

SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY



SADC FANR
Vulnerability
Assessment Committee

Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Vulnerability Assessment Committee

REGIONAL Emergency Food Security Assessment Report December 2002

Covering ... Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe

ZAMBIA

Some 2,800,000 people (28% of the population) will require an estimated 133,000MT of emergency cereal food assistance through March 2003.

ZIMBABWE

Some 7,180,000 people (52% of the population) will require an estimated 345,000MT of emergency cereal food assistance through March 2003.

LESOTHO

Some 740,000 people (34% of the population) will require an estimated 36,000MT of emergency cereal food assistance through March 2003.

MALAWI

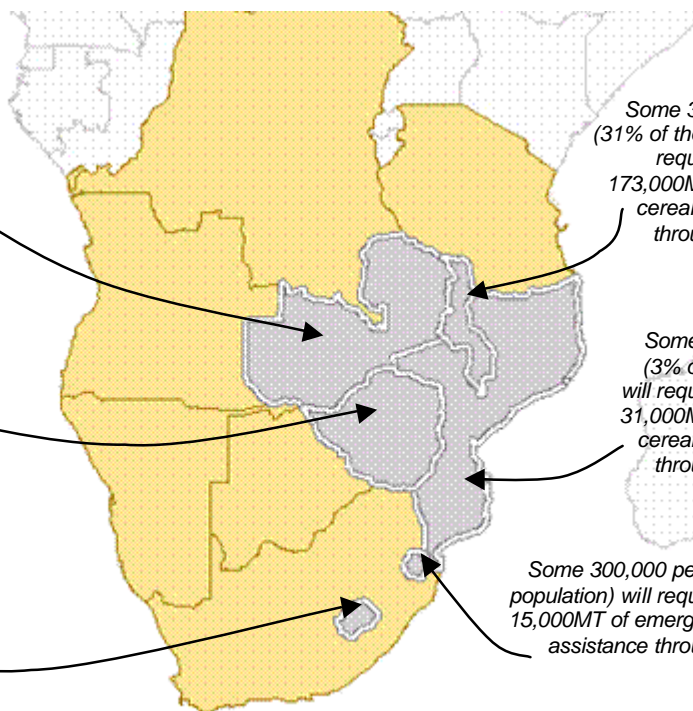
Some 3,600,000 people (31% of the population) will require an estimated 173,000MT of emergency cereal food assistance through March 2003.

MOZAMBIQUE

Some 660,000 people (3% of the population) will require an estimated 31,000MT of emergency cereal food assistance through March 2003.

SWAZILAND

Some 300,000 people (28% of the population) will require an estimated 15,000MT of emergency cereal food assistance through March 2003.



January 30, 2003
Harare

A collaborative report of the National Vulnerability Assessment Committees in Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe; the SADC Regional Early Warning Unit; the SADC Regional Remote Sensing Unit, the SADC Regional Food Security Database Project; WFP; FEWS NET; SC(UK); CARE; FAO; UNICEF; IFRC; with financial support from National Governments, DFID, WFP, and USAID

SADC REGIONAL FOOD SECURITY EMERGENCY ASSESSMENT HIGHLIGHTS

The December VAC emergency food security and vulnerability assessments confirm that food aid needs are increasing much as expected, with the most severe months from January through March. Efforts to alleviate this year's food shortages by national governments, the international community and civil society have thus far averted a major crisis. However, large volumes of outstanding planned imports will be a challenge to realize in the coming months. Early indications from the current production season are that there will be equal or even greater food shortages throughout the region in the year ahead. The current crisis is a manifestation of chronic poverty and vulnerability, exacerbated by escalating HIV/AIDS prevalence. This demands integration of short-term relief efforts with a longer-term development response within a framework of essential policy reforms.

Key Regional Trends...

- ? The July 2002 estimated **cereal gap** for all six countries of 3.3 million MT has been reduced by more than 50% through formal commercial and food aid imports as of December. If all import plans are achieved, the gap would be 85% filled by March 31, 2003. However, combined remaining imports exceed 1 million MT, which may be difficult to achieve.
- ? **Informal trade**, particularly from Mozambique and Tanzania to Malawi and Zambia has helped reduce the cereal gap. Although difficult to monitor, informal cross-border trade could be as high as 300,000MT.
- ? Acute **malnutrition** due to food shortages appears to have been kept in check throughout the region, but requires close monitoring.
- ? Early indications are that **next year's cereal harvest will be well below normal** in areas already affected by food shortages due to unfavourable rains, limited availability/accessibility of agricultural inputs, and certain government policies that inhibit agricultural production.
- ? Vulnerable people's resilience to another poor season next year has decreased. Successive years of stress on households mean that many **coping strategies** employed during this past year will become less available and/or less effective in the coming year.
- ? The highest **HIV/AIDS** prevalence rates in the world are in the Southern Africa region, with adult prevalence rates in most countries in excess of 25%. HIV/AIDS directly contributes to, and is compounded by, food insecurity. The linkages are many, strong, and long lasting.

