

Zambia's 2026/27 El Niño readiness plan: from seasonal forecast to local protection

Zambia's official 2026/27 seasonal forecast identifies a very strong El Niño, below-normal rainfall over most of the country, prolonged dry spells in the southern half from December to February, and localised flood risk in wetter northern areas. On 13 October the Government and UNICEF reported that the national El Niño Cluster Readiness, Preparedness and Anticipatory Action Plan had been finalised. The plan is a verified administrative action, not evidence that budgets, supplies or protection have reached districts and communities.

Record: ZM-ELNINO-2026-001

Revision: 1.0

Jurisdiction: Zambia

Opened: 14 October 2026

Last reviewed: 14 October 2026

State: National plan finalised; finance and delivery trail open

This record concerns Zambia's national 2026/27 readiness plan and the provincial forecast geography established by the Zambia Meteorological Department. It does not classify district conditions, attribute observed impacts, or infer implementation from the plan's completion.

Current assessment

Latest change: Zambia has moved from a seasonal warning to a finalised national readiness plan.

A joint Government and UNICEF release published on 13 October confirms that the plan has been finalised with line ministries, United Nations agencies and partners. The plan itself, its trigger table and its budget were not retrieved in the sources reviewed.

Decision now due: Publish the plan's triggers, responsibilities and finance, then show pre-positioning and local delivery before the risk windows close.

The next consequential evidence is a dated chain from trigger to national, provincial and district tasking, appropriation or release, procurement, stock placement, service delivery and outcome monitoring.

Timing: Immediate. The forecast places rainfall onset from October in parts of the north and delays onset until December in much of the south and south-east; the prolonged dry-spell window is December 2026 to February 2027.

Responsibility: The National Disaster Risk Management Division coordinates; the meteorological service and line ministries hold sector responsibilities.

The Office of the Vice-President's National Disaster Risk Management Division coordinates the national plan. The Zambia Meteorological Department supplies the forecast. Agriculture, water, health, education, energy, infrastructure, livestock and fisheries institutions, with provincial and district authorities, are responsible for sector and local execution.

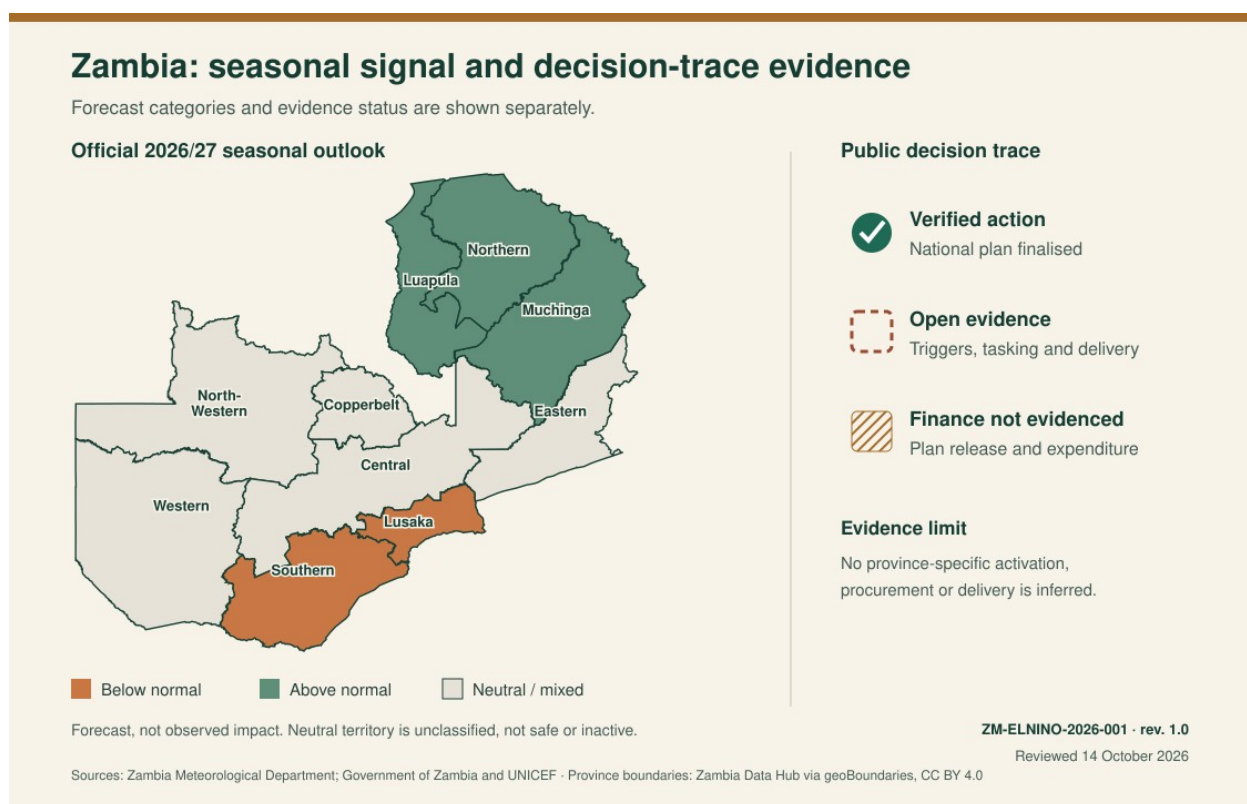
Verified action: One verified response entry: the 2026/27 national readiness and anticipatory-action plan was finalised.

