DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL

# El Niño Through a Displacement Lens: Risk Exposure, Mobility and Operational Implications

## 00 Executive Summary

The strong forecasted El Niño event in 2026 and 2027 are likely to have a significant effect on displaced people and may drive further displacement. The relationship between climate and displacement is complex. Climate-induced natural hazards displace an average of 22 million people every year, many of whom remain in protracted displacement. Needs assessment data from DRC operations in multiple countries further shows that displaced people frequently live in shelters that offer limited protection against extreme weather events. Climate shocks drive displacement by eroding livelihoods and food security, but they can also create "trapped populations," whose depleted resources leave them unable to flee worsening conditions. Against this backdrop, DRC's analysis finds a relationship between annual changes in displacement and the phase of the El Niño; however additional data is needed to validate this hypothesis.

To better understand where displaced and vulnerable populations may be most exposed to the anticipated effects of El Niño, DRC analysed available weather forecasting, exposure and population mobility data across a sample of contexts where it operates, including Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Colombia, Venezuela, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and Syria. The analysis aims to identify areas that may merit closer monitoring; it does not predict specific impacts.

In **Somalia**, where the impact of El Nino is likely to be high, this analysis identifies that around 2.3 million as being most exposed to flooding in the Juba and Shabelle riverine corridors, and in urban and peri-urban areas around Mogadishu, with IDPs in fragile shelters particularly at risk. **Ethiopia** is forecast to see both elevated dryness in northeast, and wetness in the south, with exposed populations identified both in the southeast and parts of Ethiopia's densely populated highland corridor. Some of the highest potential exposure appears to be in the Somali Region, where approximately 320,000 people may be highly exposed to flooding. In **Kenya**, between over 500,000 people are identified in areas exposed to frequent river flooding, with coastal areas, as well as Tana, Garissa, Dadaab, Mandera and Wajir identified as potential impact hotspots. In **Venezuela**, DRC's analysis suggests that a drier-than-normal season could worsen conditions in Maracaibo, Caracas, and the central-north urban belt, for people already affected by the country's displacement and migration crisis. In **Colombia**, which hosts 7.2 million internally displaced people, El Niño-related dryness could worsen existing pressure on water access, food security, agriculture, livestock, hydropower and public health, including in La Guajira and the Caribbean urban corridor. Forecasts for the Sahel are more mixed, with a potential both for continued drought/agropastoral stress and localized flood risk, with potential impact hotspots in Boucle du Mouhoun (**Burkina Faso**), Ségou, Mopti and the Inner Niger Delta / Niger River corridor (**Mali**) and Yobe River basin (**Niger**). Finally, in **Syria**, a wetter-than-normal late-2026 rainy-season period may have large humanitarian impacts in Al-Hasakeh, where recent displacement and service disruption have already increased vulnerability, and northwest Syria, where camp and shelter conditions make even localized heavy rainfall potentially severe.

The contexts where DRC operates have very different exposure to El Niño risks, systems and resources, and DRC is applying a flexible approach to strengthening preparedness according to forecast confidence, existing programming and national capacities. DRC teams on the ground are in the process of adapting existing programmes to anticipated El Niño impacts; strengthening existing preparedness and anticipatory action systems and making rapid investment in emergency

preparedness plans and simplified anticipatory action plans. Further information on DRC's El Niño response will be available in a forthcoming Global El Niño Response Plan.

# 01 Introduction: El Niño Through a Displacement Lens: Risk Exposure, Mobility and Operational Implications

El Niño is now underway in the tropical Pacific and forecasts point to a high-risk event through the remainder of 2026 and into early 2027. NOAA's Climate Prediction Center has issued an El Niño Advisory, stating that El Niño conditions are present and favoured to persist through the Northern Hemisphere winter of 2026–27; it also estimates a 81% chance of a very strong event during October-December[1], which would rank among the largest El Niño events in the historical record since 1950. The International Research Institute for Climate and Society's June update shows how quickly conditions have developed, with sea-surface temperature anomalies in the Niño 3.4 region rising from +0.48°C during March–May to +1.7°C by mid-June[2]. WMO's July update points in the same direction, warning that El Niño is expected to intensify rapidly over the coming months, increasing the likelihood of heatwaves, droughts, heavy rainfall and other extreme weather events in many parts of the world.[3]

El Niño increases the likelihood of seasonal rainfall and temperature anomalies, but it does not determine local impacts. NOAA and WMO both caution that even strong or very strong events do not produce expected impacts everywhere. Local outcomes still depend on timing, event structure, regional exposure and interaction with other climate drivers, including the possible development of a positive Indian Ocean Dipole, as indicated by several current seasonal forecasts, and other seasonal climate patterns. Moreover, El Niño shifts the probability of floods, droughts, heat stress and other weather-related hazards, but the humanitarian consequences depend on who is exposed, how vulnerable they are and what capacity exists to anticipate, absorb and respond to shocks.

When climate shocks intensify, displaced populations and vulnerable households are among those most at risk. Refugees, internally displaced people, returnees and displacement-affected host communities frequently reside in hazard-prone locations, including floodplains, informal settlements and drought-affected rural areas. Many face insecure land tenure, degraded infrastructure, limited access to essential services and reduced livelihood opportunities. These underlying vulnerabilities mean that even moderate climate shocks can rapidly escalate into humanitarian crises. Applying a displacement lens to El Niño is therefore key to shift the focus beyond identifying where hazards are likely to occur. It enables humanitarian actors to understand who is most at risk, how existing vulnerabilities shape likely humanitarian consequences and where early action can have the greatest impact.

El Niño acts as a multiplier of displacement risks. For populations already affected by displacement, it does not simply introduce a new hazard. It compounds existing humanitarian vulnerabilities and can trigger cascading impacts across multiple sectors. Flooding and drought may lead to secondary displacement, damage shelters, overwhelm drainage systems and contaminate water supplies, while simultaneously disrupting livelihoods, education, health services and humanitarian access. Climate shocks can also increase protection risks, including gender-based violence, family separation, child protection concerns, trafficking risks and loss of civil documentation.

In many contexts, climate shocks contribute to secondary displacement, forcing households that have already experienced displacement to move once again after losing shelter, assets or access to basic services. Repeated displacement erodes coping capacities, weakens community networks and increases dependence on humanitarian assistance.

Climate impacts may also heighten competition over land, water and natural resources between displaced and host communities, increasing social tensions and placing additional pressure on already fragile local systems. Taken together, these interacting risks demonstrate that climate hazards should not be viewed in isolation. Their humanitarian consequences are shaped by displacement dynamics before, during and after a shock.

Progress towards durable solutions is also a central concern when it comes to El Niño impacts. For returnees and recently integrated displaced households, climate shocks can reverse years of recovery by damaging housing, destroying productive

[1] See Climate Prediction Center: ENSO Diagnostic Discussion

[2] See IRI – International Research Institute for Climate and Society | June 2026 Quick Look

[3] See El Niño is forecast to intensify, increasing likelihood of extreme weather

assets and interrupting livelihoods. Households that had begun rebuilding their lives may once again require humanitarian assistance or face renewed displacement.

In protracted displacement settings, repeated climate shocks reduce opportunities for self-reliance, delay local integration and complicate prospects for voluntary return. Damage to infrastructure, public services and local markets can undermine broader recovery efforts while increasing pressure on host communities.

Integrating the anticipation of predictable shocks into displacement programming is therefore not solely about reducing immediate humanitarian impacts. It is equally about protecting investments in durable solutions, strengthening resilience and preventing climate hazards from becoming drivers of recurrent and secondary displacement.

This report seeks to apply that displacement lens to El Niño. It first examines historical displacement patterns in the context of past El Niño events. It then looks ahead to the coming months in selected countries where forecast rainfall anomalies may affect large populations, including areas hosting refugees and internally displaced people. The report considers what this could mean for those already displaced, while recognizing that forecast exposure alone does not determine humanitarian impact. It concludes by outlining DRC's displacement-centred approach to El Niño anticipation and response.

## 02 El Niño & Historical Displacement

The relationship between climate and displacement is complex and multifaceted, characterized by both direct triggers and indirect, systemic pathways. The most immediate and direct link is "disaster displacement." Sudden-onset disasters, primarily floods and tropical cyclones, are the most visible and numerically dominant causes of internal disaster displacement. Over the past decade, climate-induced natural hazards have displaced an average of 22 million people every year. While much of this movement consists of short-term evacuations over short distances, almost 14 million people were still in protracted displacement by the end of 2025 as a result of these disasters.

Beyond sudden-onset disasters, climate change and natural hazards indirectly drives broader human mobility by eroding livelihoods and food security. As an example, the slow-onset disasters caused by drought are more complex in their relationship to displacement. Prolonged dry spells decimate agricultural productivity, especially in regions dependent on rainfed subsistence farming. Environmental degradation destroys the resources communities rely on, turning migration into a necessary adaptation strategy. Interestingly, the relationship between climate adversity and displacement is non-linear. While environmental degradation can push people to move, it can also have the opposite effect by depleting the financial and social capital required to migrate. For highly vulnerable households at the lower end of the income spectrum, extreme climate shocks can strip away their resources, leading to involuntary immobility, or "trapped populations," who are unable to flee worsening conditions. Finally, when climate change does force people to move, the displacement is overwhelmingly internal rather than international. People typically prefer to travel along known routes and remain as close as possible to their existing social support networks.

The environmental shocks caused by El Niño drive migration through both sudden-onset disasters and slow-onset disasters. The type of hazard changes the dynamics of human mobility, the demographic profile of the displaced, and the duration of displacement. Across the countries examined in the following section, approximately 2.6 million climate-related displacements were recorded during the 2023–24 El Niño period, more than 88% of them in the East African countries included in the analysis.

El Niño drives displacement through amplifying sudden-onset disasters. In 2023, weather-related hazards accounted for 77% of the 26.4 million new internal disaster displacements globally, with floods causing 9.8 million displacements and storms causing 9.5 million. The localized warming of the Pacific during El Niño can alter cyclone tracks, dampening Atlantic hurricane activity while significantly amplifying storms in the Pacific. In the Horn of Africa, the 2023 Deyr rainy season (October to December), supercharged by a strong El Niño and a positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), resulted in unprecedented riverine and flash floods in Somalia, Kenya, and Ethiopia. In Somalia alone, the floods affected an estimated 2.48 million people and displaced over 1.2 million. Similar rapid displacements occurred in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in early 2024, where El Niño-linked flooding from the Congo River displaced over 521,000 people in just six months.

