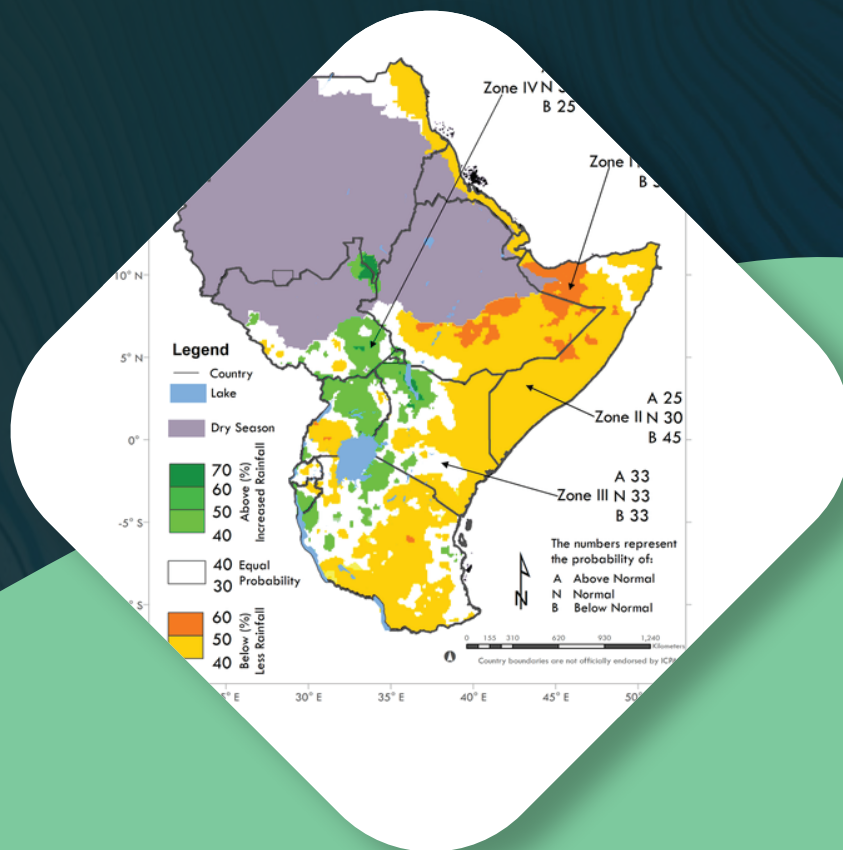




# Anticipating **La Niña** in **Somalia**: Projected **Drought** Impacts and Urgent Preparedness **Actions**



## Commentary

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# 1. Introduction

Somalia is bracing for significant climate challenges as the La Niña phenomenon is anticipated to emerge by the end of 2024. Climate models estimate a 70% probability of a La Niña event, which is likely to bring severe drought conditions extending into 2025. This transition to La Niña, predicted to cause markedly below-average rainfall, could deeply impact Somalia's already fragile economy, agriculture, and livelihoods, exacerbating the drought situation.

This follows the devastating 2023 El Niño event, which resulted in extensive flooding, the displacement of millions, and widespread destruction. The humanitarian sector must prepare for these potential effects to safeguard vulnerable populations, drawing upon the critical lessons from the last prolonged drought. Continuous monitoring and timely intervention will be essential to maintain food security across the region as these patterns evolve.

## 2. Understanding La Niña in Somalia

La Niña, a natural climate phenomenon, causes surface waters in the central and eastern Pacific to cool significantly, triggering global shifts in weather patterns. Reoccurring every 2-7 years and lasting 9-12 months, La Niña's relatively predictable cycle and slow onset enable anticipatory interventions and proactive emergency responses. Following a strong El Niño year, La Niña

often brings contrasting climate extremes to affected areas, including droughts across Eastern and Southern Africa. Immediate, coordinated actions are critical to mitigate these impacts, with this briefing outlining key strategies for governments, donors, business communities, and development partners.

