



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

Fostering Urban Resilience through Preparedness Activities in Southern Africa

WHY FOCUS ON URBAN VULNERABILITY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA?

About half of the residents in urban areas of Zimbabwe (roughly 2.4 million people) go to bed hungry every night. Since Covid-19 first struck the country, over a quarter of the country's urban residents are skipping meals daily, and only 54% can access a healthy diet.¹ Similarly, in Madagascar, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic over food insecurity are being further compounded by the country's exposure to recurrent natural hazards. In early 2022, Madagascar was struck by four consecutive tropical

storms and cyclones; Cyclone Batsirai passed over central and southern Madagascar, destroying nearly 8,200 homes and affecting over 116,000 people.² With climate and economic shocks becoming increasingly prevalent, fifty years of development gains and the success of the Sustainable Development Goals are under threat in southern Africa. Food insecurity has nearly doubled over a five-year timeframe, increasing from an estimated 27 million in 2017/2018 to more than 53 million in 2021/2022.³



Funded by
the European Union

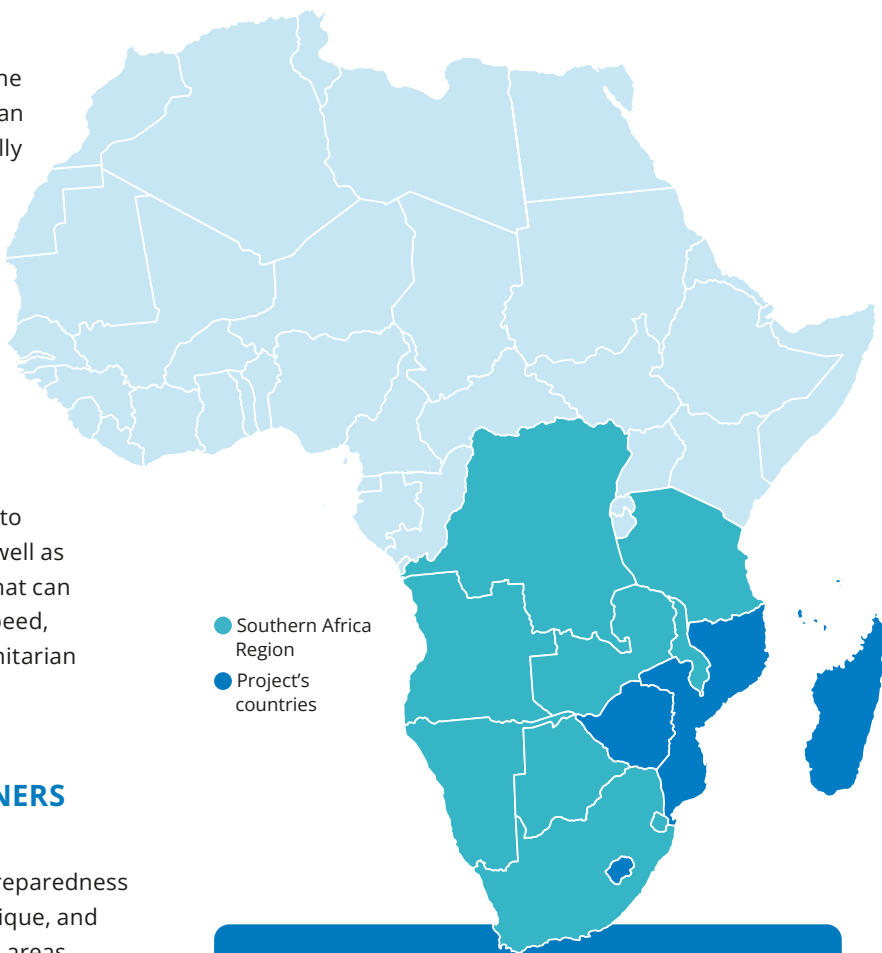


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In addition, the rapid growth of cities in the region has tilted the scales of humanitarian response, moving away from a traditionally rural focus as needs increase in urban areas due to protracted crises, conflict, and socio-political dynamics—around 55% of urbanites in southern Africa live in informal settlements, with poor living conditions and limited access to basic services and infrastructure.⁴

The challenges are manifold and require a “fresh” understanding of the multiple factors influencing people’s vulnerability to natural and human-induced hazards, as well as fit-for-purpose tools and best practices that can support stakeholders in improving the speed, appropriateness, and efficiency of humanitarian response.



