responding now

1. We will work with resource partners to help address the funding gap by clarifying priority geographical areas that require urgent attention and ensuring there are viable inter-agency response plans that can be funded immediately;
2. We will organize a follow-up meeting as soon as feasible to engage resource partners to make concrete contributions to fill the most pressing gaps, and advance preparedness for a possible La Nina event in the latter half of this year. The resource mobilisation effort would include mobilizing funds already committed (and unspent) to other rural development initiatives which can be re-deployed to new activities in the El Niño affected areas.
3. We will work with development partners to reduce humanitarian need by targeting the same people with a mix of short-, medium- and longer-term efforts, including social protection initiatives such as safety nets, which are appropriately sequenced and layered;
4. We will engage more systematically with the private sector at the local level in affected countries and integrate businesses on the ground in ongoing response efforts.

#### Anticipate and respond early to future events

5. We will redouble our efforts to support and build the capacity of national governments to mitigate and respond to future El Niño /La Niña and other climate-related events;
6. We will work with development partners to ensure that Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) projects are stepped up in the most vulnerable areas;
7. Recognizing that early action saves lives, conserves resources and results in more effective response, we commit to working together to enhance preparedness and activate early action in the face of future El Niño / La Niña and other climatic events. To this end, we will develop a document outlining steps that we agree to take together, within defined timelines, to ensure early collective action to future El Niño and La Niña events whenever the WMO determines that there is an elevated risk of an event. The document will include such steps as collective analysis, joint scenario planning, early engagement with resource partners and early investment in preparedness and resilience initiatives. The document will be developed in consultation with all relevant actors by the end of 2016.



One-day El Niño event, Rome, 17 March 2016

**El Niño: Impacts and Priorities for Action**

FAO, Red Room (A - 121)

**Objectives:**

1. Promote a shared understanding of the impact of El Niño on Food Security and Agriculture and other sectors.
2. Review current and planned responses and identify gaps and priorities for action.
3. Agree on key actions, which enable early response to and mitigation of future risks.

**Agenda**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Presenter(s)</b>	<b>Moderator(s)</b>
09.00 - 09.30 hours	Welcome, sign-in and coffee		
09:30 - 10.00 hours	Opening remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FAO: Mr José Graziano da Silva, Director-General, accompanied by Mr Laurent Thomas, Assistant Director-General, Technical Cooperation and Programme Management</li> <li>- WFP: Mr Jim Harvey, Chief of Staff</li> <li>- IFAD: Dr. Lakshmi Menon, Associate Vice-President</li> <li>- OCHA: Ms. Marcy Vigoda, Director, Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Branch</li> </ul>	Mr Dominique Burgeon, Director, Emergency and Rehabilitation Division, Strategic Programme Leader – Resilience, FAO
10.00 - 10.15 hours	Key note presentation	Mr Michel Jarraud	Mr Dominique Burgeon, Director, Emergency and Rehabilitation Division, Strategic Programme Leader – Resilience, FAO
10.15 - 10.30 hours	El Niño/La Niña - Outlook for 2016 (WMO)	Mr Robert Stefanski, Chief, Agricultural Meteorology Division World Meteorological Organization (WMO)	Mr Dominique Burgeon, Director, Emergency and Rehabilitation Division, Strategic Programme Leader – Resilience, FAO

<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Presenter(s)</b>	<b>Moderator(s)</b>
10.30 – 10.45 hours	Discussion	Mr Dominique Burgeon, Director, Emergency and Rehabilitation Division, Strategic Programme Leader – Resilience, FAO	
10.45 - 11.00 hours	Global overview of El Niño impacts in agriculture and food security (FAO/WFP)	Mr Shukri Ahmed, Deputy Strategic Programme Leader – Resilience, FAO  Mr Arif Husain, Chief Economist and Deputy Director, Policy Programme and Innovation Division – Analysis and Nutrition Services, WFP	Mr Stefano Porretti, Director, Emergency Preparedness and Response Support Division, WFP
11.00 - 11.15 hours	Global overview of El Niño impacts in the Health Sector (WHO)	Mr Jonathan Abrahams - Emergency Risk Management and Humanitarian Response, WHO	Ms Marcy Vigoda, Director, Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Branch, OCHA
11.15 - 11.30 hours	Global overview of El Niño impacts in the Nutrition and WASH Sector (UNICEF)	Mr Sikander Khan, Deputy Director, UNICEF	Ms Marcy Vigoda, Director, Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Branch, OCHA
11.30 – 12.00 hours	Floor interventions and discussion	Ms Marcy Vigoda, Director, Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Branch	
12.00 - 12.30 hours	Joint NGO Intervention	Ms Debbie Hillier, Senior Humanitarian Policy Adviser - Oxfam GB  Ms Elisa Pozzi, Child Poverty and Livelihoods Advisor, Save the Children  Mr Kostas Moschochoritis, Director General, Intersos  Mr Bertrand Noiret, Climate Change Advocacy Officer, Action Contre la Faim	Ms Marcy Vigoda, Director, Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Branch, OCHA
12.30 - 13.30 hours	<i>Lunch break</i>		