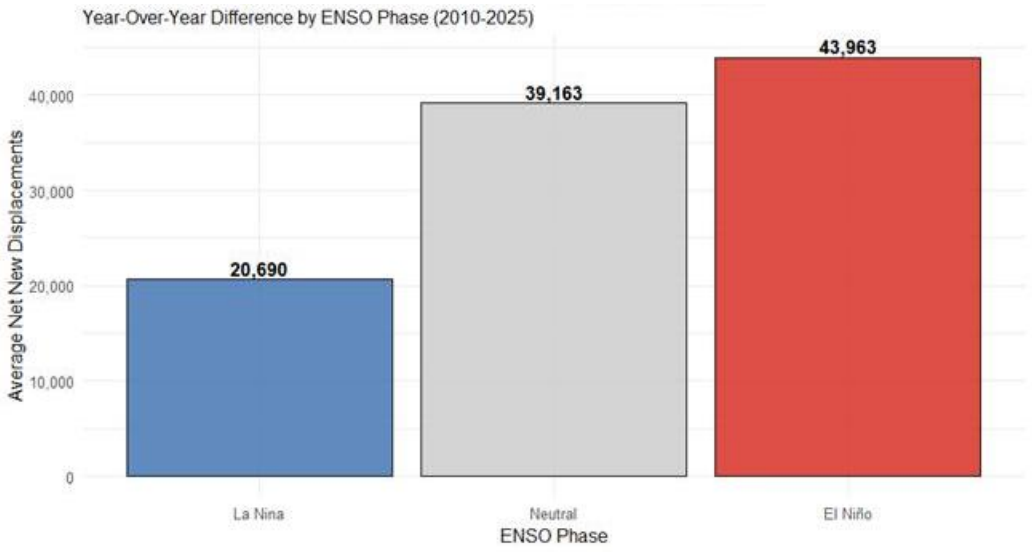
In Southern Africa, the 2023/2024 El Niño resulted in the worst mid-season dry spell in over a century, pushing an estimated 29 million people into alarming levels of hunger and decimating livestock. When traditional coping mechanisms, such as reducing food intake, taking on debt, or selling off livestock and tools, are exhausted, families migrate as a survival strategy.

Since displacement from drought is a complex sequence in many areas, displacement from drought is not always recorded as such. In some places, displacement from drought is a common occurrence, and it is more acute and visible, e.g. the Horn of Africa, where displacement from drought has been measured for over a decade. But in many other regions the drawn-out process makes it less visible, and the data does not reach far back in time. This makes quantitative studies of the relationship between El Niño and drought displacement very difficult. In general, quantitative studies of the effect of El Niño on displacement are hampered by the fact that displacement data covering internal displacement do not go further back than 2008.

El Niño does not only affect disaster displacement as there are other pathways for it to influence human mobility. An important pathway is conflict. Hsiang et al. (2011) leveraged the natural experiment provided by the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) cycle to test how the changing modes of the global climate affects conflict. By analyzing data on civil wars in 175 tropical countries from 1950 to 2004, the researchers showed that in countries whose climates are heavily influenced by ENSO teleconnections, the probability of a new civil conflict breaking out in a cooler La Niña year was approximately 3%. However, during an El Niño year, this probability doubled to approximately 6%[4]. Recent research by Bagwell et al (2026) have corroborated these findings by extending the research to a grid of armed conflict onsets since 1950[5]. It is especially in the dry teleconnections that this relationship is strong.

Our contribution to this ongoing area of study has been to investigate the relationship between all conflict-induced displacement and the ENSO-cycle. Our hypothesis is that if El Niño affects conflict onsets, it should also affect rises in displacement caused by conflict and violence. We adopt the same definition of the ENSO-cycle as Bagwell et al (2026) and collect all data on conflict-induced displacement from IDMC and UNHCR. For every country a total amount of displacement is calculated from adding together the refugees and asylum-seekers with that country as origin and all internal displacement within that country. While new displacements are estimated per year for internal displacement, they are not for refugees and asylum seekers, so we have to approximate changes in total displacement by the change in total from year to year.

***Figure 1. Average annual net change in conflict-induced total displacement numbers (UNHCR+IDMC)***



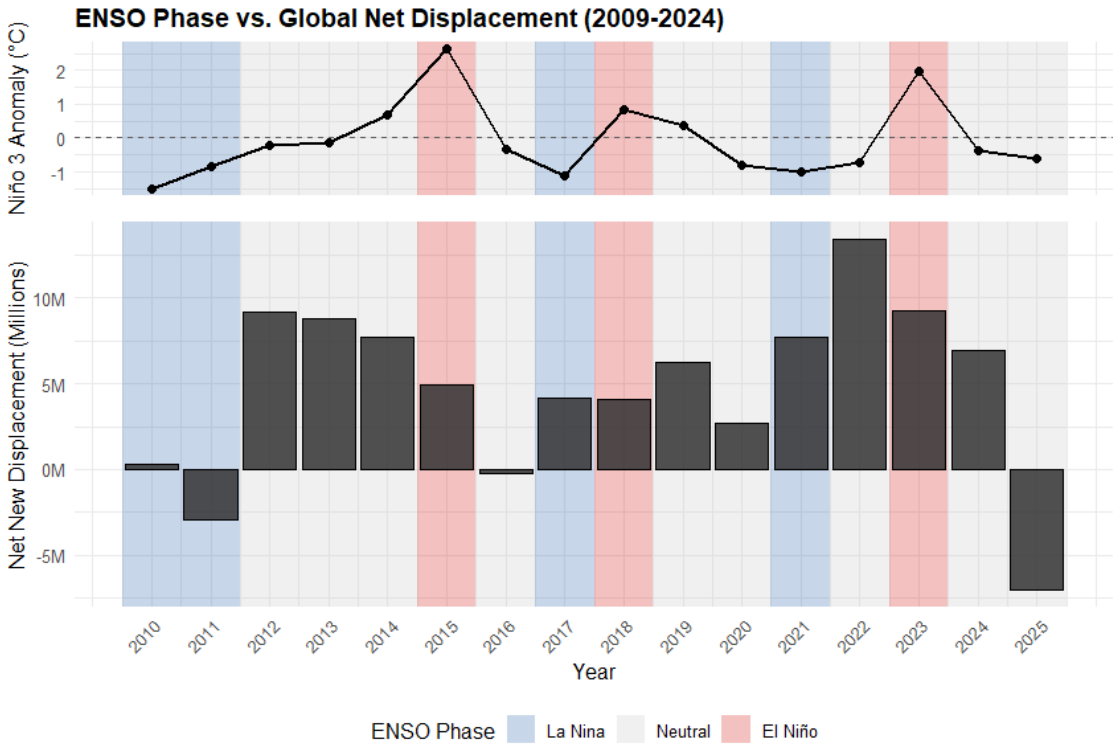

We find a relationship between conflict-induced displacement change per year and the phase of the ENSO. As illustrated in Figure 1, the average net change in conflict-induced displacement in the sample is approximately 4,800 higher during El Niño years. But the difference from a Neutral year is not statistically significant. The short time period is an influence on the significance. In contrast, the studies on conflict onset had 65 years of data to work with. The exact placement of an El Niño onto a calendar year is also not definitive. We have adopted Bagwell et al (2026), but arguments could be made that the following year should also be included as climate effects of El Niño takes time to take hold. Using other definitions and lag-years the relationship is not quite as visible.

[4] See Hsiang, S., Meng, K. & Cane, M. Civil conflicts are associated with the global climate. *Nature* **476**, 438–441 (2011). https://doi.org/10.1038/nature10311

[5] See T.E. Bagwell, S.G. Dee, X. Luo, A. Stravato, D. Saikumar, F. Viens, B.K. Lee, D.Z. O'Brien, & J.S. Mankin, Global and regional climate modes modulate armed conflict risk, Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A. 123 (20) e2532935123, https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2532935123 (2026)

We believe that given the strength of the effect on climate onsets found in the literature, we would also be able to detect a stronger signal of the influence on displacement in general, if we had datasets of similar length.

*Figure 2. ENSO phase vs. global net displacement (2009-2024)*




# 03 El Niño in 2026-27: Exposure and Population Mobility[6]

## 03.A – Methodological approach and limitations

The analysis below is a country-level screening of where current seasonal rainfall signals may overlap with humanitarian vulnerability. For each country or region, we compare the forecast probability of wetter- or drier-than-normal conditions with population exposure, known flood- or drought-prone areas, displacement and mobility data, recent impact history and operational concerns such as shelter, WASH, food security, access and service disruption. The aim is to identify areas that may merit closer monitoring, but not to predict specific impacts.

The analysis does not rank countries by expected severity, and inclusion should not be read as evidence of a direct or uniform El Niño impact. Some countries have clearer El Niño teleconnections than others; and in several cases, the forecast signal is uncertain or differs across agencies. The analysis therefore will be updated to reflect new information and include additional countries, including South Sudan and Uganda. Maps below should also be seen as screening tools, i.e., they show where wetter- or drier-than-normal conditions are currently more likely, and where people live within those areas. They do not show expected flood caseloads, drought caseloads, displacement movements or humanitarian needs.

The analysis focuses on the October-November-December season (OND) for Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya; September-October-November (SON) for Colombia and Venezuela; the 2026 rainy season for the central Sahel countries covered here,

[6] Population, IDP and refugee figures are used to understand vulnerability and exposure, but they come from different sources and reporting periods and should be treated as indicative. Administrative boundaries and place names are shown for analytical purposes only and do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by DRC. This is a live analysis and should be updated as seasonal forecasts, displacement data and field reports change.

namely Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger; and the late-2026 rainy-season outlook for Syria. Long-range outlooks should always be used alongside updated monthly, weekly and national forecasts as the season approaches.

For rainfall, the analysis uses the C3S/ECMWF seasonal forecast, compared against the model's own historical reference period, the 1993–2016 hindcast. The forecast does not predict rainfall on a specific day. Instead, it estimates how likely the season is to be wetter or drier than the model's historical normal. For each grid cell, we calculate the probability that total rainfall over the relevant season falls in the wettest or driest third of the historical range. This is a measure of seasonal rainfall probability, not a forecast of heavy rain on any single day and not, by itself, a flood or drought impact forecast. The forecast is also relatively coarse, at roughly 1° resolution, or about 100 km. It is useful for identifying broad areas where a season may be wetter or drier than normal, but it cannot identify which town, camp, neighbourhood or road will be affected.

To estimate population exposure, the rainfall signal is overlaid with WorldPop population data and, where appropriate, calibrated to official COD-PS administrative population totals. These figures represent people living in areas where the forecast indicates a higher probability of wetter- or drier-than-normal seasonal rainfall. They are not estimates of people expected to be flooded, drought-affected, displaced or in need of assistance.

Reported IDP, refugee, returnee and migrant figures are used to understand vulnerability and operational relevance. These figures come from different humanitarian sources, reporting periods and methodologies, and should be treated as indicative. In this report, displacement is also often treated as a vulnerability factor rather than a forecast outcome, meaning that the analysis asks where climate hazards could worsen conditions for people already displaced, mobile, recently returned or living in fragile settlements. However, DRC is working to integrate El Niño considerations into the AHEAD model displacement forecasts to estimate flood-induced displacement in the coming months, particularly in East Africa.

The analysis also uses JRC[7] flood-hazard data to distinguish areas that are forecast to be wetter than normal from areas that are physically flood-prone. The JRC layers used here include 10-year and 100-year return-period flood extents. The 10-year layer represents more frequent river-flood hazard, while the 100-year layer represents less frequent but more severe river-flood hazard. These return periods do not mean that flooding happens exactly every 10 or 100 years in a given location. They are statistical indications of possible flood extent under different hazard scenarios. The flood-prone land analysis overlays these hazard extents with population data to estimate how many people live on land mapped as river-flood prone. This is still a measure of potential exposure, not a prediction that those people will be flooded in the coming season.

The JRC flood layers mainly capture riverine flood hazard. They do not fully capture all forms of flooding that may matter operationally, including flash floods, urban drainage flooding, coastal flooding, dam releases, blocked culverts or highly localized runoff. For this reason, the maps should be complemented by local flood-risk information, river-level monitoring, drainage data and field knowledge.