WHAT ARE WFP AND ITS PARTNERS DOING ABOUT IT?

WFP is implementing a Regional Urban Preparedness Project in Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, focusing activities in 12 urban areas. Funded by the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), the project, titled “Fostering Community Resilience through Preparedness Activities in Southern Africa,” aims to build a common understanding on the specific characteristics of urban vulnerability and essential needs in the region, and strengthen country capacity by providing partners, local governments, and national institutions with a set of tools to better prepare for responding to shocks in urban areas.

At its core, the project has been working closely with key stakeholders involved in urban preparedness and response, all the way from data collection to validation to ensure that any proposal developed meets the needs and preferences of each targeted community. This includes engagement with traditional WFP partners in the four countries, such as the National Disaster Management Authorities⁵ and social welfare bodies (e.g., the Ministry of Social Development in Lesotho, the Institute of Social Assistance in Mozambique, the Ministry of Population in Madagascar), and with non-traditional partners such as the Municipalities of Pemba in Mozambique and the Municipality of Antananarivo in Madagascar, which have been directly involved in the design and implementation of activities.

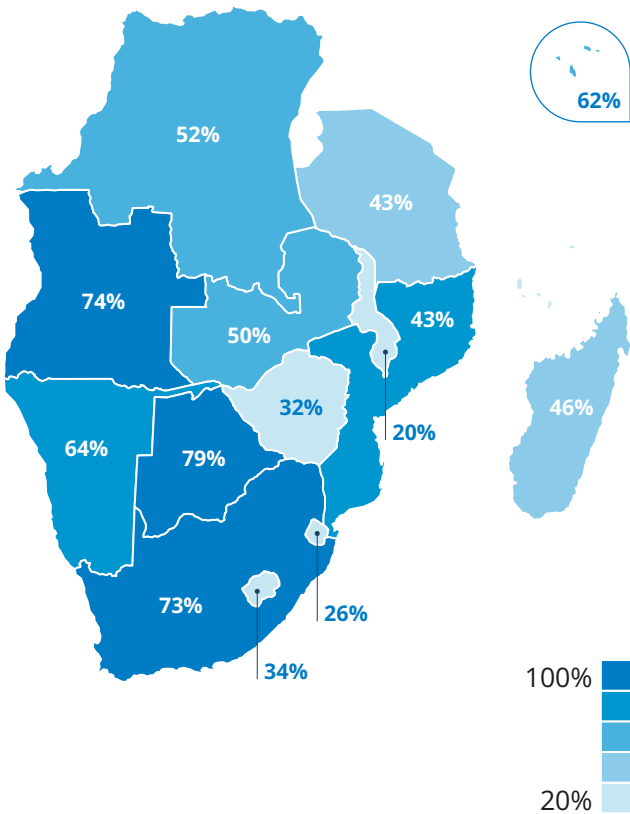


Engagement with city-based civil society organisations and community members has also been facilitated for each phase of the project—embracing the critical importance for vulnerable groups such as women, children and youth, older persons, migrants, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities to be actively involved in resilience building and disaster preparedness at all levels, and that their needs and aspirations are taken into consideration.

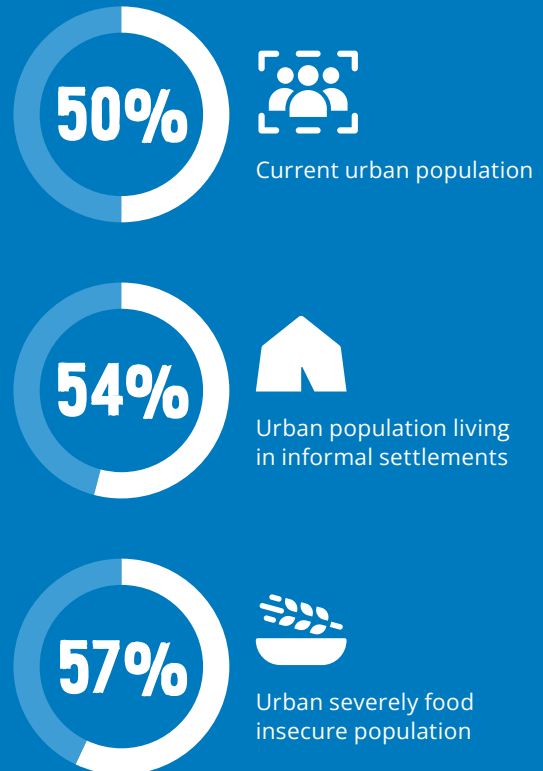




PERCENTAGE OF URBAN POPULATION Projections for 2030



REGIONAL URBAN PROFILE



Informing the current urban shift of humanitarianism: a renewed approach to vulnerability