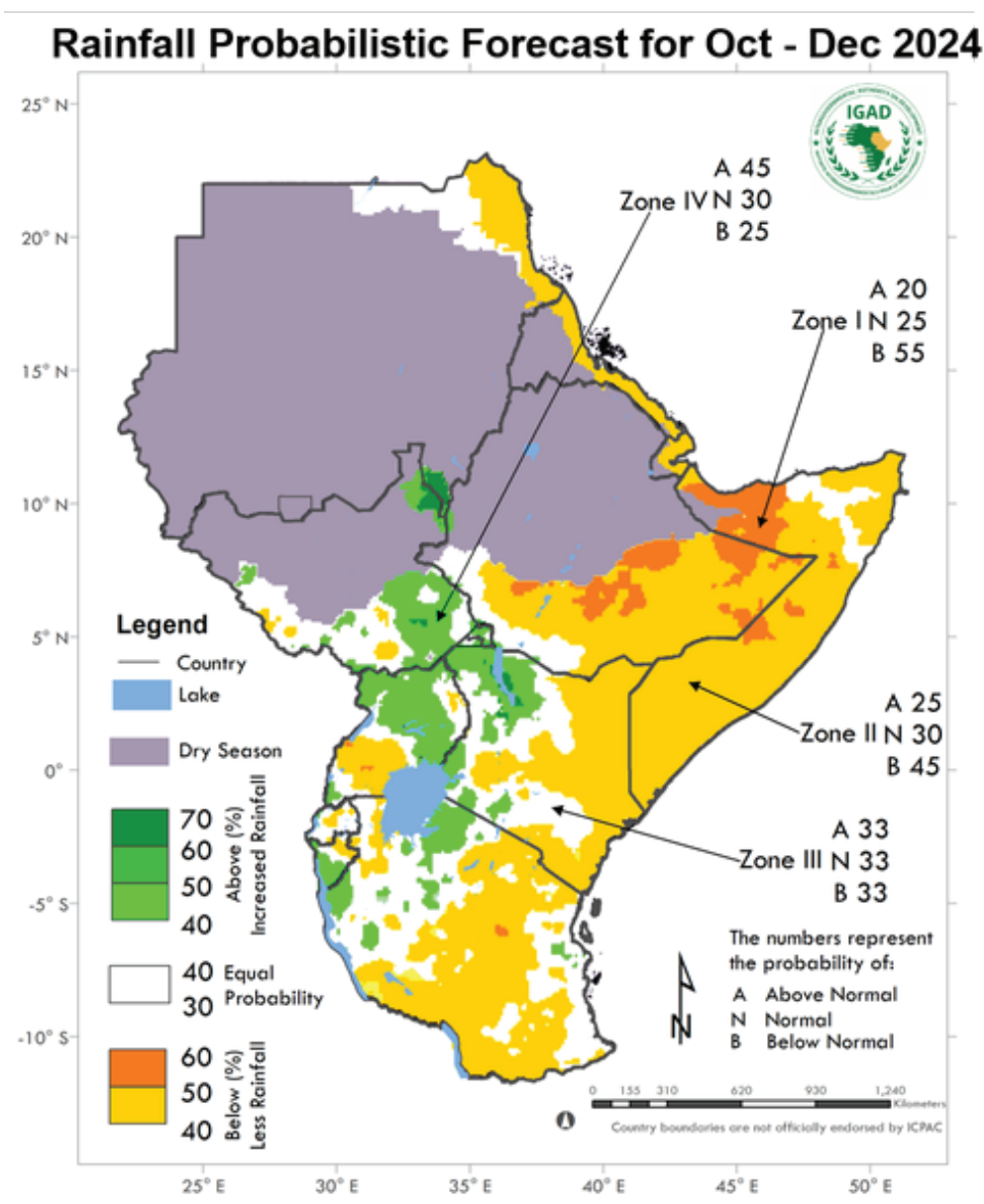
## 3. Background

Global climate phenomena like La Niña shape weather patterns worldwide, influencing agriculture and food security. Recent La Niña events have heightened cyclone occurrences in Southeast Asia and prolonged droughts across the Horn of Africa. Typically, La Niña brings wetter

weather to Northern Somalia from July to September, while South-Central Somalia experiences drier conditions between November and March. The March-May 2024 rainy season brought above-average rainfall, temporarily aiding

crop production and restoring rangeland after severe droughts in 2022-2023. However, forecasts for late 2024 indicate a shift to La Niña, likely resulting in dry conditions across the south. Somalia, with its reliance on rain-fed agriculture and vulnerability to extreme weather, faces complex climate-induced challenges. The severe 2023-2024 El Niño event indicated

Somalia's vulnerability to climate extremes, such as droughts, floods, and cyclones, placing the country among the 24 most at-risk nations. With a 70% likelihood of reduced rainfall in the upcoming Deyr season (October-December 2024), Somalia's ongoing recovery from past droughts remains precarious, which leaves millions vulnerable to food insecurity.



