

# The Iran truce may be too late for many African countries

By



[Nimi Princewill](#)

10.04.2026



Fuel prices have increased sharply across Africa, rising between 15% and 40%.

Francis Kokoroko/Reuters

*Abuja -*

In northern Malawi, Suteny Williams Nsamba is struggling to buy fertilizer for his small farm, where he grows corn, groundnuts and tobacco. The war in Iran sent living costs soaring, and he warns if shipping disruption continues into Malawi's crop-growing season in November, a "devastating low yield" is inevitable.

"The prices of many commodities will rise, and life will be unbearable," he told CNN.

Nsamba's struggles echo across Africa, with economies hit hard as fuel prices surge and the obstruction of trade routes leads to shortages of fertilizer during the key planting season.

The two-week ceasefire announced between the United States and Iran brings hope, but even if it holds, few expect a swift return to normality. Aliko Dangote, the owner of Africa's largest oil refinery in Nigeria, told CNN last month that it may take several months for oil prices to stabilize.

While nowhere has been spared the impact of the Iran war, African countries – which rely heavily on imports of fuel, food, and fertilizer – are especially vulnerable.

Simon Mulongo, a former special African Union envoy to Somalia and the Sahel, told CNN that the temporary ceasefire has come too late to ease the hardships faced by African nations confronting rising resource prices.

“It is late and uneven,” he said, leaving some oil-importing countries on the continent dealing with “currency pressure, subsidy strain, and rising pump prices.”

Across Africa, fuel prices have surged by as much as 15% to 40%, further straining already struggling economies. In Malawi, petrol prices have risen by 34%, while jet fuel prices jumped by 81%.

[Related video](#)



Once again, African countries have found themselves victims of a distant war they have no say in.

“Earlier shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war show that African economies remain deeply exposed to global volatility,” said Fola Aina, a political scientist and international security analyst.

### **Distant war, local burden**

The economic impact of conflicts elsewhere is painfully familiar to Africa, a continent that was only just recovering from price shocks caused by Russia’s ongoing war in Ukraine.

Before Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the two neighboring countries were significant suppliers of agricultural goods to many African nations.

A [survey](#) conducted by the think tank ODI Global in 2024 revealed that Kenya and Egypt — among the continent’s largest economies — relied on Russia and Ukraine for a substantial portion of their wheat imports, sourcing up to 85% and 67%, respectively.

Much of the impact stems from the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz. While much of the global attention has been on oil, the chokepoint is also a vital route for fertilizer, putting harvests and daily meals at risk. Even with the truce underway, only a trickle of ships are getting through.



A farmer applies fertiliser on cabbages at a farm in Jibia, Nigeria, on February 17, 2024.

The figures showing Africa's reliance on global supply chains are stark.

Africa's annual food import costs [range between \\$70 billion and \\$100 billion](#), according to the United Nations. The continent also [imports over 6 million tons of fertilizer](#) each year. Additionally, Africa's spending on refined petroleum products [exceeds \\$120 billion annually](#).

According to a [report](#) released last year by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), "African economies faced greater uncertainty during global shocks" than the rest of the world, pointing not just to the heavy use of imports but also high levels of debt and weak infrastructure.

### **First big crisis of the 'post-aid era'**

The ripple effects of the Iran war extend far beyond an oil crisis.

Aid agencies raised alarms about the conflict's potential to disrupt humanitarian efforts across Africa, worsening food insecurity on a continent already grappling with a sharp decline in foreign aid.

Even before the conflict began, the [World Food Programme warned of a "dire" year ahead](#) with 55 million people in west and central Africa expected to endure crisis levels of hunger.

In Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia, "millions of people are already living through drought, hunger, displacement, and conflict," Melaku Yirga, Mercy Corps' vice president for Africa, told CNN. We may be on the brink of "the first major crisis of the post-aid era, where the need is immense, but the response simply does not come," warned Yirga.



Residents receive aid from World Food Programme (WFP) at Al-Omada neighborhood of Omdurman, the twin city of Khartoum, Sudan, on March 11, 2026.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has reported significant disruptions in the delivery of vital aid due to shipping delays.

Pharmaceutical supplies intended to support 20,000 people in war-torn Sudan, “where needs are already at catastrophic levels,” are stranded in Dubai, and more than 600 boxes of therapeutic food that could save the lives of over 1,000 severely malnourished children in Somalia remain stuck in India, said the IRC.

Both countries [rely on imported fertilizers](#) transported through the Strait of Hormuz and face a heightened risk of acute hunger if the crisis persists, according to the UN World Food Programme (WFP).

The tensions in the Middle East coincide with the key planting season in many African countries, occurring from March to May, when fertilizer demand [is at its peak](#).

“This will affect agricultural production, compounding risks of crisis and emergency levels of food insecurity, especially for low-income households and import-dependent economies,” a [policy brief](#) issued by the UN development programme (UNDP) stated.

The WFP [estimates](#) that an additional 45 million people worldwide may now be at risk of acute hunger, particularly as this conflict coincides with critical funding shortages for aid services.

## Long-term outlook

African governments' responses to the crisis brought on by the conflict have varied.

Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Hassan cut back on her motorcade, instructing officials accompanying her to travel together in shared buses to conserve fuel amid rising oil prices in the East African nation.

Madagascar declared a national energy emergency due to ongoing disruptions in its energy supply. In South Sudan, where nearly all electricity is [generated from fossil fuels](#), power rationing has been implemented in the capital city as a response to oil shortages. South Sudan produces oil for export, but has little refining capacity of its own, so has to import most of what it uses.

Egypt enforced a nationwide policy requiring restaurants, cafes, and stores to close by 9 pm in an effort to reduce energy consumption.



Shops are closed after Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly confirmed that all commercial establishments including malls, shops, and restaurants will close at 9:00 PM for one month to conserve electricity, in Cairo, Egypt, on March 28, 2026.



A man stocks up on petrol and diesel, loading jerrycans into his van, during a national energy crisis declared by the government, amid the US-Israeli conflict with Iran, in Antsirabe, Madagascar, on April 8, 2026.

What's missing is that, in the long term, analysts say Africa will have to reduce its vulnerability to global economic shocks, including strengthening regional ties.

Neo Letswalo, a research associate at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa, told CNN that there is a critical need to enhance trade among African nations.

“Our deeply embedded reliance on foreign value-added products and services persists with no minimal contingency to resort to an intra-African alternative,” he said.

Aina, who teaches at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, urged the swift implementation of the [African Continental Free Trade Area \(AfCFTA\)](#), an agreement signed by countries on the continent to boost trade among themselves. Although the agreement was initiated in 2020, progress has been slow, with [just over 20](#) of the continent's 55 countries trading under the deal.

“The alternative for African nations is strategic autonomy,” he explained. This involves “deepening intra-African trade through the AfCFTA, investing in local production — especially in food and energy — and building resilient regional value chains.”

In the meantime, African nations can only hope that a US-Iran truce might offer some relief.

“Africa should not celebrate, it should recalibrate,” said Mulongo, the former African Union envoy.

“The truce eases escalation risk but leaves structural vulnerability intact. Importers still face inflation, [while] exporters gain only briefly. This [ceasefire] is breathing space, not stability, and complacency would be costly.”