Zambia (specific areas)

**ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY** | The magnitude of acute food insecurity persists amid high levels of poverty, macroeconomic instability and weather shocks.

**PEAK 2023/24 (OCTOBER 2023—MARCH 2024)**

2.0M people or 23% of the analysed population faced high levels of acute food insecurity. Of them, 0.06M people faced Emergency (IPC Phase 4).

The analysis coverage decreased from 13.5 million people in 91 districts in 2022/23 to 9.1 million in 76 districts.

When considering the same districts analysed during the two periods, the number of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity increased significantly. This is largely driven by prolonged dry spells and flooding, pests, diseases, high food and input costs, and low labour opportunities and wages for poor households.

**Drivers of the Crisis 2023-2024**

- **Economic shocks** Prices of maize reached record levels in October 2023 and were 80 percent higher year-on-year – due to currency weakness increasing fuel and transport costs and strong export demand for Zambian maize (FAO, November 2023).

  - The impact of the war in Ukraine also contributed to pushing up domestic prices, due to the disruptions it caused to the global food market (IPC, November 2023).

  - Labour opportunities and wages for poorer rural households were expected to be lower than average due to increases in the cost of agricultural inputs (IPC, November 2023).

- **Weather extremes** Maize production increased by 22.9 percent year-on-year for the 2023/24 consumption period, largely thanks to increased planting and generally good weather conditions. However, localized flooding and prolonged dry spells in western and southern Zambia, ahead of the July–September 2024 dry season (OCHA, February 2024).

  - Reduced harvests.

  - Crop diseases and pests Almost all the provinces that grow cassava reported cassava brown streak disease, while army worms devastated field crops in affected districts (IPC, November 2023).

**A protracted food crisis** Zambia is a lower-middle-income country that has been defined as a major food crisis in six of the eight editions of the GFCS, even as the coverage of the analysis has varied widely (between the 2022/23 and 2023/24 lean seasons the analysis coverage decreased from 71 percent to 47 percent). The increasingly protracted nature of this food crisis is largely due to the impact of weather extremes on the food security and livelihoods of smallholder farming households that are responsible for up to 90 percent of food production, including frequent, prolonged dry spells, extreme high temperatures and floods. Zambia faces underlying structural problems, such as very high poverty rates and a high public debt burden that undermines efforts to deliver social services and alleviate poverty (WFP, 2023).

**Displacement**

- **0.08M refugees and asylum-seekers by 2023** Source: UNHCR Nowcasted estimate, December 2023.