The maps are intended to support operational discussions. They show where climate signals, population exposure, displacement, flood-prone land or recent impact history may overlap. They do not identify final hotspots, confirmed impact areas or expected caseloads. A darker rainfall probability does not automatically mean a worse humanitarian outcome. Likewise, a large exposed population does not mean that all or most of those people will be affected. The humanitarian significance depends on local conditions, including drainage, river levels, shelter quality, displacement sites, road access, public services, conflict, food security, health risks and response capacity, among other factors.

This is a live analysis. Forecasts, river levels, population movements, displacement figures, flood-risk information and model outputs may change as the season develops. Country Operations should still work identifying local hotspots, checking national forecasts, reviewing field reports and locating vulnerable settlements, camps, infrastructure and access routes within some of the broader areas flagged here.

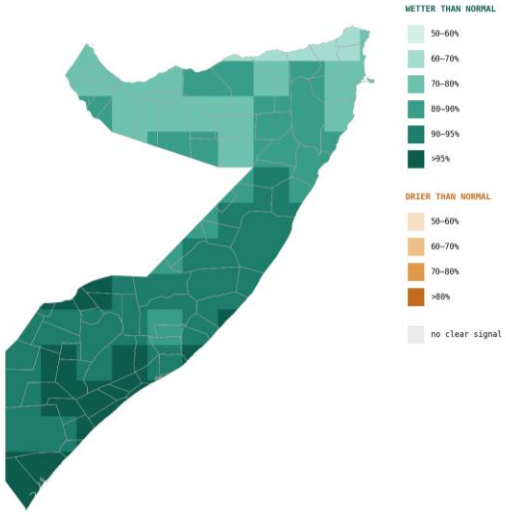
## 03.B – Somalia

Somalia shows one of the strongest wetter-than-normal signals among the countries included in this report. For the OND season, almost the entire country has a large probability of wetter-than-normal rainfall, while much of southern Somalia reaches probabilities above 90% (Figure 3). This indicates a strong and spatially widespread forecast signal. It should not be

[7] See Baugh, Calum; Colonese, Juan; D'Angelo, Claudia; Dottori, Francesco; Neal, Jeffrey; Prudhomme, Christel; Salamon, Peter (2026): Global river flood hazard maps. European Commission, Joint Research Centre doi: 10.2905/JRC.VD32YWG PID: http://data.europa.eu/89h/jrc-floods-floodmapgl_rp100y-tif JRC Data Catalogue - Dataset - European Commission

read as a prediction of flooding, but it does point to areas where flood, drainage, access and public-health risks could increase if the Deyr rains intensify. Of particular concern is where this high-confidence wet signal overlaps with known areas of flood exposure and population concentration. In Somalia, this is especially relevant along the Juba and Shabelle river systems, and in dense urban and peri-urban areas around Mogadishu. FAO/SWALIM has also identified the Juba and Shabelle rivers as key areas to monitor for possible El Niño-related flooding later in 2026[8].

***Figure 3. Somalia OND 2026 forecast. Probability wetter or drier than normal***

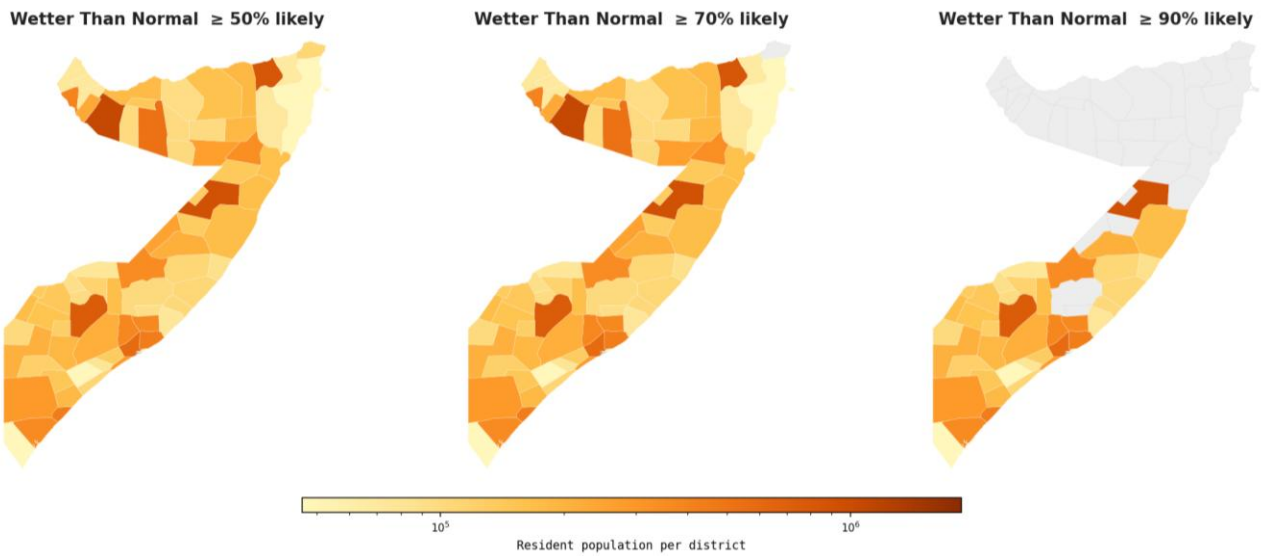



Because the wet signal is widespread, population maps can be useful for identifying where people are concentrated within areas of stronger forecast confidence, rather than for estimating expected caseloads of flood-affected individuals. Figure 4 below shows the population living in districts where the probability of wetter-than-normal rainfall exceeds 50%, 70% and finally 90%. These maps indicate that exposure under the strongest wet signal is concentrated mainly in southern and central Somalia, including riverine areas and densely populated districts around Mogadishu.

Two broad patterns stand out looking at Figure 4. The first is the riverine corridor along the Juba and Shabelle. Key areas include Doolow, Luuq, Baardheere, Bu'aale, Jilib and Jamaame along the Juba, and Belet Weyne, Jowhar, Balcad and Afgooye along the Shabelle. The second is urban and peri-urban exposure around Mogadishu, especially Daynile, where the main concerns are likely to relate less to river flooding and more to heavy rainfall, poor drainage, shelter conditions and WASH risks.

[8] See Details | FAO in Somalia | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

*Figure 4. Somalia OND 2026. Population per district where the OND season is predicted to be wetter than normal*




Current displacement adds an important vulnerability dimension to the OND wet signal. Somalia has more than 3.3 million IDPs nationally and PRMN recorded nearly 511,000 internal displacements in Q1 2026, mostly drought-related. When displacement is considered alongside the OND forecast, Daynile stands out as one of the largest IDP hotspots, with a very large displaced population concentrated in greater Mogadishu. Along the river corridors, Afgooye and Jowhar each host tens of thousands of IDPs. And Gaalkacyo should also remain on the watchlist because of its large displaced population and strong wet signal.

The concern is not only where displaced people are located, but also the conditions in which many are living. A large share of IDPs in Somalia live in fragile or inadequate shelters, with limited protection against wind, heat and heavy rainfall. In Belet Weyne and Baidoa, a March 2026 Rapid Needs Assessment found that 74% of surveyed IDPs were living in makeshift shelters constructed from locally available and low-cost materials, including wooden sticks, plastic sheets, old cloth and corrugated iron. The same assessment pointed to severe food-access constraints, with 92% of surveyed IDPs reporting difficulty accessing sufficient food and 68% reporting that they had reduced the number of daily meals. Protection risks are also relevant, with DRC protection analysis highlighting how protracted and cyclical displacement can increase exposure to harm, including forced evictions and GBV risks for IDPs in informal and peri-urban settlements. In dense IDP sites and informal settlements, intense rainfall can damage shelters, contaminate water sources, disrupt access to services, increase WASH risks and worsen already fragile protection conditions.

The 2023 Deyr floods during El Niño also provide a recent warning sign, although they should not be treated as a prediction of repeat impacts in 2026. Nationally, the floods affected around 2.48 million people and displaced more than 1.2 million[9]. The clearest district-level analogues are Belet Weyne on the Shabelle, and Doolow and Baardheere on the Juba, which were among the most affected districts in the 2023 assessment. SWALIM advisories during the same event also tracked sustained flooding or high flood concern along the Juba and Shabelle, including Luuq, Baardheere, Bu'aale, Jilib, Belet Weyne, Bulo Burto, Jowhar and Balcad.

The flood-prone land analysis helps narrow this screening further. While the OND wet signal is widespread across Somalia, mapped river-flood exposure is concentrated mainly along the Juba and Shabelle river systems (Figure 5). Thus, not every area with a strong wet signal faces the same type of risk. In riverine districts, the concern is potential flooding from river overflow, flash flooding and access disruption. In dense urban and peri-urban areas such as greater Mogadishu, the concern is more likely to relate to heavy rainfall.

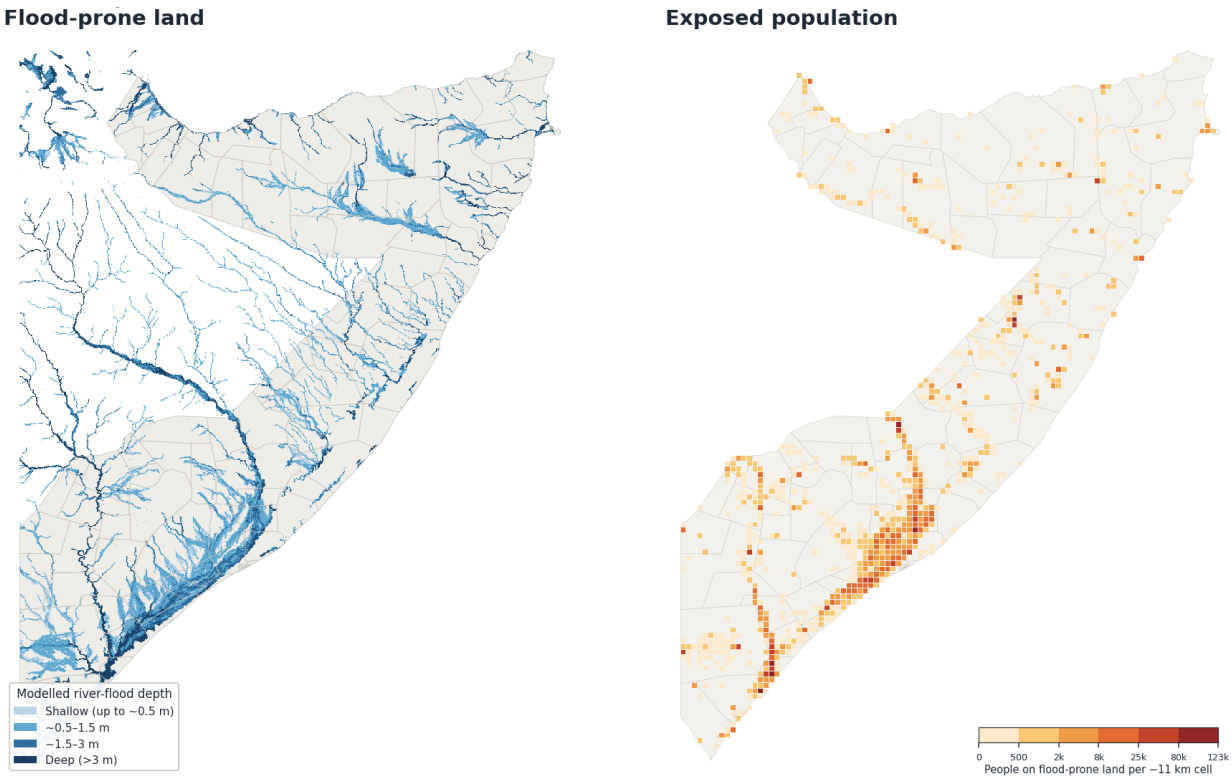
When mapped flood-prone land is combined with WorldPop population data, we find that potential exposure appears concentrated in specific riverine districts rather than evenly distributed across all areas forecast to be wetter than normal. The largest populations on mapped flood-prone land appear to be in districts such as Jamaame and Jowhar, where we

[9] See OCHA - Somalia: 2023 Deyr Season Floods Situation Report No. 5

estimate that around 300,000 people may live in flood-prone areas. Other districts with sizeable populations on flood-prone land include Afgooye, Gaalkacyo, Belet Weyne and Wanla Weyn. Several smaller riverine districts also show high proportional exposure, meaning that a large share of their population lives on land classified as flood-prone.