Country Overviews ...

- ? **Zimbabwe's** food crisis is exacerbated by a severe economic downturn and government policies that inhibit production, importation and distribution of basic commodities. Curiously, reported national cereal availability (production + imports) from April through November indicates a surplus, which directly conflicts with VAC community analysis indicating severe food shortages. This discrepancy warrants further investigation.
- ? In **Malawi**, current indications are that the potential food gap has been reduced considerably through informal cross-border cereal flows. Maize prices the same or lower than at the same time last year in most markets and availability has improved as compared to the same time last year.
- ? In **Mozambique**, whilst cereal availability at the national level is considered to be normal for the time of year, household food insecurity varies widely across the country, being highest in the southern and some central districts. The estimated number of persons in need of food assistance between December and March has risen by 10% in comparison to the August VAC assessment estimates to some 660,000 people.
- ? In **Zambia**, the national cereal gap was reduced by nearly 60% by including cassava in the food balance analysis using the maize equivalency. The current outstanding cereal gap (70,000 MT) will be partially covered through continued informal cross-border trade, a considerable source of cereals lacking rigorous monitoring and requiring more attention in the future.
- ? In **Lesotho**, the estimated number of people in need of food assistance has increased by nearly 14% since August. This is mainly due to higher than anticipated reductions in purchasing power owing to lower than anticipated incomes and high cereal prices. The winter cereal crop was poor. Maize prices are the highest in the region.
- ? In **Swaziland**, maize price increases have been one of the principal shocks to livelihoods across the country. December prices were 70 – 80% higher than at the same time last year. Commercial import deliveries have been below expectations, raising concerns of further maize price increases from January-March.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

- The overall assessment process and methodology was coordinated and backstopped by the SADC Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Regional Vulnerability Assessment Committee.
- National Vulnerability Assessment Committees led assessments in the six countries with broad participation from key stakeholders.
- The objective of the assessments was to generate timely and necessary information and analysis to guide critical decision-making.
- This is part of a series of rolling emergency food security assessments.
- Another assessment will be complete by the end of May. This will include preliminary forecasts for levels of food aid requirements for the 2003/04 consumption year.

ASSESSMENT METHODS

- Six SADC countries conducted emergency food security assessments (Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe).
- Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia conducted household surveys similar to the August assessments.
- Mozambique and Zimbabwe conducted community focus group interviews.
- Swaziland utilized a household economy approach.