## 4. Recent El Niño vs. Expected La Niña

Somalia's history of climate-related disasters, including the floods of 1997/98, highlights the country's sensitivity to extreme weather. The 2023 El Niño severely impacted Somalia, where intense rains caused unprecedented flooding, which displaced 2.5 million people and endangering 1.5 million hectares along the Juba and Shabelle rivers. Damaged infrastructure, including bridges, hindered assistance and intensified the humanitarian crisis. The United Nations

labeled it a "once-in-a-century" event, stressing Somalia's climate vulnerability. This flooding has strained agriculture, livestock, and food security, with lasting impacts on millions dependent on farming. Anticipating La Niña's drier conditions in East Africa, resilience-building efforts must begin promptly to address food security threats, particularly as La Niña is likely to exacerbate El Niño-induced damages.

## 5. Somalia's 2024 Deyr Rainfall Outlook

- **Drier-than-usual conditions:** The Deyr season (October-December 2024) is likely to bring below-normal rainfall across much of Somalia, challenging agriculture and water resources.

- **Regional variations:**

- Southeastern Somalia may face notably dry conditions.
- At-risk areas: Coastal regions, including parts of Lower Juba and Lower Shabelle, could see diminished rainfall.

- **Temperature outlook:** Warmer-than-average temperatures across Somalia may further strain water resources and affect crop growth.

- **Seasonal outlook:** Expected warmer conditions up to December 2024, particularly in eastern and northern Somalia, may pose considerable challenges for agriculture and water access, which necessitates vigilant monitoring of these evolving conditions.

## 6. Impact of La Niña in Somalia

The arrival of La Niña is likely to intensify drought risk in Somalia, straining water availability, agricultural output, and food security. Somalia's reliance on rain-fed agriculture and

pastoralism increases its susceptibility to climate variability, which adds pressures to an already fragile economy.

- **Agricultural impacts:** Drier-than-expected conditions could disrupt agricultural production, harm crops, and reduce livestock pasture availability, endangering livelihoods and potentially increasing food prices and malnutrition, especially among vulnerable populations.
- **Water resources:** Below-average rainfall will impact water resources, leaving communities, particularly those in arid and semi-arid regions, at heightened risk of water shortages for both consumption and agriculture. These challenges could delay recovery in previously drought-affected areas.
- **Food security:** With over 70% of the population reliant on agriculture and livestock, reduced production poses severe food security risks, leading to

malnutrition and greater humanitarian needs, particularly among women and children.

- **Economic stress:** Reduced agricultural and livestock production may depress incomes for farmers, herders, and traders, impacting the broader economy and heightening social tensions, migration, and conflicts over limited resources.

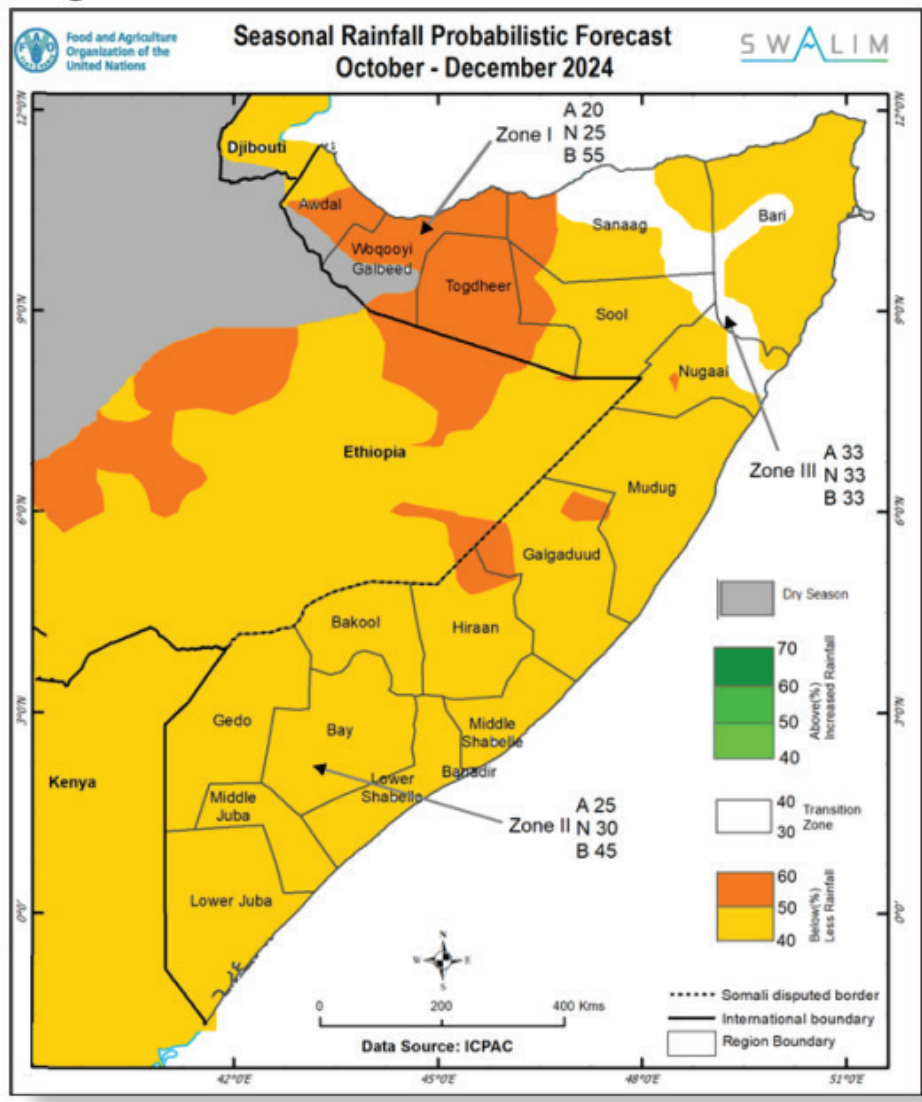
La Niña's effects compound Somalia's existing vulnerabilities, endangering the livelihoods of millions. As the country faces increasingly arid conditions, humanitarian efforts must prioritize resilience-building, water management improvements, and support for food security to mitigate potential impacts.

