

Implications of the Super El Niño Event for Shelter, Land and Site Coordination (SLSC)

Introduction

This note provides a summary of implications of the 2026-2027 “Super” El Niño event for humanitarian shelter, land and site coordination activities. Links to supplemental information on site and settlements planning and management, responses to El Niño-associated heat waves and El Niño Linked Drought and Severe Food Insecurity can be found at the end of this document.

The information in this note and the references documents can be used to plan for and manage ongoing and new humanitarian operations linked to El Niño conditions. In all cases, hazard management plans should be based on local assessments of risk and management options.

Summary Information on Super El Nino

El Niño is characterized by unusually warm ocean surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific. The name originates with Peruvian fishermen and sailors who noticed a warm current, associated with reduced fish catches, and named it El Niño (“the Christ Child”), likely because it typically became noticeable around Christmas.

El Niño is associated with increased rainfall and flooding in parts of South America, East Africa, and the southern United States; drought conditions in eastern and northern Australia, Indonesia, southern Africa, and parts of South Asia due to suppressed monsoon activity; and reduced Atlantic hurricane activity.

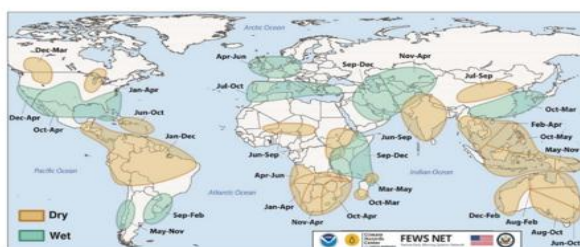
The timing and intensity can make a difference. Thus, El Niño is associated with increased rainfall over East Africa, often resulting in a wetter-than-normal, and sometimes severe, “short rains” season between October and December. It is also typically linked to suppressed rainfall during the June–September season over the northern parts of the region, including Sudan, South Sudan, parts of Ethiopia and western Kenya.

Extracted from <https://wmo.int/topics/el-nino-la-nina-phenomena>

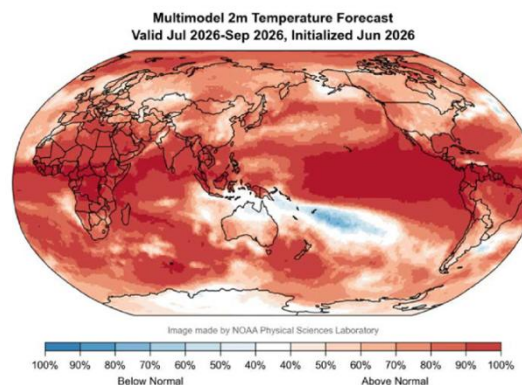
Regional Conditions Over Time

The two maps below provide sub-regional monthly impacts of El Niño, on the left for wet/dry conditions and on the right for warmer/cooler changes in average temperatures. (Source: [Fews Net Weather and Agriculture Outlook June 2026](#).) These projections can change. [Fews Net Weekly Global Weather Hazards reports](#) should be consulted to understand changes in wet-dry patterns and the timing of these events.

El Niño is Related to Precipitation
Departures from Average in Many Regions



Multimodel 2m Temperature Forecast
Valid Jul 2026-Sep 2026, Initialized Jun 2026



September 2026

While El Niño events are often reported as wetter or dryer conditions, they can also be associated with significant increases in hot weather. These hot weather events can be short (days) or long (weeks) and can have significant impacts following disasters or for IDPs where normal ways to manage extreme heat are not available. While drought-affected location may be considered hot due to the lack of rain, heavy rainfall can be followed by periods of unusually high temperatures, creating high heat index¹ conditions leading to significant health risks, particularly when considering labor demands of relief and recovery work.

Forecasting

Forecasts of El Niño weather conditions are available from global to national sources. [Fews Net](#) focuses on food security and particularly food production, food supply and markets, but also reports on natural hazards². [GIEWS - Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture](#) – focuses on food and food production. Both systems tend to be more attune to drought rather excess rainfall or flooding, as drought tends to have a broader negative impact on food security. While reporting is usually at the national or subnational (state) levels, where satellite images are used, impacted locations can be fairly specific.

