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# VIHIGA COUNTY
# CLIMATE OUTLOOK FOR THE "SHORT RAINS" SEASON (OND) 2026

## 1.0: Outlook for October-November-December (OND) 2026

The season occurs due to the southward migration of the Inter-tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ). Its duration and performance are influenced by the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), which enhances rainfall when in the positive phase. On shorter timescales, rainfall intensity is influenced by the Madden–Julian Oscillation (MJO) and the development of tropical cyclones over the Southwest Indian Ocean. The ongoing strong El Niño event also enhances rainfall when it occurs concurrently with a positive IOD.

According to the most recent update, the 2026 El Niño event continues to intensify across the central-eastern equatorial Pacific. The traditional Niño 3.4 index shows a clear and sustained increase, with the most recent seasonal mean reaching +1.51 °C during May–July 2026 and the July monthly value rising to +2.03 °C. The latest weekly Niño 3.4 index, centred on 12 August 2026, reached +2.7 °C. These observations indicate that El Niño is strengthening further and evolving toward a very strong event.

The Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) is currently neutral. As of 23 August 2026, the weekly IOD index stood at +0.17°C which is below the positive IOD threshold (+0.4°C). Sustained values above this threshold are required for eight consecutive weeks before a positive IOD event is considered established. The current IOD value is expected to increase in magnitude and surpass the threshold from September 2026 although some uncertainty remains regarding its timing and strength. The maximum predicted IOD value for the season is +0.7, which is closer to the level observed in 2015 than to those recorded in 2023 or 1997.

The Climate Outlook for the October–December 2026 "Short Rains" season indicates that above-average rainfall is expected over Vihiga County and during the season.

(***Refer to Figure1 &2 respectively as indicated below***).