At national level, our analysis suggests that up to around 3 million people may live on land mapped as exposed to severe river flooding. Within this broader area, around 2.3 million people are estimated to live in zones associated with more frequent river flooding. These figures should be read as a screening estimate of potential exposure, not as expected flood caseloads.

*Figure 5. Somalia population on river-flood-prone-land (100-year return period)*




Read together, the OND forecast, current displacement, living conditions, mapped flood-prone areas and the 2023 flood record point to several areas that merit closer review. Belet Weyne is one of the clearest examples, as it is a major Shabelle riverine town, a recurrent flood location, and one of the areas most affected in 2023. On the Juba, Doolow, Luuq and Baardheere remain important because of their riverine exposure, recent flood history and displaced populations. On the middle and lower Shabelle, Jowhar, Balcad, Afgooye and Wanla Weyn combine river exposure with population and IDPs concentrations. Other areas stand out for different reasons: Baidoa is not primarily riverine, but it hosts one of Somalia's largest IDP caseloads and was affected during the 2023 El Niño rains; Daynile and other parts of greater Mogadishu represent a large urban and peri-urban IDP concentration under the wet signal. Table 1 below summarizes information for some areas for closer monitoring. The information below doesn't provide a flood caseload, but flags areas where one or more risk factors overlap, including a strong OND wet signal, population concentration, mapped flood-prone land, displacement, poor living conditions and recent flood history.

*Table 1. Exposure and displacement in Somalia districts where OND wet signal is strong*

| Area (admin unit / basin) | Why it is flagged | Displacement context | Documented El Niño relevance |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Belet Weyne (Hiraan, Shabelle)** | Major Shabelle riverine town under the OND wet signal. We estimate that more than 300,000 people may be exposed to wetter-than-normal conditions in the district | OCHA Harmonized IDP data for Somalia shows that Belet Weyne, as of September 2025, hosted more than 80,000 IDPs. PRMN recorded almost 7,000 flood-related displacements within the district in | During the 2023 El Nino Deyr, the Shabelle burst its banks and submerged most of Belet Weyne; agencies reported |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | the first months of 2026. IDP shelter conditions are a concern, with March 2026 RNA findings showing high reliance on makeshift shelters | roughly 90% of the town's population displaced[10] |
| **Baardheere, Luuq & Doolow (Gedo, Juba)** | Key Juba riverine districts under the OND wet signal, with known river-flood exposure | As of September 2025, Baardheere was estimated to host more than 85,000 IDPs, Doolow more than 130,000 and Luuq more than 60,000. By early July, more than 11,000 displaced people had reportedly arrived across the three districts, with high food needs | SWALIM flagged severe riverine flooding along the Juba at Doolow, Luuq and Baardheere[11] |
| **Afgooye, Wanla Weyn, Jowhar, Balcad (Lower & Middle Shabelle)** | Shabelle corridor districts where the OND wet signal overlaps with river-flood exposure and sizeable population concentrations | Afgooye hosted more than 54,000 IDPs as of September 2025, Balcad more than 27,000, Jowhar more than 50,000 and Wanla Weyn about 5,000. Afgooye and Jowhar combine river exposure with high displacement concentrations | These Shabelle-corridor districts sit in the FAO/SWALIM riverine flood-risk zone that repeatedly overflowed through the 2023 Deyr season[12] |
| **Baidoa (Bay)** | Not primarily riverine, but important because of its large population, major IDP concentration and location in a region affected during the 2023 El Niño rains. Over 1 million people live in the district and we estimated that more than 0.7 million people would be exposed to wetter-than-usual conditions in the coming months | Baidoa hosts more than half a million IDPs. March 2026 RNA findings from Baidoa and Belet Weyne point to poor shelter conditions and food consumption gaps among surveyed IDPs | Baidoa - epicentre of the 2021-23 drought - was itself inundated during the 2023 El Nino rains, flooding IDP settlements[13] |
| **Mogadishu (Banadir)** | Dense urban and peri-urban area under the OND wet signal | There are over 1.1 million IDPs hosted within the Banadir region, mostly in Kahda and Daynile, with both districts hosting over half a million IDPs | Mogadishu's dense districts were affected in 2023, with main roads including the airport road flooded; they carry by far the largest exposed population |
| **Kismaayo & Jamaame (Lower Juba)** | Lower Juba districts along or near the Juba flood corridor. Jamaame also shows high potential exposure in the flood-prone land analysis | Kismaayo hosts almost 200,000 IDPs and Jamaame over 25,000 | Lower Juba districts sit on the Juba flood corridor flagged for evacuation during the 2023 Deyr floods[14] |
| **Gaalkacyo (Mudug)** | Large displaced population and notable exposure in the flood-prone land analysis, although it is outside the main southern Juba–Shabelle cluster | Gaalkacyo hosts a large IDP population (more than 120,000 IDPs) and should remain on the watchlist because rainfall-related risks could interact with displacement, shelter and service-access vulnerabilities | Not one of the clearest 2023 Juba–Shabelle analogues, but relevant as a displacement and exposure hotspot under the broader OND wet signal |

## 03.C – Ethiopia

Ethiopia is the clearest "split-risk" case in this brief. The El Niño-related concern is not one countrywide hazard. In the coming months, current regional forecasts point to elevated dry-season concern across much of Ethiopia during the June–September Kiremt period, particularly in central, northeastern and northwestern areas. Later in the year, the OND outlook shifts the main wet signal toward eastern, southern and southeastern parts of the country, although the population maps also show some exposed populations extending into the central and northern highland corridor at lower probability thresholds.

For the OND season, the strongest wetter-than-normal signal is concentrated in southern and southeastern Ethiopia, especially Somali Region and adjacent parts of eastern and southern Oromia (Figure 6). This is where the flood concern is

[10] See Horn of Africa: Over 100 killed and 700,000 displaced by El Nino rains as region braces for more wild weather - Save the Children Australia

[11] See Somalia: 2023 Deyr Season Floods Situation Report No. 1 (As of 17 November 2023) | OCHA

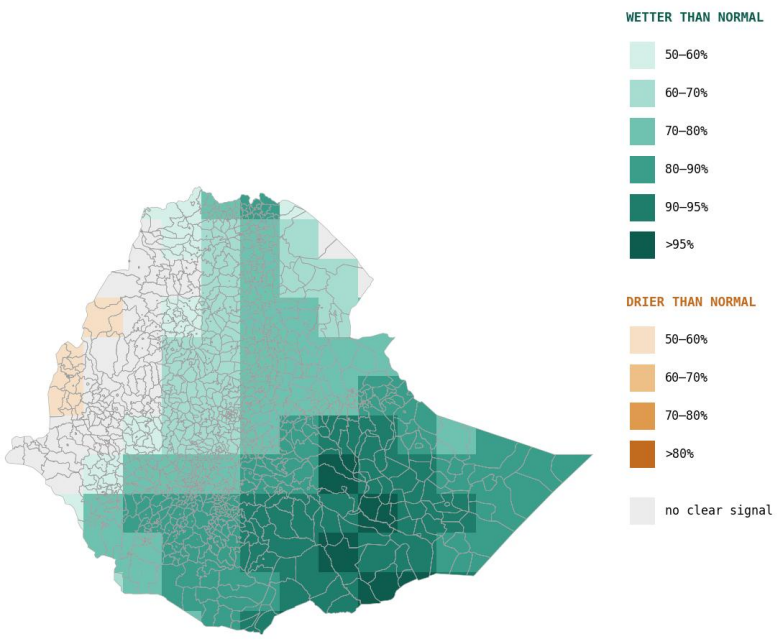
[12] ibid

[13] ibid

[14] See Somalia Situation Report, 26 Dec 2023 | OCHA

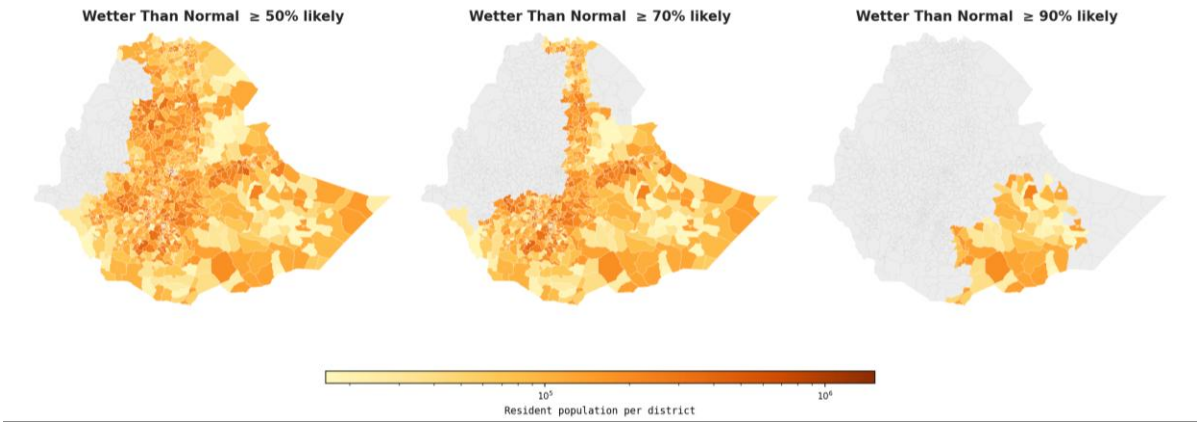
clearest, particularly along the Wabi Shabelle and Genale–Dawa drainage systems. However, the signal is not limited only to the southeast. At the 50% threshold, and to a lesser extent at the 70% threshold, the population exposure maps also highlight parts of the densely populated central and northern highland belt (Figure 7). The concern in some of these areas might be more likely related to heavy rainfall, flash flooding, landslides, drainage disruption and access constraints, rather than large-scale lowland river flooding.

***Figure 6. Ethiopia OND 2026 forecast. Probability wetter or drier than normal***




Because the OND wet signal is uneven, the population maps are useful for separating the strongest flood concern from broader areas of rainfall-related exposure. At the ≥50% wetter-than-normal threshold, exposed populations extend well beyond the southeast and include parts of Ethiopia's densely populated highland corridor. At the ≥70% threshold, the signal narrows but still includes both southeastern lowland areas and some highland populations. At the ≥90% threshold, the signal becomes much more focused in the south and southeast. This suggests that the highest-confidence OND wet signal is concentrated in Somali Region and nearby areas, while other parts of Ethiopia may still require monitoring for localized rainfall hazards, especially where population density, steep terrain, poor drainage or existing vulnerabilities increase risk.