National meteorological services can generate fairly time and location specific warnings of severe weather (including heat waves) and drought or excessively wet conditions. An example of this relatively precise forecasting is provided by the [Nigerian Metrological Service](#). National meteorological and hydrological services should be the initial contact point on El Niño evolution and threats, including seasonal and short-term forecasting and warnings.

Flood forecasting information is available from [global](#) and national agencies. Any effort at flood preparedness should include mapping and a range of risk reduction measures. Flood zone mapping can involve relatively sophisticated remote sensing, elevation data and modeling. However, mapping using community inputs and based on past floods can provide a good enough identification of possible flood-impacted locations for planning risk reduction and mitigation measures.

Super El Niño SLSC Implications

The table below provides a general summary of impacts on shelter, land, and site coordination to be expected from the three main hazards associated with El Niño: drought, flood and extreme heat. Additional documents This information, along with locally refined El Niño forecasts, can be used to guide preparedness, anticipatory actions and responses to El Niño conditions. Responding to each hazard requires effective early warning and preparedness and should involve local level risk reduction in addition to or as part of any anticipatory action efforts. Links to additional information on the implications of El Niño can be found at the end of this document.

Hazard	Implications for Shelter, Land and Site Coordination (not exhaustive)
Drought	• People moving from normal locations seeking food or water. (Significant issue in last major El Niño in PNG). • Increased local and urban migration. • New or enlarged IDP sites.

¹ For a definition of heat index, see <https://www.weather.gov/ama/heatindex>.

² This link is to a report incorporating flooding into an assessment of food security: <https://fews.net/east-africa/south-sudan/food-security-outlook-update/april-2026>.

	• Selling of productive and shelter assets to cover food costs. (Seen in Ethiopia in response to drought.) • Selling of land to cover basic needs, leading to land and property issues in some cultural systems. • Increased risk of evictions due to losses in income, particularly for those already displaced. • Reduced assets to cover basic necessities leading to evictions from housing and land. • Increase tensions over access to natural resources. • Potable and other water shortages at IDP sites, in evacuation or collective centers and in urban areas where displaced have congregated. • Secondary impact from wildfire leading to loss of shelter and damage to settlements, including IDP sites.
Floods (flash and river) ³	• Damage to shelter, sites and settlements; need for significant immediate and longer-term support. • Loss of use of productive assets, including land and home-based commercial space afforded by shelter and in settlements. • Displacement to safer sites for short or long duration. • Urban migration. • Increased need for clean-up work⁴ and resources. • Significant rebuilding costs; requirement for extended transitional shelter support (2-5 years). (Affected cannot return if they do not have at least minimum shelter and services.) • Need to replace lost assets, e.g., essential household and clothing items, productive assets (e.g., tools) and means of transport. • Replacement of lost documents needed for assistance and support services. • Land and property issues on return; proving land ownership; need for paperwork to access assistance. • Sites are no longer viable due to flood damage and requiring new locations. • Increased risk of waterborne and vector-based diseases, leading to expanded cross-Cluster site-level and overall coordination, e.g., for site-specific actions to reduce flood areas, WASH provision and expanded health surveillance and response staffing and resources. • Need to revise preparedness plans, pre-positioned stocks and risk reduction interventions based on projected increase in scope and duration of flooding.
Extreme Heat – short and long duration	• Need for facilities to reduce heat stress, e.g., cooling centers. • Changes to building and site designs to improve passive cooling and reduce urban heat island effect. • Need to increase shade; Installation of shade nets in public spaces and over shelters.

³ In some cases, flooding can last months, leading to incremental damage to structures and settlements and other infrastructure, and delaying return.

⁴ Can be a female-specific responsibility.

	• Use of insulation and geothermal cooling to improve living conditions in buildings. • Changes to work patterns to reduce exposure.⁵ • Changes in cooking arrangements (locations, fuel, food items) to reduce heat impacts. • Provision of additional household items (buckets, drums, clothing, fans) to assure potable water for consumption and for cooling.
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Additional Resources

- [Camp Management Toolkit](#)
- [Sites and Settlements: Key Planning and Management Considerations for El Niño](#)
- [Response Options for El Niño-Associated Heat Waves](#)
- [Considerations for SLSC Responses to El Niño-Linked Drought and Severe Food Insecurity](#)

⁵ Can include gendered differentiated labor.