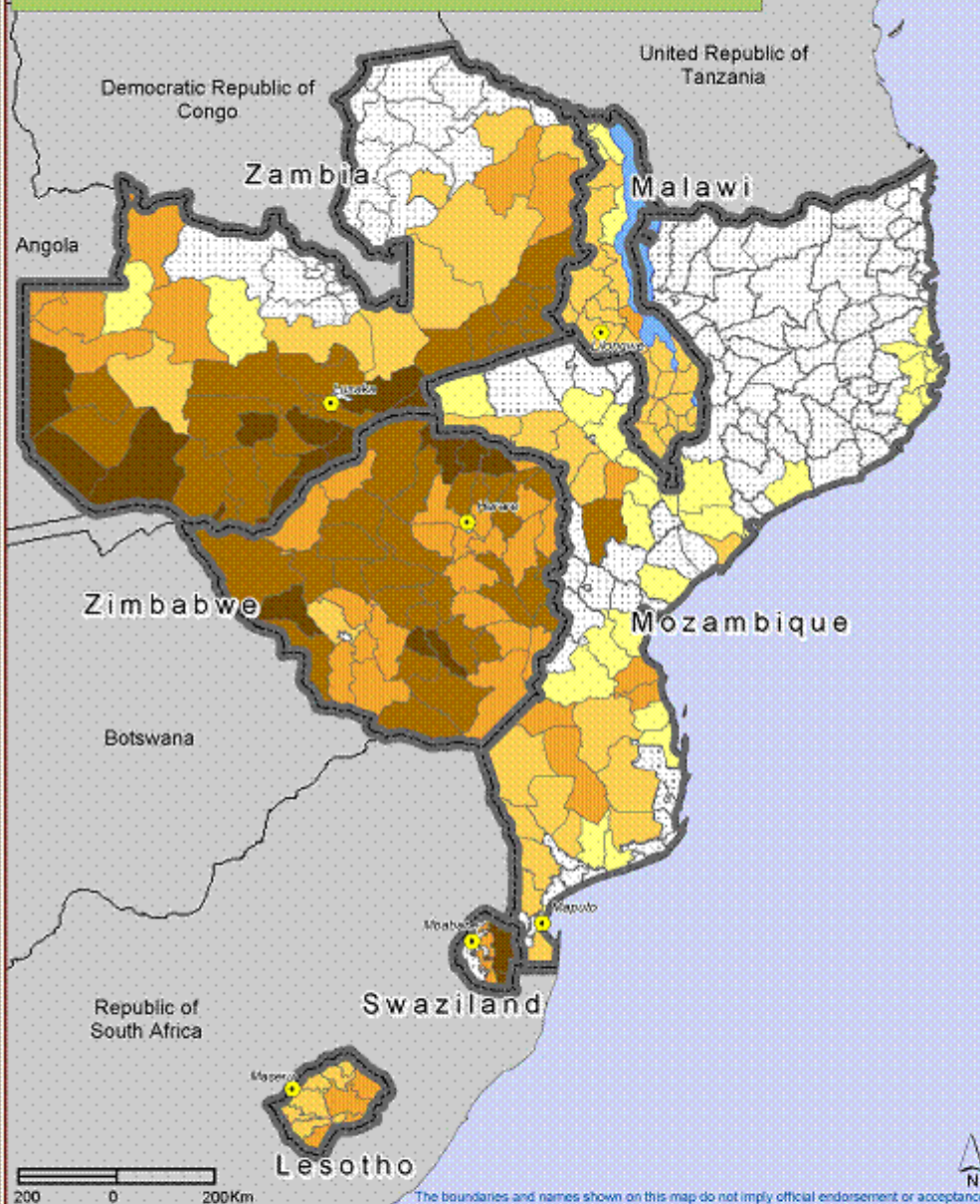
SADC FANR Vulnerability Assessment Committee December 2002 Emergency Food Needs Assessments

SADC FANR

Vulnerability Assessment Committee



Estimated Maximum Percentage of Rural Population in Need of Food Aid December 2002 through March 2003



Map Legend

Percentage of Rural Population in Need

- Less than 20%
- 20 to 40%
- 40 to 60%
- 60 to 75%
- More than 75%
- Districts Without Aid Need
- Administrative Boundary
- Country Boundaries
- National Capital

Figures based on results from the National VAC Assessment Missions, December 2002
Figures represent rural needs only
23/01/03

VAC Regional Partners

- SADC REWU
 - SADC RRSU
 - SADC DB Project
 - FEWS-NET
 - SC(UK)
 - WFP
 - FAO
 - UNICEF
 - IFRC
- Spatial files from:
Global Discovery & ADDS

People in Need of General Emergency Food Aid and Cereal Requirements (MT)

Country	VAC Aug. Assessment Maximum People in Need Dec/02-Mar/03	VAC Dec. Assessment Maximum People in Need Dec/02-Mar/03	VAC Dec. Assessment Maximum Percent in Need(2) Mar/03	VAC Dec. Assessment MT Cereal Food Aid(3) Dec/02-Mar/03
Zimbabwe ¹	6,700,000	7,180,000	52%	345,000
Malawi	3,300,000	3,590,000	31%	173,000
Zambia ¹	2,900,000	2,730,000	28%	132,000
Lesotho	650,000	740,000	34%	39,000
Swaziland	270,000	300,000	28%	15,000
Mozambique	590,000	660,000	3%	31,000
Region	14,400,000	15,200,000	26%	735,000

1. Figures for Zimbabwe and Zambia include urban needs. 2. Rural population in need over total national population. 3. Excludes stock replenishment.

* National population figures updated since VAC August Assessment (decreased about 10%). Values rounded.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT FOOD SECURITY SITUATION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL?