The project was structured around three critical knowledge gaps to better understand urban vulnerability in the region:

- 1. Understanding who the relevant actors and institutions are and how they can work better together**, through multi-stakeholder analyses of the existing urban governance systems and the socio-economic and geographical context in each country. **The project identified how to reduce, if not close, coordination gaps between national and local levels of government, as well to identify new areas of responsibility within local governments for urban preparedness.**

Outcomes include guidance and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for effective coordination of emergency preparedness and response that stipulate who does what and when, to clearly assign roles and responsibilities, avoid duplication, and therefore save time and resources. This process also allowed creating new institutions to address coordination gaps, such as the Urban Technical Working Group established in Madagascar, comprising representatives from the National Risk and Disaster Management Office (BNGRC), the Municipality of Antananarivo, WFP, OCHA, and members of the Cash Working Group.

- 2. Understanding how vulnerability is experienced in cities and why, and how to best locate and identify the most vulnerable**, using a multi-dimensional analysis of vulnerability at the national, city, and household level—leveraging community members' knowledge of existing vulnerability drivers. **Urban shock-affected communities do not perceive their vulnerability in sectoral terms but from a holistic, multi-sectoral perspective, which requires improved stakeholder coordination.** The results include SOPs as well as recommendations for developing or revising existing urban vulnerability frameworks, taking into account the specificities of urban areas, such as informal labour and the quality of jobs and people's exposure to hazards, including through georeferencing.



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The project was a unique platform for local authorities, WFP, and [the Department of] Civil Protection's framed conceptual and programmatic approaches to Disaster Preparedness (DP). For Civil Protection, it was a chance to extend the scope of our programming away from solely social assistance and disaster response. Most Civil Protection projects in urban spaces now need to have crisis modifier budget lines to address urban DP and DRR concerns. Overall, this was a very necessary and worthwhile project which deserves more resource and time allocation in the wake of increased intensity and frequency of disasters in cities.

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Solomon Mungure,
DanChurchAid in Zimbabwe



3. Understanding the adequacy of cash-based transfers (CBT) in urban areas of the region

through an analysis of the enabling environment, as well as community experiences with this modality of humanitarian response and their preferences. CBT, coupled with emerging digital opportunities, place vulnerable people at the centre of aid, empowering them to meet their essential needs in local markets according to their priorities. Using Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB)⁶ estimations, stakeholders were able to determine a transfer value (i.e., the amount of money household members need to receive to cover essential needs in times of crisis) that is suitable for urban areas, and to inform discussions with National Cash Working Groups on the potential update of current MEBs.



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The project has been enlightening, especially during the hotspot identification exercises. Multi-stakeholder discussions helped me better understand the vulnerability dimensions of poor households in the city of Gweru. Through the discussions, disaster risk management gaps in the city of Gweru were identified. I learned about the importance of community focal points in disaster risk management, and that communities should be trained on first aid because they are usually the first responders. I also learned that a multi-sectoral approach (including the private sector) is key in strengthening disaster preparedness in urban areas.

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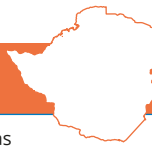
Phillis Tena,
Department of Social
Development
City of Gweru, Zimbabwe



SUMMARY OF IMPLEMENTATION





	URBAN CONTEXT ANALYSIS	URBAN VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT	TARGETING FOR & DELIVERING CASH-BASED TRANSFERS (CBT)
 <p>OUTPUTS ACHIEVED</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 04 urban context analyses delivered • Entry points identified for policymakers in the 04 countries • SOPs on coordination for urban preparedness developed for each country • Urban contingency plans updated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 05 urban vulnerability hotspots identified in each of the 12 cities • 04 qualitative & quantitative MEBs designed • SOPs provided for each country to update their urban vulnerability framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Technical Working Group established in Madagascar • National Cash Working Group established in Lesotho • SOPs for urban response via cash transfers developed • CBT Feasibility carried out in the 4 Countries
 <p>ACTIVITIES & ENGAGEMENT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 04 national workshops held • 1000+ stakeholders participated • 150 organisations engaged at the international, national, city, and community level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 04 national and 12 city-level geographic targeting exercises held • 800+ stakeholders contributed to the participatory analysis • 300+ household members consulted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 04 CBT assessments performed • Review of urban targeting methodologies: mapping of the current challenges and opportunities