The Government and UNICEF describe plan preparation, essential supplies and services, local preparedness, early action, disease surveillance, emergency logistics and safe-water systems. Those descriptions establish the plan's intended scope, not completed procurement, stock placement or delivery.

Open evidence: The plan document, triggers, public-finance trail, procurement, stocks, local tasking, delivery and outcomes remain open.

No attributable plan budget, contingency release, procurement award, stock inventory, provincial or district mobilisation order, beneficiary-level delivery or outcome record was verified. European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations funding is described as support for Zambia's anticipatory-action approach, but the amount and any release tied to this plan are not established.

Territorial evidence map



The map keeps forecast probability separate from institutional evidence. Other provinces remain neutral where a single province-wide category would overstate the source. Neutral does not mean safe or inactive. The forecast is not an observed-impact map.

Record ZM-ELNINO-2026-001 · revision 1.0 · reviewed 14 October 2026. Sources: Zambia Meteorological Department; Government of Zambia and UNICEF. Province boundaries: Zambia Data Hub via geoBoundaries, CC BY 4.0.

Decision trace

T0 · Signal · Verified

What is forecast, where and when?

The official forecast identifies a very strong El Niño, below-normal rainfall over most of Zambia, wetter conditions in Luapula, Northern and Muchinga provinces, prolonged dry spells in the southern half from December to February and localised flood risk in wetter northern areas.

T1 · Trigger · Open evidence

Which thresholds would activate early action?

The public release confirms that an anticipatory-action plan exists, but the plan's trigger values, lead times and activation authority were not available in the sources reviewed.

T2 · Authority · Mapped

Who coordinates and who executes?

The National Disaster Risk Management Division coordinates. The forecast identifies sector leads, including the meteorological service, ministries responsible for agriculture, water, health, energy and infrastructure, the Water Resources Management Authority, ZESCO, the Zambezi River Authority and the Road Development Agency.

T3 · Commitment and finance · Open evidence

What has been authorised and financed?

The national plan is finalised. No plan-specific appropriation, contingency release, donor amount, procurement award or payment was verified. A financing framework or partner support is not evidence of release or expenditure.

T4 · Execution · Open evidence

What has reached operations and communities?

The release describes strengthening surveillance, logistics and safe-water systems but provides no dated sites, quantities, procurement trail or delivery record. Execution cannot yet be verified from this file.

T5 · Outcome · Not assessable at this stage

What protection or service continuity can be assessed?

No attributable livelihood, health, water, education, energy or infrastructure outcome is yet established. The forecast and plan do not by themselves demonstrate reduced loss or protected services.

Material changes

14 October 2026 · New record admitted

Context: Zambia · 2026/27 El Niño readiness; forecast issued 11 September, plan confirmation published 13 October

What changed: The Government reported that Zambia's 2026/27 El Niño Cluster Readiness, Preparedness and Anticipatory Action Plan had been finalised, creating a defined national decision trace from the seasonal forecast to anticipatory action.

Decision consequence: Publish the plan's triggers, responsibilities and finance, then show pre-positioning and local delivery before the risk windows close.

Assessment effect: New record admitted. Plan finalisation and the institutional chain are verified; activation, finance, procurement, local delivery and outcomes remain open.

Source: Government of the Republic of Zambia and UNICEF Zambia

Forecasts, guidance and evidence

2026/27 seasonal rainfall and sector outlook: Verified

Source: Zambia Meteorological Department · 2026/27 Seasonal Rainfall ForecastX

Published: 11 September 2026

Valid for: October 2026 to April 2027, including onset and December-to-February dry-spell windows

The forecast identifies below-normal rainfall over most of Zambia, above-normal rainfall in Luapula, Northern and Muchinga provinces and northern parts of North-Western Province, and delayed onset in much of the south and south-east. Its sector guidance calls for contingency planning and resource pre-positioning.

National preparedness and anticipatory action: Verified

Source: Government of the Republic of Zambia and UNICEF Zambia · joint releaseX

Published: 13 October 2026

Valid for: National planning and the immediate 2026/27 decision window

The release confirms plan finalisation and identifies the coordinating institution, participating line ministries and intended preparedness functions. It does not publish the plan, trigger table, budget, procurement or delivery results.