***Figure 7. Ethiopia OND 2026. Population per district where the OND season is predicted to be wetter than normal***

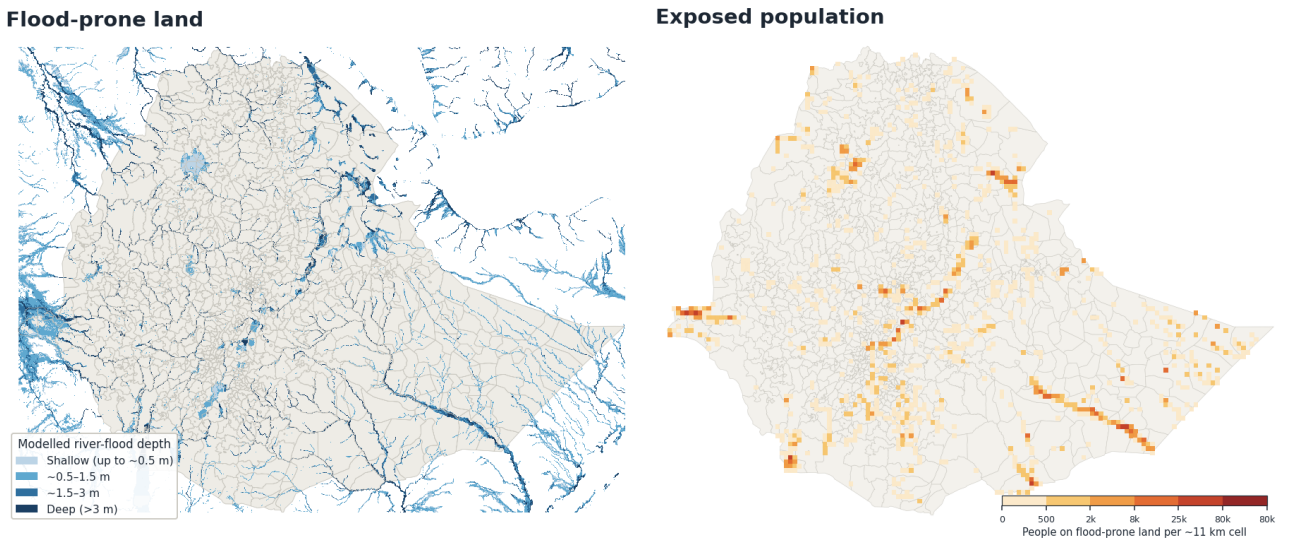



The flood-prone land analysis helps narrow the screening further. At national level, we find that potential river-flood exposure appears more limited than in Somalia, but there are clear local concentrations along specific river systems, especially the

Wabi Shabelle in Somali Region (Figure 8). Using the broader JRC 100-year flood scenario, we estimate that around 1.3 million people live on land mapped as river-flood prone. Using the narrower JRC 10-year flood scenario, which represents areas associated with more frequent river flooding, the estimate is around 1 million people.

Some of the highest potential exposure appears to be concentrated in Somali region. Kelafo stands out, where we estimate around 110,000 people living in areas mapped as flood-prone. Other exposed areas include Dolo Ado, East Imi, Mustahil, West Imi and Godey town, where estimated populations on flood-prone land range from roughly 25,000 to 50,000 people under the broader scenario. Several smaller riverine areas also show notable exposure, even where the absolute number of people is lower. These figures should be read as a screening estimate of potential exposure, not as expected flood impacts.

***Figure 8 Ethiopia population on river-flood-prone-land (100-year return period)***




Given some of these signals, it is relevant to look closely at the displacement context in particular in the Somali region, where large IDP populations are already located in lowland and riverine areas. Assessment data indicate that Liben holds one of the largest IDP caseloads in the Somali region, followed by Afder, Daawa and Shebelle. These areas matter not only because of the number of displaced people, but also because of their geography. Liben includes the Dollo Ado and Bokolmayo area near the Genale–Dawa system; Afder includes lowland riverine areas around Cherati and Hargele; Daawa sits along the Dawa drainage and cross-border corridors; and Shebelle covers the Wabi Shabelle valley, including Gode and Kelafo-type exposure. These are indications of where displacement and flood exposure may coincide, not predictions of impact.

Shelter conditions increase this concern. Assessments of recently displaced communities in Liben Zone in 2025 found that more than 60% were living in shelters made from found or salvaged materials, such as sticks and plastic sheeting, while 58% reported that a family member was sleeping in the open. Displaced people also reported that these shelter conditions increased exposure to protection risks, including Gender-Based Violence. This means that even localized heavy rainfall can have serious humanitarian consequences where shelters are fragile, drainage is poor and displaced households have limited options to relocate safely.

The 2023 floods also provide a recent warning sign. In late 2023, flooding in Somali region affected dozens of woredas and sites across Afder, Daawa, Doolo, Erer/Erwe, Jarar, Korahe, Liben, Nogob and Shebelle zones. Severe flooding was reported across southeastern Ethiopia, with more than 1.5 million people reportedly affected[15]. Other reporting indicated that Somali region accounted for the large majority of Ethiopia's 2023 flood impact, with severe flooding reported in Shabelle, Afder, Liben and Dawa zones. In Oromia, the 2023 flood and landslide evidence was more localized, including impacts reported in Arsi, East Bale, West Guji and Galana.

[15] See Floods in Ethiopia | Humanitarian Coalition

The OND wet signal, mapped flood-prone land, displacement patterns, shelter conditions and the 2023 flood record point to a smaller set of areas that merit closer monitoring. Table 2 summarizes these areas and highlights locations where several risk factors overlap.

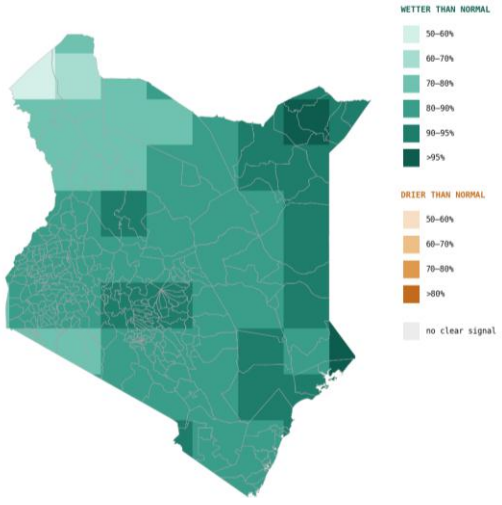
***Table 2. Exposure and displacement in Ethiopia areas where OND wet signal is strong***

| Area (admin unit / basin) | Why it is flagged | Documented El Niño relevance |
|---|---|---|
| **Dolo Ado (Somali, Genale/Juba)** | We estimate that over 100,000 people might be exposed to strong wet signals in the woreda. Riverine and lowland exposure is relevant because of proximity to the Genale–Dawa system and cross-border flood corridors | Somali-Region officials reported fatalities and displacement around Dolo Odo near the Genale (Webi Juba) river in early November 2023; Dollo Ado woreda was among the worst-hit[16] |
| **Kebridehar, Filtu, Barey, Liben (Somali)** | These areas sit within or near the southeastern wet-signal zone. Exposure varies by woreda but we estimated that over 120,000 individuals might be exposed to strong wet signals in each of them | The Somali Region overall saw over a million people affected by the El Nino-enhanced 2023 floods |
| **Kelafo, Mustahil, Godey and other Shabelle-zone riverine areas** | The Wabi Shabelle corridor shows some river-flood exposure. Kelafo stands out, and we estimate that over 100,000 people live on mapped flood-prone land. Other exposed areas include Godey town, East Imi, West Imi and Mustahil | Although this flooding predated the onset of El Niño, UNOSAT satellite mapping documented extensive inundation along the Shabelle River in Ethiopia's Shabelle Zone in 2023, illustrating the area's existing vulnerability to heavy rainfall and river flooding[17] |

## 03.D – Kenya

Kenya shows a broad wetter-than-normal signal for the OND season, although the signal changes across the coming months. September retains some drier conditions in parts of the west, while October and November show a wider shift toward wetter-than-normal conditions across much of the country, including the coast, eastern Kenya, the northeast, and parts of the central and Nairobi-adjacent belt (Figure 9). This is consistent with the wider regional outlook. ICPAC's June 2026 update points to below-average rainfall risks in parts of Kenya during July–September, followed by enhanced October–December rainfall across Kenya and other equatorial and southern parts of the region[18].

***Figure 9 Kenya OND 2026 forecast. Probability wetter or drier than normal***



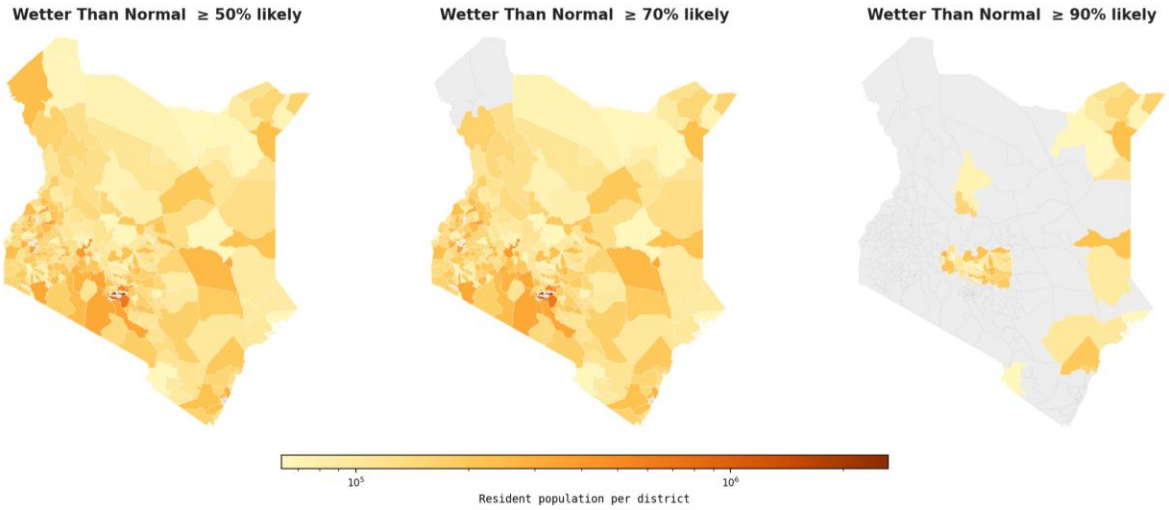

[16] See East Africa – Heavy Rains and Floods Take Their Toll in Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Burundi and Malawi – FloodList

[17] See UNOSAT_A3_Natural_Landscape_FL20230327SOM_Shabelle_Ethiopia_02April2023.pdf

[18] See GHA_Climate_Outlook_2026.pdf

The population exposure maps confirm that the OND signal is not only coastal (Figure 10). At the ≥50% wetter-than-normal threshold, much of the country is included. At the ≥70% threshold, large populations remain within the wet-signal area, including Nairobi and surrounding urban/peri-urban sub-counties, parts of central Kenya, the coast, eastern Kenya and the northeast. At the ≥90% threshold, the signal narrows, but remains visible in selected areas of the northeast/east, the coast/southeast, and parts of the central or Nairobi-adjacent belt.

***Figure 10 Kenya OND 2026. Population per district where the OND season is predicted to be wetter than normal***




Along the coast, including Mombasa/Nyali, Kilifi, Malindi and Magarini, the concern may be heavy rainfall, flash flooding, poor drainage, WASH risks and road disruption. In Nairobi metro and surrounding urban/peri-urban areas, including places such as Kasarani, Embakasi East, Roysambu, Juja and Mavoko, the exposure maps show large populations under a moderate-to-strong wet signal.