Domestic Cereal Gap

Estimates of national cereal gaps, a major determinate in estimating food aid needs, change during the marketing year (April to March), as new information and analyses become available. For example in Zambia, the estimated opening cereal gap decreased from 684,000MT in August to 289,000MT in December. This decrease is attributable to a revision in estimated domestic requirements due to changes in national population figures, and the inclusion of cassava (converted to maize equivalents) in the cereal balance analysis. Figures for Malawi and Zimbabwe now reflect cereal gaps that are even larger than those reflected in September 2002, due to revision of the final 2001/02 crop production figures as well as revisions in estimated domestic requirements. The overall result for the region is a slight decrease in the 2002/03 food gap from 3.37 million MT to 3.35 million MT.

2002/03 Domestic Cereal Gap (MT) and Import Progress, January 2003

	2001/02 Cereal Production + Opening Stocks	Domestic Requirements ¹	Initial Domestic Cereal Gap	Commercial Imports Received	Food Aid Imports Received	Current Domestic Cereal Gap	Outstanding Commercial Import Plans	Outstanding Food Aid Import Plans	Potential Domestic Food Gap
Lesotho	140,000	395,500	-255,500	161,000	17,000	-77,500	30,000	14,000	-33,500
Malawi ²	1,800,000	2,414,000	-614,000	230,000	131,000	-253,000	20,000	41,000	-192,000
Mozambique ³	1,876,000	2,256,000	-380,000	164,000	53,000	-163,000	218,000	13,000	68,000
Swaziland	72,500	193,500	-121,000	63,000	16,000	-42,000	45,000	2,000	5,000
Zambia ^{2,4}	1,124,000	1,413,000	-289,000	61,000	60,000	-168,000	40,000	58,000	-70,000
Zimbabwe	889,000	2,584,000	-1,695,000	680,000	118,000	-897,000	336,000	239,000	-322,000
TOTAL	5,901,500	9,256,000	-3,354,500	1,359,000	395,000	-1,600,500	689,000	367,000	-544,500

Numbers are rounded. Data should be considered indicative and remain subject to change. 1. Excludes stock replenishment; 2. Includes cassava maize equivalent; 3. Food aid imports include wheat and rice for market stabilization; commercial imports are net of informal exports estimated at 200,000MT. 4. Commercial imports received exclude a considerable but unknown amount of informal maize trade. Readers are encouraged to contact national VACs for updated figures. SOURCE: National VAC Reports, National and Regional EWUs, WFP, December 2002/January 2003

Filling the Cereal Gap

ress as of the end of December 2002

Available estimates indicate that progress towards filling the cereal gap through commercial and food aid imports has varied across the six countries. **Mozambique** has already received more than enough imports to fill the cereal gap. However some 200,000MT of maize are estimated to have been exported informally from the northern and central regions of Mozambique – bringing net commercial imports to 164,000MT. In **Zambia**, deliveries through formal channels and food aid account for 42% of import requirements. However, commercial import figures from the informal sector, although not readily available, are known to be significant and possibly close to formal sector import levels. **Lesotho** has imported more than two-thirds of its requirements, and **Swaziland** just over 65%, primarily through commercial imports. Commercial and food aid imports to **Zimbabwe**, amounting to 798,000 MT, have so far filled 47% of the requirements, while in **Malawi**, 59% of requirements have so far been filled with the delivery of 361,000MT.

Outstanding Import Requirements

Further success in filling the cereal gap between now and the end of the marketing year depends on import progress in the months ahead. **Zimbabwe** faces the greatest challenge, with remaining import requirements through March 2003 of over 897,000 MT. Government plans to import an additional 336,000MT may not be realized given foreign exchange and other constraints facing Zimbabwe. Even if all planned imports are received, Zimbabwe would still face a cereal gap of 322,000MT, representing more than one month's worth of national cereal requirements.

An interesting finding from the **Zimbabwe VAC assessment** was that distribution of Grain Marketing Board (GMB) imports at the community level is inconsistent with reported imports at the national level. For the time period April 1, 2002 to December 1, 2002 total maize available from domestic availability, GMB imports and food aid was 1.3 million MT. The human requirement for this time period was 1.1 million MT, indicating a surplus of 200,000 MT at the national level. However, at sub-national level, forty percent of the communities visited reported that cereals were "not or rarely" available from the GMB and/or market. Other indicators such as coping strategies, food and livestock prices, and dietary intake also support the conclusion that cereal is extremely scarce at the community level, despite reported national numbers indicating a surplus. The discrepancy between reported import levels at the national level and community availability of cereals warrants further investigation.