## 7. El Niño and Hunger in Somalia

Preparing for La Niña's potential effects is critical as millions in Somalia face increased hunger risk. Below-average rainfall in the 2024 Deyr season threatens food security, prompting warnings from UN agencies. Without swift humanitarian support, Somalia may experience a severe drought in 2025, mirroring conditions that led to famine in 2022. Currently, 3.6 million Somalis, or 19% of the population, face crisis-level hunger

(IPC Phase 3 or above), projected to increase to 4.4 million by year-end. Alarming estimates suggest nearly 1.6 million children under five are at risk of acute malnutrition. As La Niña increases temperatures and reduces rainfall, soil moisture deficits could devastate crops and pastures. Ensuring life-saving aid and sustainable recovery support is vital for building community resilience against repeated shocks.





## 8. Urgent Actions for Drought Preparedness

a) *Strengthen early warning and preparedness systems:* Enhance climate monitoring and data collection to track La Niña impacts on rain-fed agriculture, integrating climate risk into local development and preparedness strategies.

b) *Build resilience in agriculture and infrastructure:* Promote drought-resistant crops, sustainable

farming practices, and diversify small-scale agribusinesses. Invest in climate-resilient infrastructure, including water management solutions and flood control systems.

c) *Engage the private sector and international partners:* Develop partnerships to strengthen food and water supply chains for vulnerable

communities and mobilize water infrastructure resources.

d) *Invest in water management:* Expand community water conservation initiatives and rehabilitate existing infrastructure to ensure sustainable access in drought-prone regions.

e) *Promote community awareness and education:* Launch public awareness campaigns on drought risks

and water conservation practices, and equip local governments with disaster risk reduction skills.

f) *Enhance humanitarian response and community resilience:* Reinforce emergency response systems and support communities in adapting to prolonged drought conditions.

## 9. Conclusion

Somalia faces a critical challenge in transitioning from the floods triggered by the 2023 El Niño to the looming drought of a potential 2024 La Niña. These climatic extremes intensify Somalia's vulnerabilities, especially given the severe drought conditions likely to follow recent flooding. While these climate events are unavoidable, their impacts can be significantly reduced through proactive, coordinated actions.

Investing in early warning systems, enhancing agricultural resilience, and

improving water management are essential for safeguarding Somalia's most vulnerable communities. By fostering collaboration among government agencies, the private sector, and international organizations, Somalia can establish a comprehensive response framework addressing both immediate needs and long-term resilience-building efforts. Today's preparedness can prevent tomorrow's disaster, ensuring that lessons from past climate extremes strengthen Somalia's resilience against future challenges.





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Who we work with is just as important as the work we do. Collaborating with partners is critical to driving and delivering change. Through our partnerships, we develop local solutions that can work for lasting impact. *Want to contribute to our journey, Contact us.*



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