The river-flood exposure analysis helps narrow the screening further. For Kenya, the overlay of river flood-prone areas with WorldPop data suggests that potential river-flood exposure is relatively limited at national level, but locally concentrated in several well-defined areas. Under the broader 100-year flood scenario, we estimate that over 700,000 people live on land mapped as potentially exposed to severe river flooding. Under the narrower 10-year flood scenario, associated with more frequent river flooding, the estimate is around 520,000 people.

The most important riverine corridor is the Tana River–Garissa–Dadaab axis. In Tana River County, areas such as Bura, Galole and the lower Tana/delta should be checked against updated rainfall, river-level and road-access information, especially if the wet signal strengthens into October and November.

Garissa and Dadaab should also remain a priority watch area because the OND wet signal overlaps with a very large refugee population and recent camp-level flood impacts. UNHCR reports over 400,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in Garissa/Dadaab as of late May 2026, including around 138,000 in Hagadera, 104,000 in Dagahaley, 92,000 in Ifo and 83,000 in Ifo 2[19]. If heavy rainfall, riverine flooding or road disruption occurs, impacts can quickly translate into shelter, WASH, health, protection, market-access and service-delivery concerns. Recent DRC field reporting from the 2024 floods shows the type of consequences that can occur in Dadaab. Ifo 1 and Ifo 2 were reported as the worst affected camps, followed by Dagahaley, with around 20,000 households affected and many people relocating to nearby schools. The same reporting noted collapsed latrines, limited access to field offices, disruption on the Garissa–Dadaab road, market impacts and disease concerns including measles in Dagahaley and reports of cholera in Ifo 1[20].

The northeast border counties, especially Mandera and Wajir, should also remain in the screening. Past floods have shown how quickly heavy rainfall can combine with river overflow, road damage and access constraints. During the 2023 El Niño-enhanced floods, UNICEF, citing Kenya's National Disaster Operations Centre, reported that 545,515 people had been

[19] See UNHCR Operational Data Portal - Kenya

[20] See Q&A on the flooding status of Dadaab Refugee Camp in Kenya | Danish Refugee Council

displaced nationally as of 8 December 2023[21], with Mandera, Garissa, Tana River and Wajir among the most affected counties. A later IFRC update, drawing on Kenya Red Cross reporting and covering the period up to 3 January 2024, reported that approximately 757,000 people had been affected across 38 counties, while 64,373 households had been displaced[22]. The same reporting described damage to key infrastructure, restricted road access, disruption to assistance and heightened health risks associated with contaminated water, including water- and vector-borne disease.

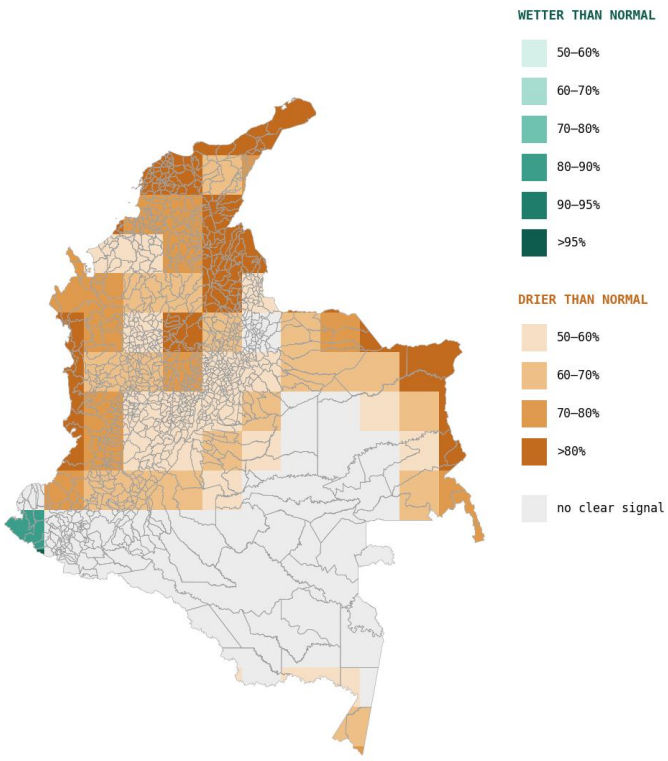
The OND forecast, population exposure maps, flood-prone land overlay, refugee-site exposure and the 2023–2024 flood record thus point to several areas for closer monitoring. The coast, especially Mombasa/Nyali and Kilifi/Malindi/Magarini, is important because the wet signal overlaps with dense settlement and drainage risk. The lower Tana and Tana River County, including Bura, Galole and the delta, are important because of riverine exposure and past access disruption. Garissa and Dadaab are also key to follow closely because riverine, access and site-level risks overlap with a very large refugee population and recent camp-level flood impacts. Mandera and Wajir should remain on the watchlist as previous El Niño-enhanced rains caused displacement and road cuts across the northeast.

## 03.E – Colombia

Colombia's September–November signal is mainly a drier-than-normal one. WMO's latest outlook indicates below-normal rainfall for parts of Central America, the Caribbean and northwestern South America, while IDEAM's 2026 outlook points to a persistent rainfall deficit in the Caribbean and Andean regions during July–September, with drier-than-normal conditions also suggested for parts of the Caribbean, Andean, Pacific and Orinoquía regions later in the year.

This gives Colombia a different profile from the East Africa countries in the brief. The main concern is not flood exposure, but the possibility that El Niño-related dryness worsens existing pressure on water access, food security, agriculture, livestock, hydropower and public health. IDEAM and MinAmbiente reported a 90% probability of El Niño conditions from September 2026[23], with moderate or higher intensity possible in the last quarter of the year.

***Figure 11. Colombia SON 2026 forecast. Probability wetter or drier than normal***



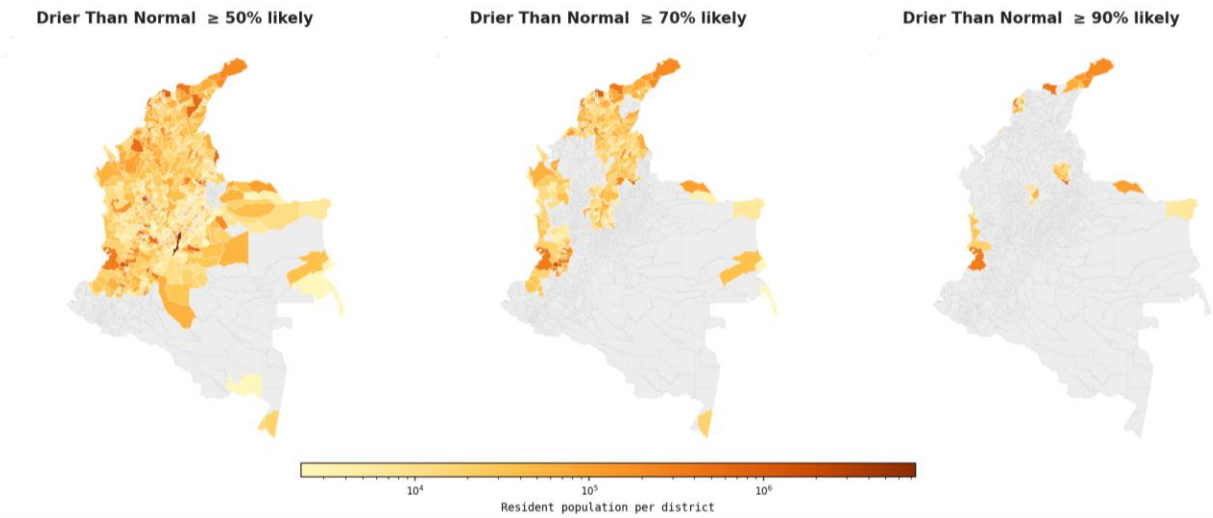

[21] See KenyaHumanitarianSitRepNo1(ElNinoFloods)1Oct-15Dec2023.pdf

[22] See Kenya, Africa | Floods 2023 Operation Update (MDRKE058) (05/02/2024) - Kenya | ReliefWeb

[23] See Ideam y Minambiente alertan de 90% de probabilidad de llegada del fenómeno de El Niño para septiembre de 2026 | Instituto de Hidrología, Meteorología y Estudios Ambientales

One of the strongest relevant dry signal is concentrated in northern Colombia, especially the Caribbean coast, La Guajira, parts of the northern Andes and the Santander urban cluster. Again, the exposure maps below should be interpreted as people living under stronger dry-signal areas, not as total population or expected caseloads. At the higher dry-probability thresholds, we find that the population signal is concentrated around the Caribbean urban corridor, including Cartagena, Barranquilla and Santa Marta, parts of Santander, including the Bucaramanga metropolitan area, and municipalities in La Guajira such as Uribia, Maicao, Manaure and Riohacha.

***Figure 11. Colombia SON 2026. Population per district where the SON season is predicted to be drier than normal***




The 2023–24 El Niño drought is a useful recent warning sign, although it should not be treated as a direct prediction for 2026. Colombia declared a national disaster in January 2024 due to El Niño impacts, and humanitarian reporting at the time highlighted water shortages, high temperatures and fire risk. Action Against Hunger's 2024 monitoring also noted a water-shortage alert for 190 municipalities, and among surveyed households, 41.6% reported that climate variations had worsened access to water, while 66.4% said climate changes, water access problems and lack of food were affecting household health[24].

The displacement and migration context is central to interpreting potential El Niño signals and impacts. Colombia already has one of the world's largest numbers of displaced individuals, with about 7.2 million internally displaced people[25], including around 191,000 people newly displaced during 2025. Humanitarian reports also note that 3.5 million refugees, migrants, returnees and host communities face unmet humanitarian needs, with needs concentrated in areas including La Guajira and other Venezuelan border regions[26]. Potential drought would therefore act as a risk multiplier for people already affected by displacement, weak services and limited access to water.

This can be particularly important in La Guajira. The department combines high dry probabilities, structural water scarcity, Indigenous Wayúu vulnerability and food and nutrition concerns. Reporting from 2024 documented severe malnutrition and water scarcity among Wayúu communities[27]. Recent reporting also describes Wayúu migrants and displaced families living in informal settlements around Maicao and Riohacha, often in fragile shelters with limited water, sanitation or protection from extreme heat and flooding[28]. Under a stronger dry signal, the main concern would thus be worsening access to safe water, nutrition, health services and livelihoods.