Legal and institutional basis: Mapped

Source: National Assembly of Zambia · Disaster Management (Amendment) Act No. 2 of 2026X

Published: 2026

Valid for: The national disaster-risk-management institution and proactive mandate

The amendment provides the legal basis for the National Disaster Risk Management Division that now coordinates the plan. The law is an enabling framework; it does not establish plan funding or implementation.

Geographic reach and consequences

Southern and Lusaka provinces

Horizon: Below-normal seasonal rainfall and prolonged dry-spell risk

Systems: Agriculture, food security, water, health, education, energy and infrastructure

Finding: The official outlook supports province-wide below-normal mapping for these areas. The plan is national; no province-specific activation or delivery is inferred.

Luapula, Northern and Muchinga provinces

Horizon: Above-normal seasonal rainfall and localised flood risk

Systems: Water, health, education, infrastructure, agriculture and disaster preparedness

Finding: The official outlook supports province-wide above-normal mapping. No observed flood or province-specific response is established.

Other provinces

Horizon: Mixed or sub-provincial forecast signal

Systems: National plan coverage

Finding: These provinces remain neutral on the map because the official forecast does not support a single province-wide category. Neutral does not mean no risk or no action.

Responsibility across public institutions

National coordination

Institutions: National Disaster Risk Management Division, Office of the Vice-President

Role: Coordinate the plan, inter-ministerial readiness and anticipatory action. Publication of the full trigger and tasking structure remains open.

Basis: Joint Government and UNICEF release; Disaster Management (Amendment) Act No. 2 of 2026

Climate information

Institutions: Zambia Meteorological Department

Role: Issue and update the seasonal forecast and sector guidance; supply forecast monitoring for operational decisions.

Basis: Official 2026/27 Seasonal Rainfall Forecast

Sector execution

Institutions: Ministries responsible for agriculture, water, health, education, energy, infrastructure, livestock and fisheries; Water Resources Management Authority, ZESCO, Zambezi River Authority and Road Development Agency

Role: Translate the national plan into sector readiness, continuity measures, procurement, staffing and delivery. Institution-specific execution evidence remains open.

Basis: Lead institutions named in the official forecast's sector recommendations

Subnational implementation

Institutions: Provincial administrations, district authorities and local service teams

Role: Apply authorised early action and service measures in forecast-affected areas. No province- or district-specific order is verified in this file.

Basis: Local preparedness is within the plan's stated scope; detailed tasking remains open

Response and implementation trace

National El Niño readiness, preparedness and anticipatory-action plan finalised

Date: Published 13 October 2026

Actor: National Disaster Risk Management Division with line ministries, United Nations agencies and partners

Stage: Administrative commitment and coordination

Status: Verified

Finance trace

Plan-specific appropriation or contingency release

Amount: Not evidenced in this file

Status: Open evidence

Finding: No amount, budget line, authorisation, transfer or drawdown tied to the finalised plan was verified.

European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations support

Amount: Amount and plan attribution not evidenced

Status: Under review

Finding: The joint release says European humanitarian funding supports Zambia's anticipatory-action approach. It does not establish the amount, release date or which plan activities the funding pays for.

Procurement, emergency stocks and mobilisation

Amount: Not evidenced in this file

Status: Open evidence

Finding: No attributable award, contract, payment, stock inventory, staffing roster or provincial deployment was verified.

Jurisdiction evidence

Zambia · national · Verified plan; execution open

The national plan is finalised. Triggers, finance, procurement and delivery are not established.

Source: Government of the Republic of Zambia and UNICEF Zambia · 13 October 2026

Evidence basis: Authoritative joint release confirming the plan and national coordinating institution

Open evidence: Plan publication, trigger table, budget, releases, procurement, stocks, provincial and district tasking, delivery and outcomes.

Finance: No plan-specific appropriation, release or expenditure evidenced in this file.

Version history

Revision 1.0 · 14 October 2026

The national readiness and anticipatory-action plan was confirmed as finalised against the official 2026/27 seasonal forecast.

Availability: Current public record; an immutable webpage and JSON snapshot will be preserved before any later numbered revision.

Source register

Government of the Republic of Zambia and UNICEF Zambia · Zambia steps up early action to protect children from El NiñoX

Published 13 October 2026; confirms plan finalisation, coordination and intended preparedness functions, while leaving plan detail, finance and delivery open.

Zambia Meteorological Department · 2026/27 Seasonal Rainfall Forecast

Issued 11 September 2026; authoritative forecast, onset timing, sector risks and lead institutions.

Zambia Meteorological Department · full seasonal forecast PDF

Primary forecast document used for the territorial evidence map and sector responsibility chain.

National Assembly of Zambia · Disaster Management (Amendment) Act No. 2 of 2026

Primary legal source for the renamed National Disaster Risk Management Division and its proactive risk-management basis.

Licence and citation

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