

Severe southern African drought to worsen: UN

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The impact of the most severe drought to hit southern Africa in 35 years is expected to worsen in the coming months, a UN climate envoy warned Friday.

"The crisis has yet to peak," Macharia Kamau, special envoy on El Nino and climate, said at the end of a four-day trip to Mozambique.

The devastation, which has affected some 18 million people across the southern African region, will be at its worst around January next year, he said.

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"For many children, women and the elderly, the next few months will be about looking at survival straight in the face," Kamau told reporters in Maputo after visiting water-starved districts a few hours' drive from the capital.

"Frankly, what I saw there saddened and shocked me. We saw stretches of land, bone dry and desolate," he said.

Some parts in Mozambique have not seen rains for three years, according to the country's natural disaster management agency.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) in August launched an emergency aid appeal for \$2.9 billion (2.7 billion euros).

For Mozambique, \$200 million is required "immediately" but only 57 percent of that has been secured, said Kamau.

Drought in the region has been blamed on the El Nino weather phenomenon which occurs every two to seven years, affecting rainfall patterns by causing both drought and flooding.

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