[< **Mozambique Is Racing To Adapt To Climate Change. The Weather Is Winning**](https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2019/12/27/788552728/mozambique-is-racing-to-adapt-to-climate-change-the-weather-is-winning)

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AILSA CHANG, HOST:

Mozambique is particularly vulnerable to climate change. It's driving more frequent and severe cyclones, droughts and floods there. NPR's Rebecca Hersher spoke with those on the frontlines, the people living in small communities doing the best they can to adapt.

REBECCA HERSHER, BYLINE: It's November in Mozambique, and summer is almost here. It's the last week of school in the cities, which means it's well into the growing season in the countryside. But three hours outside the capital, there are empty fields.

How can you tell that it's the drought?

A Red Cross Land Cruiser bumps down a packed dirt road. In a normal year with normal amounts of rain, the Red Cross staff say the town we're going to would be inaccessible by car. My interpreter Velsoma Alfredo explains.

VELSOMA ALFREDO: It would be a lot of mud even to cross. It wouldn't be possible.

HERSHER: Oh, interesting. So it's usually very wet.

ALFREDO: Yeah.

HERSHER: There are about 100 families in this town, all farmers. On this particular morning, representatives from about half the families have gathered in the center of town for a meeting, which begins with a prayer of thanks.

LUIS JOSINE: (Chanting in Changana).

HERSHER: The man who leads the prayer, Luis Josine, has lived in town since 1961.

JOSINE: (Through interpreter) We've been noticing the climate changing here since around the year 2000. The floods are getting bigger and more severe. The droughts are getting longer.

HERSHER: The two are linked. This time of year, heavy rain is common in much of Mozambique. When lots of rain falls on hard, cracked soil, it doesn't really soak in. It runs off in a flood. The water can destroy homes and endanger livestock. Over the years, people in this town have died in floods. So a few years ago, Josine took action to protect himself and his neighbors. He volunteered to run a disaster risk reduction group for his town. That meant he was one of the hundreds of local volunteers who registered with Mozambique's Government Disaster Office and got training from the local Red Cross.

JOSINE: (Through interpreter) I'm responsible for making sure everyone knows where the high ground is.

HERSHER: It's actually hard to tell in some places. That's how flat it is here. But it makes a huge difference to get it right. Josine also has a handheld radio that he can use to find out when there's a flood warning for this area.

JOSINE: (Speaking Changana).

HERSHER: When there's a flood warning, he goes around town with a flag and a whistle to get people's attention. My interpreter explains a blue flag means there's a flood predicted in the next two to three days. Yellow means one day.

ALFREDO: And the red one, it's when the water is already here.

HERSHER: Now.

ALFREDO: And it's like, we need to leave now.

HERSHER: OK.

ALFREDO: Yeah.

HERSHER: He says since he started using the warning flags, people have been more careful about getting themselves and their animals to high ground before the water arrives. So even as the flood danger here has increased, the damage has decreased, which he says makes him feel good. Seemingly small local efforts like this one are an important part of Mozambique's overall effort to be more resilient to climate change.

Michel Matera works on flood resilience projects at the World Bank office in the capital. He points out that most of Mozambique is very flat with a large river delta and long coastline.

MICHEL MATERA: So it's difficult to think that we could just not be in areas that will never be flooded because those areas are limited.

HERSHER: People are going to live in flood-prone areas, whether it's on farms or in coastal cities, so making it possible to live there more safely is really important in part because the more damage a flood does, the more it destabilizes peoples lives. For people who are doing a lot with a little, that shock can mean the difference between being OK and starving.