Malawi and **Zambia** probably face considerably lower import requirements than indicated in the formal cereal balance sheet due to substantial informal cross-border trade from Mozambique and Tanzania, and possibly from Zimbabwe due to notable price differentials resulting from Zimbabwe's foreign exchange and pricing policies. In addition, food aid brought in through smaller humanitarian organisations (such as church groups) has not been included in the food aid imports, as quantities are difficult to ascertain. In estimating these informal sources, the Malawi VAC reports that the "consensus of experts" is that grain supplies from all sources should be sufficient to fill the national cereal gap. The situation in Zambia has been greatly eased with the inclusion of cassava in the cereal balance analysis, although cross-substitution is only possible in cassava-producing districts, and is not necessarily available countrywide. While the food situation remains precarious in some areas, grain availability from all sources should be adequate to cover Zambia's national cereal requirements through March 2003, assuming that informal trade continues at the current levels, and that food aid imports are received as planned,

Mozambique could have a surplus of 68,000MT if commercial and food aid imports proceed as planned. Nonetheless, cereal availability varies widely across the country, with southern and some central districts facing serious access problems. While **Lesotho** is likely to receive most of its commercial imports, this may not be the case in **Swaziland** whose main grain importer (the National Maize Corporation) is currently facing financial constraints.

Food Aid Progress and Plans

The World Food Programme regional Emergency Operation aims at providing more than 727,000MT of cereals to over 10 million people between July 2002 and the end of March 2003. In addition to the WFP appeal, an NGO consortium called C-SAFE comprised of CARE, World Vision and Catholic Relief Services operating in Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia made plans to provide an additional 267,000MT of cereal food aid during this same period, bringing the total cereal aid appeal to about 1 million MT.

Progress by mid-December indicates that a total of some 395,000 MT of cereals had been distributed in the six countries, representing 39% of the total regional appeal. At the national level, Swaziland has received nearly 90% of planned food aid, while Zimbabwe and Zambia cereal receipts have been the lowest at 23% and 39%, respectively. As of December 2002, WFP had distributed food to at least 5 million people with about 4 million people receiving food aid in Malawi and Zimbabwe.

	Total Cereal Aid Appeal (WFP&NGOs)	Confirmed Cereal Pledges			Cereal Gap against Appeal
		Received	Pending	TOTAL	
Lesotho	50,000	17,000	14,000	31,000	-19,000
Malawi ¹	175,000	131,000	41,000	172,000	-3,000
Mozambique	98,000	53,000	13,000	66,000	-32,000
Swaziland	18,000	16,000	2,000	18,000	0
Zambia ¹	154,000	60,000	58,000	118,000	-36,000
Zimbabwe	516,000	118,000	239,000	357,000	-159,000
TOTAL	1,011,000	395,000	367,000	762,000	-249,000

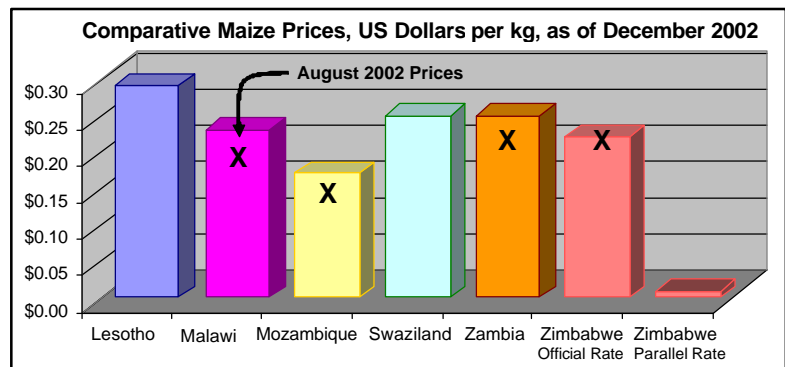
Numbers are rounded to the nearest thousand. 1. Excludes cereal food aid distributed from local purchase; SOURCE: National VAC Reports, National and Regional EWUs, WFP, December 2002.