COUNTRY-LED PRACTICES AND OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED

<p>LESOTHO</p>		<p>MADAGASCAR</p>	
<p>Since 2019, the National Information for Social Assistance (NISSA) is being updated to expand its coverage to 12 urban areas, a need further emphasized after witnessing the impacts of Covid-19 on city dwellers. This first expansion has set the foundation for further updating the NISSA and revising and testing the targeting criteria in urban areas. While the targeting methodology employed requires further improvement for its effective application in urban areas, the expansion of the NISSA has set the foundation to facilitate more adequate NISSA registration and better coordination for shock-responsive social protection in urban areas of Lesotho.</p>		<p>The Commune Urbaine of Antananarivo (CUA) is an example of good city-governance with a very well-organized structure that allows it to be fully involved in key activities aimed at reduce urban communities vulnerability, in coordination with the national bodies, namely BNGRC and the Ministry of Population. Provided with a Directorates such as Disaster Risk Management, Social Welfare, Health, Community Life, the Commune has been directly involved in the delivery of the urban post-COVID response as well as the post-cyclone urban responses. The Municipality has been, jointly with BNGRC, the main government partner of WFP in this project.</p>	
<p>MOZAMBIQUE</p>		<p>ZIMBABWE</p>	
<p>The National Institute of Social Action (INAS) and National Institute for Disaster Risk Management and Reduction (INGD), supported by The World Bank and other partners, have implemented one of the most ambitious social safety net response plans in the region to alleviate the economic impact of Covid-19 on poor and vulnerable families directly dependent on the informal sector. To date, the plan has directly benefited over 1.5 million affected urban families thanks to the use of an adaptive component of the Post Emergency Direct Cash Transfers Programme, created to deal with covariate shocks such as droughts, floods, and cyclones.</p>		<p>The national government-led devolution policy has set the foundation towards increased responsibility and financial autonomy amongst subnational and local authorities in Zimbabwe. The Provincial Governments are directly mandated by the Office of the President and Cabinet to implement the devolution policy to ensure that no community is left behind as the nation forges ahead with Vision 2030 of an empowered upper-middle-income economy. This devolution policy set the basis for a decentralized management of disaster risk and preparedness, thus filling the coordination gap between the national and the local level.</p>	



REGIONAL FINDINGS

	FINDINGS	RECOMENDATIONS
 <p>COORDINATION: URBAN CONTINGENCY PLANNING</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Contingency Planning does not get translated into clear operational procedures that are relevant at the local level. Communities and civil society are not trained or prepared to implement preparedness and anticipatory action planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen DRM Coordination in urban areas through updating, redesigning, and digitalising of urban contingency plans and enhancing community capacity in disaster preparedness.
 <p>URBAN VULNERABILITY FRAMEWORK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frameworks are heavily focused on food insecurity, reflecting a rural bias. Income-generating activities are characterized based on availability but not according to quality and type of income generated. The spatial dimension of inequality is not taken into consideration through an area-based approach that includes exposure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redefine the Urban Vulnerability Framework by adding urban-specific indicators related to Multidimensional Deprivation Index (MDDI), informal labor, and exposure to hazards.
 <p>URBAN MEB</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where present, the national MEB does not reflect urban essential needs. No systems are in place to cascade the effects of inflation and other macroeconomic price fluctuations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update & monitor regularly holistic essential needs, price actualisation, and price monitoring.
 <p>URBAN TARGETING</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No regional or national guidance is available that can help harmonise methodologies for urban targeting. Duplication & exclusion errors are frequent. The absence of an objective procedure results in tension. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harmonise & localise methods for population registration, shared targeting criteria, and community validation.



WAY FORWARD

The Regional Urban Preparedness Project has provided a clearer understanding of urban vulnerability and essential needs in urban areas of the four participating countries, including a detailed picture of the main hazards affecting the selected urban locations, of who the ultra-vulnerable are, where they are located, what their essential needs are, and what the transfer value for a dignified assistance could be. The innovative approach used for multi-stakeholder engagement has also set the foundation for better coordination of urban preparedness amongst national governments, local authorities, and stakeholders across the DRM, social protection, and humanitarian sectors, while contributing to enhanced intra-regional collaboration (see Box 1).