Time	Topic	Presenter(s)	Moderator(s)
13.30 - 14.15 hours	Regional overview of preparedness and response strategies and priorities – <u>Southern Africa</u> (all regional sessions starts with an OCHA brief on existing plans and funding [5 min], followed by a presentation by WFP/FAO/gFSC on food security and agriculture [10 min], followed by a discussion and interventions [30 min])	Mr Greg Puley, Senior Advisor, Office of the Director, Coordination and Response Division, OCHA  Rogerio Bonifacio, Climate and Food Security Analyst, WFP  Mr Cyril Ferrand, Global Coordinator, Global Food Security Cluster (gFSC)	Mr Stefano Porretti, Director, Emergency Preparedness and Response Support Division, WFP
14.15 - 15.00 hours	Regional overview of preparedness and response strategies and priorities – <u>Horn of Africa</u>	Mr Greg Puley, Senior Advisor, Office of the Director, Coordination and Response Division, OCHA  Rogerio Bonifacio, Climate and Food Security Analyst, WFP  Mr Cyril Ferrand, Global Coordinator, Global Food Security Cluster (gFSC)  Mr Neil Marsland, Senior Technical Advisor, Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division, FAO	Mr Daniele Donati, Deputy Director, Emergency and Rehabilitation Division, FAO
15.00 - 15.45 hours	Regional overview of preparedness and response strategies and priorities – <u>Latin America and the Caribbean</u>	Mr Greg Puley, Senior Advisor, Office of the Director, Coordination and Response Division, OCHA  Rogerio Bonifacio, Climate and Food Security Analyst, WFP  Mr Cyril Ferrand, Global Coordinator, Global Food Security Cluster (gFSC)  Mr Neil Marsland, Senior Technical Advisor, Emergency Operations	Mr Daniele Donati, Deputy Director, Emergency and Rehabilitation Division, FAO

<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Presenter(s)</b>	<b>Moderator(s)</b>
		and Rehabilitation Division, FAO	
15.45 - 16.30 hours	Regional overview of preparedness and response strategies and priorities – <u>Asia and the Pacific</u>	Mr Greg Puley, Senior Advisor, Office of the Director, Coordination and Response Division, OCHA  Rogerio Bonifacio, Climate and Food Security Analyst, WFP  Mr Cyril Ferrand, Global Coordinator, Global Food Security Cluster (gFSC)  Mr Neil Marsland, Senior Technical Advisor, Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division, FAO	Mr Giancarlo Cirri, Deputy Director, Emergency Preparedness and Response Support Division, WFP
16:30 – 16:50 hours	World Bank and UNDP interventions	Mr Daniel Kull, Senior Disaster Risk Management Specialist, World Bank  Mr Jo Scheuer, Chief of Profession/Team Leader, UNDP- Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction -New York	Mr Dominique Burgeon, Director, Emergency and Rehabilitation Division, Strategic Programme Leader – Resilience, FAO; and  Mr Stefano Porretti, Director, Emergency Preparedness and Response Support Division, WFP
16.50 - 17:20 hours	The way forward: Recommendations to collectively respond to current needs and address future risks	Mr Dominique Burgeon, Director, Emergency and Rehabilitation Division, Strategic Programme Leader – Resilience, FAO; and  Mr Stefano Porretti, Director, Emergency Preparedness and Response Support Division, WFP	
17.20 - 17.30 hours	Summary and Closing remarks	Mr Laurent Thomas, FAO Assistant Director-General, Technical Cooperation and Programme Management (TC)	



## Annex 2: List of Participants

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