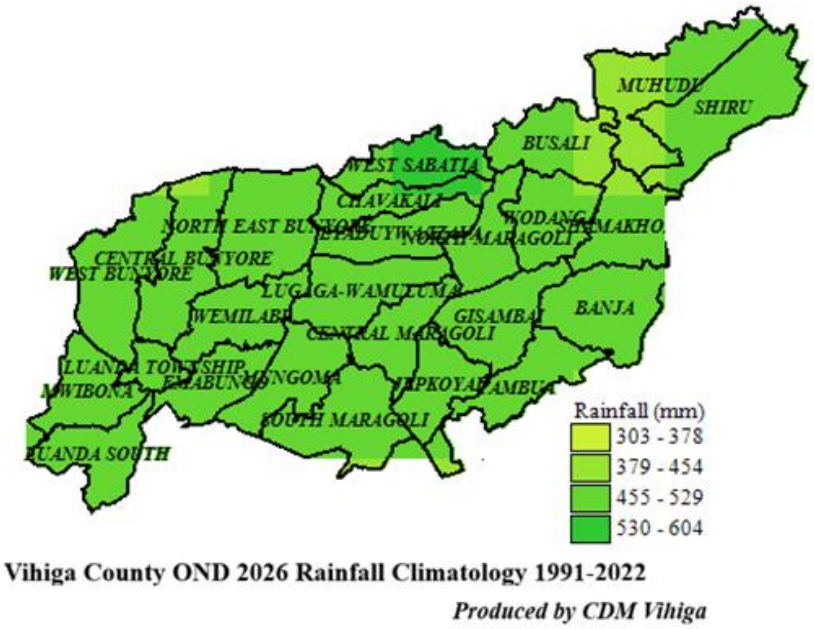



*Fig 1*: *OND 2026 Rainfall Climatology*

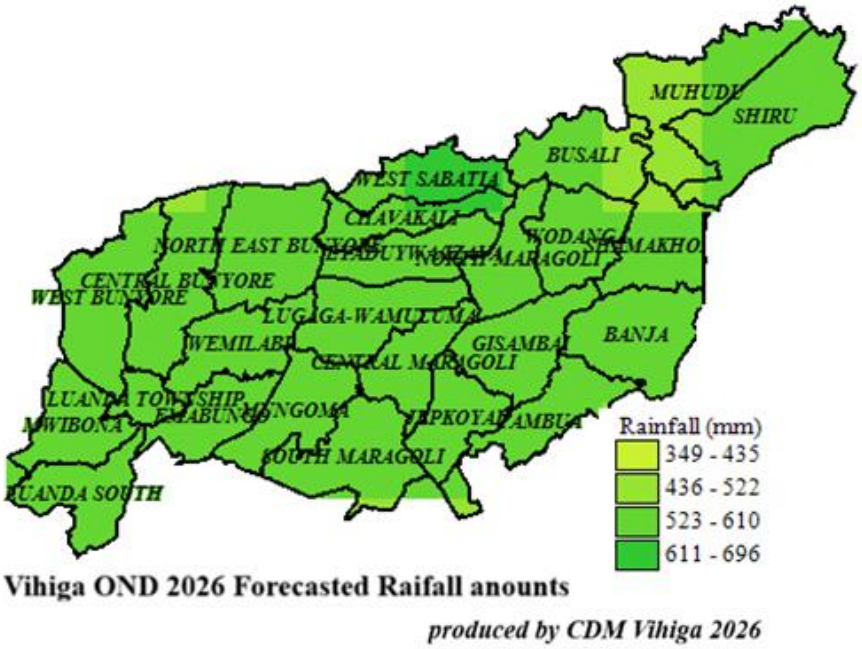



*Fig 2*: *OND 2026 Rainfall forecast*

## 2.0: Expected Onset

(i) **September**: Rainfall is expected to continue or become increasingly established.

(ii) **October**: More widespread and persistent rainfall is expected.

*The onset and distribution may vary across different parts of the county.*

## 3.0: Expected peak

(i) **October-November**: Enhanced rainfall activity is expected;

(ii) **November**: Indications suggest this may be the principal peak month;

*Heavy rainfall episodes and thunderstorms may occur even outside the peak period.*

## 4.0: Expected Cessation.

Rainfall may remain significant through **December 2026**, with some enhanced rainfall conditions potentially extending into **January 2027**.

## 5.0: Rainfall distribution and intensity.

The season may be characterized by:

**(i) Above-average seasonal rainfall.**

- Generally good rainfall distribution, although rainfall may be uneven in space and time.

**(ii) Prolonged wet spells.**

- Occasional heavy rainfall events and thunderstorms.
- Increased risk of localized flooding, soil erosion and waterlogging in vulnerable areas.

## 6.0: Likely impacts for key sectors.

### (i) Agriculture.

- Generally favourable moisture conditions for crops and pasture.
- Farmers should, however, use good drainage, avoid waterlogging and monitor crops for fungal diseases.
- Heavy rainfall may damage young crops and increase nutrient leaching and soil erosion.

### (ii) Water resources.

- Likely improvement in water availability and recharge of rivers, springs and other water resources.
- Communities should protect water sources against contamination during heavy rainfall.

### (iii) Disaster risk management.

Increased preparedness is needed for:

- Localized flooding;
- Landslides and slope failures in vulnerable areas;
- Soil erosion;
- Damage to roads and infrastructure;
- Lightning incidents.

*NB: Updates on rainfall activities will be provided regularly through weekly forecast.*



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## APPENDIX I: INTERPRETATION OF TERMS

| S/No | Term | Rainfall Amount (24 hrs) | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Light | < 5mm | Gentle rain, drizzle. |
| 2 | Moderate/Lingering | 5 - 20 mm | Steady, noticeable rain. |
| 3 | Heavy | 21 - 50 mm | Intense rain, possible thunder. |
| 4 | Very heavy | > 50 mm | Prolonged rain, high intensity. |

| S/No | Term | Area Affected | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Few places | < 33% | Rain in a small portion of the region. |
| 2 | Several places | 33% - 66% | Rain in multiple but not in most parts of the region. |
| 3 | Most places | > 66% | Rain in nearly all parts of the region. |

| S/No | Term | Area Affected | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Isolated | Less than 25% | Very few places affected. |
| 2 | Scattered | 25% - 50% | Several, but not most, areas affected. |
| 3 | Numerous | 51% - 70% | Many areas affected. |
| 4 | Widespread | Over 70% | Almost all areas affected. |

| S/No | Term | Time Coverage (%) | Meaning |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Occasional | Less than 25% | Happens rarely or a few times. |
| 2 | Intermittent | 25% - 50% | Starts and stops, comes and goes. |
| 3 | Frequent | 51% - 75% | Occurs regularly. |
| 4 | Very frequent/Common | Over 75% | Happens almost all the time. |

| S/No | Term | Probability of Occurrence | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Possible | 10% - 30% | There is low confidence. |
| 2 | Chance of/May | 31% - 50% | There is moderate confidence. |
| 3 | Likely | 51% - 75% | There event is more probable than not. |
| 4 | Expected | 76% - 90% | There is high confidence. |
| 5 | Very likely | 91% - 99% | There is very high confidence. Almost certain. |
| 6 | Certain | 100% | The event is guaranteed to occur. |