The next step will be to translate the project's achievements into national systems and regional guidance for urban preparedness and response, including of the Southern African Development

Community (SADC). A revision of the urban vulnerability framework is being considered to incorporate i) a multi-dimensional approach beyond the traditional food security focus; ii) labour-related questions that can help better characterise livelihood activities and their implications for the household, and iii) people's exposure to risks and hazards.

WFP envisions three main areas of work to further support national systems strengthening in the region, in accordance with the regional priorities identified through the different activities held both at the national and regional level (see below). First, support for improving DRM coordination in urban areas, including at the community level. Second, continuous support to National Vulnerability Assessments Committees, charged with improving emergency response. And third, providing technical advice on urban population registration and shock-responsive social protection.



OVERARCHING STRATEGIC REGIONAL PRIORITIES



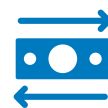
Closing the vertical coordination gap

Translating national contingency plans into locally relevant emergency operation procedures for a more effective response



Revising the urban vulnerability framework

Enabling the multi-dimensional analysis of urban vulnerability at the national, city, and household level



Strengthening urban cash preparedness

Improving urban population registries, targeting processes, and harmonising transfer values



BOX 1 – REGIONAL ADVOCACY AND PEER-LEARNING ACTIVITIES

A key element of the project is to promote the adoption and ownership of the resulting urban programming recommendations and methodological adjustments in the four participating countries, as well as in the region as a whole. In addition to National Technical Workshops held in each country, a series of global and regional-level events convened key stakeholders to identify overarching themes, gaps, and opportunities for defining a **common regional framework** on urban preparedness across coordination, vulnerability, and cash assistance. The project has organised the following three advocacy and peer-learning events:

1. Dialogue session at the 9th AfriCities Summit in Kenya, featuring representatives of national and local governments from across the region and from the African Union.

2. Networking event at the 11th session of the World Urban Forum in Poland, to exchange on and discuss different aspects of fostering urban resilience through preparedness activities.

3. Global webinar on socialprotection.org focused on adaptive social protection and urban resilience, showcasing the experiences of the cities of Antananarivo, Madagascar and Pemba, Mozambique.

The outcomes of these and future engagements aim at strengthening buy-in from the broader urban resilience community in Southern Africa, including both national and regional entities, while further consolidating the partnerships established to implement the project.





World Food Programme

Regional Bureau for Southern Africa Johannesburg

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For more info on the project

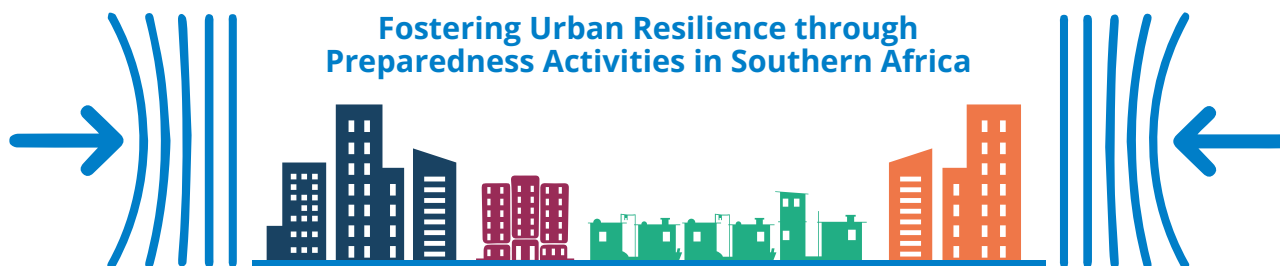
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Photo credits

Photos page 1, 4, 5 (focus group), 7, 10:
WFP/Hannah Barry
Photos page 3, 5 (people on map photo):
WFP/Arianna Francioni

Endnotes

- 1 ZimVAC, 2021
- 2 Centre for Affordable Housing Finance in Africa, 2022
- 3 WFP, 2022; SADC, 2022
- 4 UN-Habitat, 2022.
- 5 This includes the National Bureau of Disaster Risk Management (BNGRC) in Madagascar; the National Institute for Disaster Management (INGD) in Mozambique; the Disaster Management Authority (DMA) in Lesotho; and Department of Civil Protection (DCP) in Zimbabwe.
- 6 A minimum expenditure basket (MEB) is defined as what a household requires in order to meet their essential needs, on a regular or seasonal basis, and its cost.



Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, Zimbabwe



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