An additional 367,000MT of cereal food aid has been pledged, and is expected to arrive over the next few months. Once received, the combined WFP and NGO appeals will be more than two-thirds met in terms of commodities, leaving an unfilled gap of 249,000MT against the appeal targets. Cereal food aid receipts and confirmed pledges will come close to meeting appeal targets in Swaziland and Malawi, but will only partially meet targets in Lesotho (62% of appeal), Mozambique (67%), Zambia (77%), and Zimbabwe (69%).

Government policies on genetically modified (GM) foods have slowed down food aid procurement efforts and created new challenges for food aid response. Among the most affected is Zambia, which has banned importation of GM foods. As a result of this decision, about 15,000MT of GM cereals were moved out of Zambia and the number of beneficiaries between July and August dropped from 800,000 people to 230,000. In other countries, milling restriction for GM food aid impose logistical challenges as designated millers are limited in number in some countries and the short shelf life (6-8 weeks) for low extraction roller meal requires careful logistical planning to ensure delivery to the beneficiaries before the expiry date for consumption.

Market Prices for Maize

Conversion of local December maize prices into US dollars allows for comparison of consumer prices across the region. Lesotho has the highest maize price, followed by Swaziland and Zambia. The lowest price is in Mozambique, although the graph does not capture variations within the country. Prices in Maputo are notably higher than in northern and central markets. Local price variations are analyzed in the National VAC reports.



Analysis and comparison of maize prices in Zimbabwe are complicated by the side-by-side existence of controlled prices (Z\$12.50/kg) and local market prices (currently averaging Z\$130/kg), and the official exchange rate (set at Z\$56/USD) and the parallel exchange rate (Z\$1,500/USD). Depending on the combination of rates, one kilo of maize could cost less than US\$0.01 (controlled price, parallel rate) or as high as US\$2.32 (local price, official rate). These price differentials offer clear opportunities for unscrupulous traders to make large profits by purchasing and reselling staple food commodities both within Zimbabwe and across borders where prices are notably higher. However for most Zimbabweans across the country, staple foods and other basic commodities remain largely unavailable.

In all countries maize prices have increased as compared to August, and will continue to rise until the main harvests in April/May, which follows the normal seasonal pattern. However, the rate of increase in most markets is slower than last year at this time. Compared to last year's prices the picture is mixed. In Lesotho, and Swaziland maize prices are considerably higher than in November 2001. In Malawi, prices are about the same as a year ago in the centre and north and slightly below November 2001 levels in the south. In Mozambique, there is considerable variation. In four out of seven provinces covered by the VAC survey, prices are generally higher, whilst in the other three they are about the same or lower. In most markets in Zambia, real prices are somewhat above last year's levels, which is largely due to the devaluation of the Zambian kwacha over the past year.

WHAT IS THE FOOD SECURITY SITUATION AT THE HOUSEHOLD LEVEL?

Production and market access: At this time of the year household access to cereal (and other foods) is particularly dependent on purchasing power, that is cereal prices relative to incomes. Throughout the region, the two key income sources are livestock sales and casual labour. With the exception of parts of Mozambique, the VAC assessment results clearly indicate an abnormally steep decline in the terms of trade between both livestock and casual labour, and cereal (one day's work or one chicken sold is worth progressively less cereal). In Lesotho and Swaziland, as well as border areas of Mozambique and Zimbabwe, expatriate remittances from South Africa have historically been important income sources. However, remittance income is on a long-term downward trend due to retrenchment in South Africa.

Food aid, gifts, informal food for work: Throughout the region there has been an unusually high incidence of payment in food for casual labour, and higher than normal bartering for food. In view of the deteriorating terms of trade, it has become increasingly difficult to obtain food through informal labour or bartering. The contribution of food aid in filling household food shortages varies but is generally well below household needs. In Zimbabwe, food aid accounted for only 15 to 30% of total caloric needs at the provincial level between September and December depending on where the household was located. Most of the communities visited in Lesotho reported that there had been just one food aid distribution between September and November.

Cereal availability: Cereal availability varies significantly both across the region and within countries. In Zimbabwe cereal grains are not readily available anywhere in the country. In Mozambique there is wide variation, reflecting the fact that food shortages are largely limited to the southern and some central parts of the country. Production of winter crops is limited in the region, but can be important for those households that grow them. In Zambia, it was reported that around 10% of the rural population had stocks from the winter harvest. In Mozambique, there was a large variation between the northern and central regions where the winter harvest was normal to above normal, and the southern region where the harvest was poor.