The Caribbean urban corridor should also remain in the screening. Areas such as Cartagena, Turbaco, Barranquilla and Santa Marta combine large exposed populations with previous El Niño-related water stress. During the 2023–24 El Niño period,

[24] See Second-Monitoring-Report-El-Nino-Phenomenon.pdf

[25] See Colombia | IDMC - Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

[26] See Colombia-HCA-2026_March-2026-Short.pdf

[27] See Colombia's Wayúu people live on land rich in resources. So why are their children dying of hunger? | Colombia | The Guardian

[28] See Droughts, floods and economic uncertainty: Portraits of the Wayuu people in northern Colombia | AP News

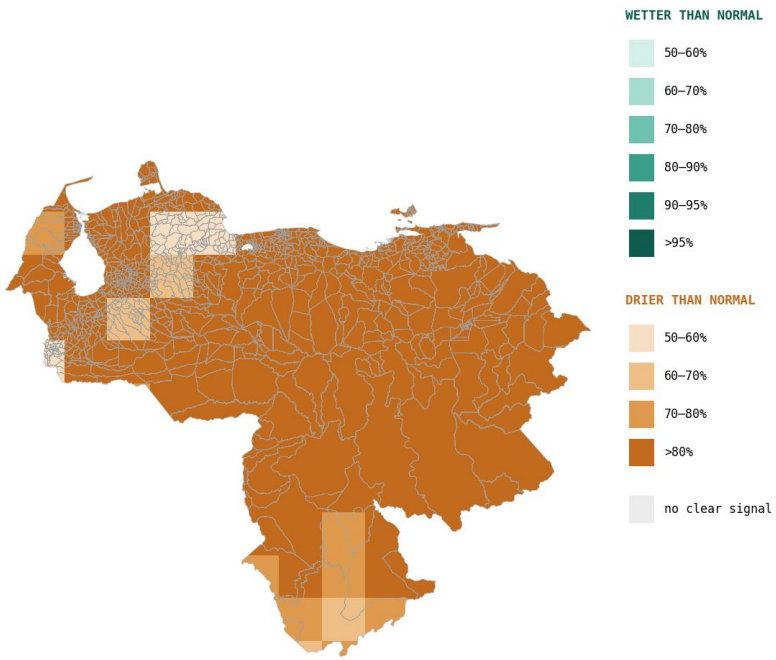
Colombia declared a disaster situation, and IFRC reporting noted that several departments declared public calamity due to water shortages, including La Guajira, Sucre, San Andrés y Providencia, Boyacá and Cundinamarca.[29]

Overall, Colombia can be framed as a dry-signal and water-stress country in this analysis. Some of the priority areas are those where stronger drier-than-normal probabilities overlap with existing humanitarian vulnerability, including La Guajira, the Caribbean urban corridor and Santander/Bucaramanga. Current forecasts do not indicate what the impacts will be on new displacement, but they do help identify where drought could worsen conditions for IDPs, refugees, migrants, Indigenous communities and host populations already under pressure.

## 03.F – Venezuela

Venezuela shows one of the strongest and most spatially consistent drier-than-normal signals in our analysis. The September–November maps indicate moderate to high dry probabilities across much of the country, with the densely populated north and west, Especially Zulia/Maracaibo, the Caracas metropolitan area and the central-north urban belt, among the most relevant areas for screening (Figure 13). This aligns with the wider regional outlook; WMO's July–September 2026 update places below-normal rainfall over parts of Central America, the Caribbean and northwestern South America, and ACAPS' July 2026 El Niño overview also notes that seasonal forecasts anticipate below-average rainfall and above-average temperatures across Venezuela and northern Colombia during the July–December period[30].

***Figure 12. Venezuela SON 2026 forecast. Probability wetter or drier than normal***




The main concern is therefore the way drought could add pressure to an already fragile humanitarian situation. Venezuela's humanitarian needs remain severe, with OCHA reporting 7.9 million people in need in 2026[31]. Current humanitarian analysis also highlights limited access to food, clean water and electricity, with WASH, health, nutrition, protection and food security among the most acute needs[32]. Venezuela also remains dependent on hydropower, including the Guri / Simón Bolívar system, and past El Niño droughts have been associated with low reservoir levels, electricity rationing and blackouts. These impacts have often been felt most acutely in various areas, including in western states such as Zulia, Mérida, Táchira and Barinas.

[29] See Colombia: Droughts - DREF Operational Update: MDRCO025 - Colombia | ReliefWeb

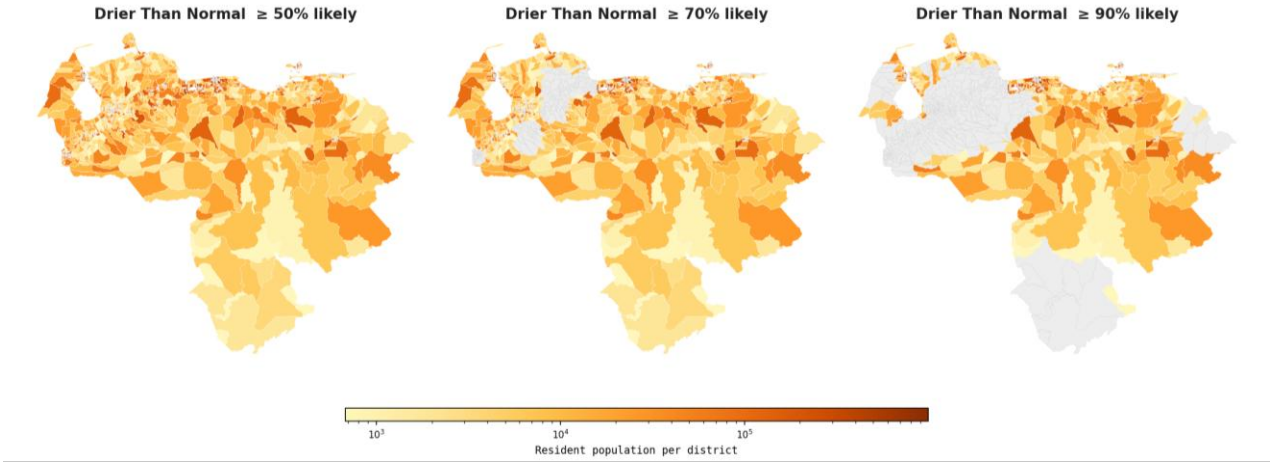
[30] See 20260707_ACAPS_El_Nino_Overview_-_Countries_to_watch_.pdf

[31] See Venezuela | OCHA

[32] See Venezuela-HCA-2026_March-2026-Short.pdf

Our analysis shows that the largest exposed populations to the stronger dry-signals appear in Maracaibo and the wider Zulia basin, the Caracas metropolitan area including Distrito Capital, Miranda and La Guaira, and the central-north urban belt across parts of Aragua, Carabobo and Anzoátegui. Recent earthquake impacts in the north-central corridor, including Caracas, La Guaira, Miranda, Aragua and Carabobo, might also be a service-stress factor, since damage to homes, water systems, health facilities and other infrastructure could make dry-season water and power pressures harder to absorb.

***Figure 13. Venezuela SON 2026. Population per district where the SON season is predicted to be drier than normal***




Displacement and mobility are central to interpreting this dry signal, but not because the forecast predicts new displacement. The stronger point is that drought could worsen conditions for people already affected by Venezuela's displacement and migration crisis, including returnees, people on the move, vulnerable host communities and households with limited access to reliable water, electricity or health services.

Our analysis indicates that Zulia and Maracaibo are areas that should be monitored. They combine a strong dry signal, a large exposed urban population, recurring water and electricity stress and relevance for cross-border mobility and return dynamics. The Caracas metropolitan area and the central-north urban belt should also remain in the screening because large populations sit under the dry signal. In these areas, drier-than-normal conditions could increase pressure on water supply. The western border and Andean states, especially Táchira and Mérida, are also relevant because they combine dry-signal exposure with mobility, return and service-access concerns along the Colombia–Venezuela corridor.

## 03.G – Sahel – Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali

The three Sahel countries analyzed here should be treated as one of the more uncertain forecast cases in this brief. Unlike Somalia or Venezuela, the main forecast sources do not point in one clear direction. AGRHYMET/PRESASS 2026 expects above-average to average rainfall across much of the Central and Eastern Sahel, including Niger, Burkina Faso except the far south, and central/eastern Mali[33]. It also notes average to above-average river flows in several basins and warns that wetter conditions and runoff could lead to flooding, road disruption, damage to infrastructure, waterborne disease risks and access constraints.

At the same time, the global-model picture is more cautious, and in places drier. FEWS NET reports model divergence. WMO and C3S multimodel forecasts indicate below-average rainfall from July to October in parts of the Sahel, while NMME points toward wetter conditions in parts of the central and eastern Sahel. FEWS NET attributes this split to different model interpretations of El Niño's influence on the West African monsoon[34].

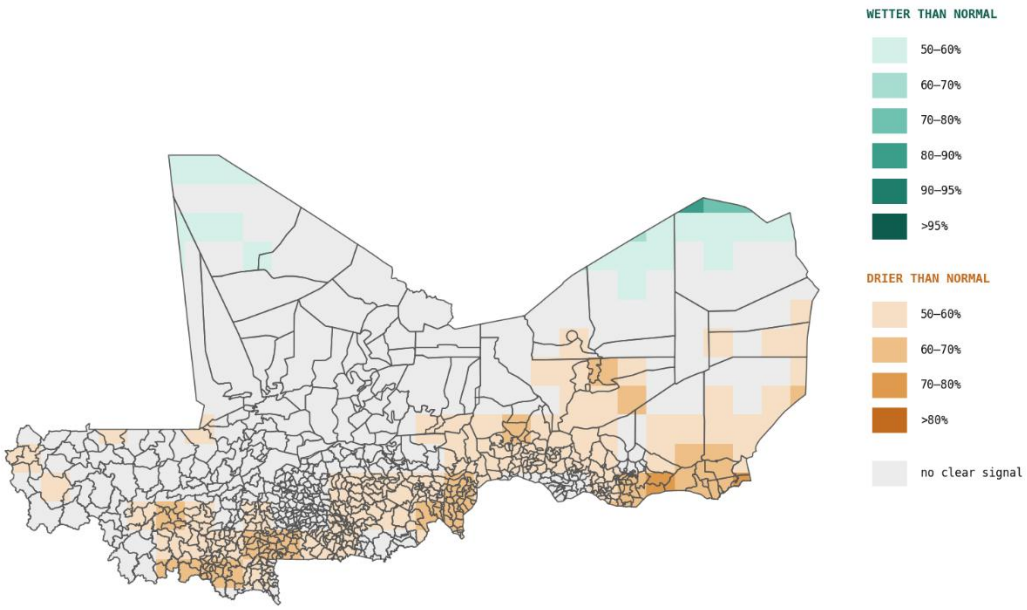
This means the Sahel should not be written as either a straightforward drought case or a straightforward flood case. The forecast map used in our analysis leans more toward the drier side, with a fragmented drier-than-normal signal across parts of the southern/agricultural belt of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, while large areas show no clear signal and only isolated

[33] See COMMUNIQUE-FINAL_PRESASS_Ndjamena_2026_EN.pdf

[34] See The rainy season continues normally in bimodal areas and expands gradually into the Sahel | FEWS NET and 20260604-FEWS-NET-west-africa-sm

wetter-than-normal pockets. However, because the some regional forecast still points to normal-to-wet conditions in parts of the Central and Eastern Sahel, the focus should still be on monitoring both dry-spell/agropastoral stress and localized flood risk, especially where either hazard would affect displaced populations and hard-to-reach communities.

***Figure 14. Sahel JAS 2026 forecast. Probability wetter or drier than normal***




The humanitarian relevance is high even where the climate signal is uncertain. Burkina Faso, Mali and western Niger are already facing a severe crisis driven by conflict, displacement and the erosion of basic services. OCHA reports that the three-country area hosts over 2.8 million IDPs[35]. Climate shocks could worsen conditions for people already displaced, recently returned, or living in conflict-affected host communities. A drier outcome would raise concerns around water access, pasture, crop performance, livestock conditions, food prices and transhumance routes. A wetter outcome would raise concerns around flash flooding, river overflow, shelter damage, road cuts, health risks and access to already isolated areas. PRESASS makes this same dual point: wet areas could face flooding and access disruption, while dry-spell areas could see crop and fodder stress, prolonged lean-season pressure and increased movement.

In Burkina Faso, one of the main concerns is where the dry signal overlaps with very large displacement and service pressure. The country is estimated to have a large number of IDPs and recent humanitarian analysis notes that insecurity affects much of the country, especially the north and east, while displacement intensified in the west in 2025, particularly in Boucle du Mouhoun[36]. If the drier forecast verifies, monitoring should focus on water access, pasture, food prices and agricultural livelihoods in IDP-hosting and conflict-affected areas. If the wetter regional forecast verifies locally, the same areas may face road cuts, flooding of shelters or service disruption.

In Mali, the forecast should also be kept mixed. The map above shows dry probabilities in parts of the southern and central agricultural belt, while PRESASS keeps central and eastern Mali within the normal-to-wet Central Sahel zone. This makes Ségou, Mopti and the Inner Niger Delta / Niger River corridor important for monitoring both sides of the risk, both dry spells and heavy rainfall.

In Niger, the divergence is especially important. PRESASS places Niger within the Central and Eastern Sahel area where rainfall is expected to be above-average to normal, and it also flags excess flows in the Komadougou Yobé basin. However, the forecast map in this brief shows drier probabilities across parts of the southern and eastern belt. This argues for monitoring both drought-sensitive and flood-sensitive areas. Niger's displacement-related needs are concentrated in Tillabéri, Tahoua, Diffa and Maradi, with Tillabéri alone hosting more than 300,000 forcibly displaced people. The 2026 humanitarian analysis

[35] See Burkina Faso, Mali and Western Niger - Humanitarian Overview (As of 29 April 2026) | OCHA

[36] See Burkina Faso - European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

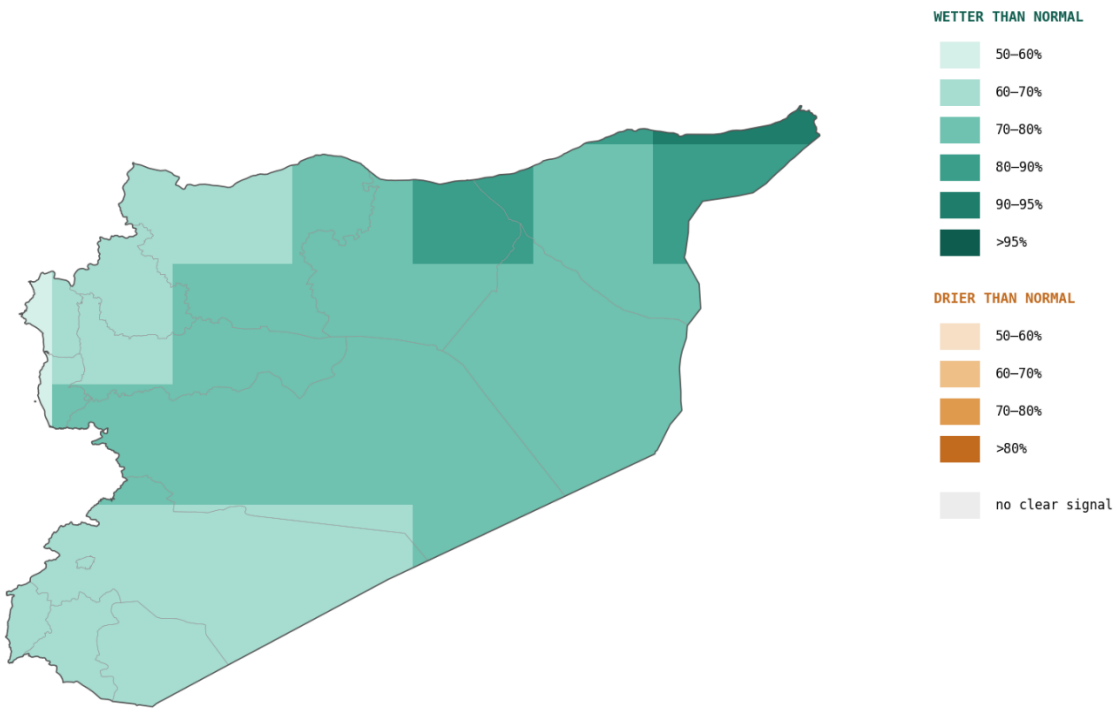
also notes recurrent floods, food insecurity, malnutrition and WASH vulnerabilities, with flooding affecting around 270,000 people in 2025 and southern Maradi particularly impacted[37].

If wet conditions end up materializing, recent flood history is important, but it should be used as a stress test rather than a direct El Niño analogue. In 2024, flooding across the Sahel affected nearly 6 million people and displaced more than 980,000, including refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs whose shelters were destroyed. Rainfall in Chad, Niger, Mali, Mauritania and northern Burkina Faso was reported at 120% to 600% above average, and Niger alone had around 1.5 million people affected[38]. So even in a season where total rainfall forecasts are uncertain, localized heavy rainfall and river flooding can still create major humanitarian impacts in the Sahel countries.

## 03.H – Syria

Syria shows a broad wetter-than-normal signal for the late-2026 rainy-season period, with most of the country showing at least moderate probabilities and the strongest signal in the north and northeast, especially around Al-Hasakeh and parts of the Euphrates/Jazira area (Figure 16). This aligns with wider regional analysis. ACAPS' July 2026 El Niño overview, drawing on WMO and IRI forecasts, notes a high probability of above-average precipitation from October–November 2026 across parts of Southwest Asia, including Syria, with stronger signals across northern Syria[39]. The same analysis cautions that wetter conditions could increase flood risk, aggravate conditions for people displaced by conflict, and raise waterborne and respiratory disease risks.

*Figure 15. Syria OND 2026 forecast. Probability wetter or drier than normal*




But this should not be read as a straightforward flood forecast. Above-average rainfall could bring some relief for water availability, pasture and agriculture if well distributed. Syria's current vulnerability, however, means that heavy rainfall can quickly create localized impacts. A multi-year drought, combined with high water, food and energy costs, has been a major driver of Syria's food-security crisis, while 2025 reporting described the country's drought as among the worst in decades, with severe impacts on wheat production and water availability.

[37] See Niger-HCA-2026_Short_March-2026.pdf

[38] See Sahel-2025-HNRO-ENG-0530.pdf

[39] See 20260707_ACAPS_El_Nino_Overview_-_Countries_to_watch_.pdf

The displacement context is central. Syria still has one of the world's largest displacement crises. More than 5.5 million people remain internally displaced, while it's been previously estimated that more than 8.1 million people need protection support[40]. Since late 2024, return dynamics have also shifted, with refugee and IDP returns increasing, often to areas where infrastructure and services remain fragile. The current climate forecast therefore does not indicate where people will move; rather, it helps identify where wetter conditions could worsen risks for people already displaced, recently returned, or living in damaged housing and overstretched host communities.

In this context, our analysis highlights two geographies. The first is northeast Syria, including Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor, where the wet signal is strongest and where recent displacement and service disruption have already increased vulnerability. UNICEF reported that early-2026 escalation displaced more than 170,000 people across Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor by late January, with many settling in Qamishli and Al-Malikiyyeh and sharply increasing demand for WASH, health, protection and education services. It also noted that electricity shortages continued to disrupt water pumping, health facilities and vaccine cold chains, increasing reliance on unsafe water sources[41].

The second is northwest Syria, especially Idlib and northern Aleppo, where even a weaker or moderate wet signal can be highly relevant because of camp conditions. Recent experience shows the risk clearly. In early 2026, heavy rainfall affected IDP sites in Idlib and northern Lattakia, with around 5,300 IDPs directly affected and nearly 2,000 tents damaged or destroyed. Floodwaters inundated shelters and WASH facilities, forcing some families to relocate and disrupting health services.[42]

Recent flooding also affected parts of Idleb, Lattakia, Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor between March and April 2026, damaging shelters and displacing thousands of people, including more than 19,000 people in Idleb and Aleppo, over 1,400 families in Al-Hasakeh, and 5,600 people in Deir-ez-Zor. UNFPA also highlights that women and girls in overcrowded temporary sites face heightened GBV risks where privacy, lighting and sanitation are inadequate[43].

Overall, Syria can be framed as a wetter-than-normal signal country with high compound vulnerability, but not as a deterministic flood case. Some of the areas for closer monitoring are northeast Syria, where the strongest wet signal overlaps with recent displacement and fragile services, and northwest Syria, where camp and shelter conditions make even localized heavy rainfall potentially severe.

## 04 From Data and Forecasts to Action: A Displacement-Centered Approach to El Niño Anticipation and Response

DRC's mandate and operational footprint provide a distinctive perspective on El Niño anticipation and response. Unlike approaches that focus primarily on hazard forecasting, DRC combines weather forecasts with displacement analysis to understand where forecast hazards intersect with existing vulnerabilities, displacement patterns and likely mobility dynamics. This enables humanitarian actors to anticipate not only where climate impacts may occur, but also how those impacts are likely to affect displaced populations and influence future displacement.

This integrated approach builds on DRC's expertise across anticipatory action, emergency preparedness and response, protection, durable solutions and data analytics. It also reflects DRC's operational presence across the displacement continuum, from areas of origin to transit routes, displacement sites, host communities and return locations. DRC's response focuses both on anticipating and responding to El Niño impacts in displacement settings, and preparing for, anticipating and responding to El Niño-related mobility.

DRC's sectoral expertise in Protection, Humanitarian Disarmament and Peacebuilding, Economic Recovery, and Shelter, WASH and Infrastructure enables the anticipation of climate shocks to be translated into practical preparedness and response measures that both anticipate and address immediate humanitarian needs and longer-term resilience. By combining forecasting with displacement data and local operational knowledge, DRC seeks to ensure that humanitarian action is informed not only by where hazards are expected, but by where people are most vulnerable.

[40] See Syrian Arab Republic | Displacement Tracking Matrix and Syrian Arab Republic | UNHCR

[41] See Syrian Arab Republic-2026-2026-05-08 (UNICEF)

[42] ibid

[43] See SitRep UNFPA Syria Situation Report

As the contexts where DRC operates have very different exposure to El Niño risks, systems and resources, DRC applies a flexible approach that enables DRC teams in-country to strengthen preparedness according to forecast confidence, existing programming and national capacities. DRC and partners on the ground are:

1. Adapting existing programmes to anticipated El Niño impacts
2. Strengthening existing preparedness and anticipatory action systems
3. Making rapid investments in emergency preparedness plans and simplified anticipatory action plans

Further information about DRC's response to El Niño will be detailed in a Global El Niño Response Plan.

Founded in 1956, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) has worked for 70 years to support displaced people in their pursuit of a dignified life. As Denmark's largest humanitarian NGO and a leading international organisation, DRC works in nearly 30 countries with a dedicated team of around 6,000 employees and thousands of volunteers.

DRC advocates for the rights of and solutions for displacement-affected communities, and provides assistance during all stages of displacement: In acute crisis, in exile, when settling and integrating in a new place, or upon return. DRC supports displaced persons in becoming self-reliant and included into hosting societies. DRC works with civil society and responsible authorities to promote protection of rights and inclusion.

Our more than 5000 volunteers in Denmark make an invaluable difference in integration activities throughout the country.

DRC's code of conduct sits at the core of our organizational mission, and DRC aims at the highest ethical and professional standards. DRC has been certified as meeting the highest quality standards according to the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability.

HRH Queen Mary is DRC's patron.

To read more about what we do, see: www.drc.ngo

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