Coping strategies: The high degree of non-sustainable coping strategies, such as depletion of assets, reduced agricultural production and increased prostitution, while effective in ameliorating the current year's crisis, will

inevitably lead to decreased resilience of vulnerable populations in the coming year. Thus whereas many people are “barely able to get by” this year, they will not have the same coping capacities next year.

Coping strategies identified through the August VAC assessments had intensified by December. Most frequently cited is a change in consumption patterns. In Zambia for example, 58% of households had skipped one or more entire days without food between September and November, while 46% of adults surveyed were routinely consuming just one meal a day. In Zimbabwe, there has been a significant increase in school drop-out rates, reaching as high as 35% in some parts of the country. Migration in search of food is also increasing. In Zimbabwe movements of populations into the highveld prime communal zone in search of food were reported, and movements of people across the border into Tete Province, Mozambique were noted in the Mozambique VAC report. In Lesotho, illegal migration into South Africa has clearly increased since August and was reported as being high for the time of year despite declining opportunities. Unusually high livestock sales and livestock theft were reported in some countries. Increased consumption of wild foods was another commonly reported coping strategy, including potentially poisonous foods if not properly prepared. Some 40% of Zambian households reported an unseasonably high consumption of wild foods.

Gender and household food security: The assessments confirmed the findings of the August assessments, which found that female-headed households are being more adversely affected in the current crisis than male-headed households. In each country, there were higher proportions of female-headed households in the poor and very poor wealth categories than male-headed households. Women, particularly elderly women are bearing a disproportionate caring burden due to the effects of HIV/AIDS. Young women are being driven into prostitution at accelerated rates due to food shortages.

Urban household food security: There continues to be a serious lack of knowledge on how urban households are being affected by the current emergency. In August, the Zambia VAC study estimated a total of 97,000 orphaned and vulnerable children in urban areas in need of assistance. In mid-2002, studies in Zimbabwe indicated that as many as 850,000 people in urban areas of the country were in need of food assistance; these figures can only have increased. There is an urgent need to conduct emergency food needs assessments in urban areas in the region to determine the extent of the problem and the required response, especially given the certainty that food insecurity will extend into 2003/04.

WHAT ARE THE LINKAGES BETWEEN HIV/AIDS AND FOOD SECURITY?

Sub-Saharan Africa is home for 71% of total global HIV infections, with roughly 28.5 million people living with AIDS (PLWA). While the six countries included in the VAC assessments account for only 9% of Sub-Saharan Africa’s population, they host a disproportionate percentage of the infected population (21%), with almost 6 million PLWA in 2001. Zimbabwe and Swaziland are the worst affected countries with over 33% prevalence. The lowest prevalence is in Mozambique, still alarmingly high at 13%. The table also highlights the staggering number of children orphaned by AIDS in 2001, totalling nearly 2.5 million in the six countries.

	HIV/AIDS Statistics and Status				
	Estimated number of people living with HIV/AIDS 2001			New AIDS Orphans 2001	New AIDS deaths 2001
	Total	Adults	Adult rate		
Zimbabwe	2,300,000	2,000,000	33.7%	780,000	200,000
Zambia	1,200,000	1,000,000	21.5%	670,000	120,000
Mozambique	1,100,000	1,000,000	13.0%	420,000	60,000
Malawi	850,000	780,000	15.0%	470,000	80,000
Lesotho	360,000	330,000	31.0%	73,000	25,000
Swaziland	170,000	150,000	33.4%	35,000	12,000
TOTAL	5,980,000	5,260,000	20.4%	2,448,000	497,000

Source: UNAIDS Report on the Global HIV/AIDS epidemic 2002.

HIV/AIDS infections are increasing at alarming rates in Sub Saharan Africa. In ten years, the annual number of new infections has more than doubled: in 1990 there were 1.6 million annual new infections, as compared to 3.7 million in 2000. This rapid and exponential acceleration highlights the urgency of addressing the situation immediately, not least because of the strong negative bi-directional relationship between HIV/AIDS and food insecurity. HIV/AIDS increases food insecurity and food insecurity increases the likelihood of HIV infection and speeds the transition from HIV to AIDS.

The VAC data from the August and December assessments allows for examination of linkages between HIV/AIDS and food security. Below are just a few examples of these linkages illustrated by the VAC data.

- **Increased food insecurity increases migration and thus exposure to HIV/AIDS:** In Lesotho 20% of households identified as food insecure were sending children away, compared to only 9% of food secure households. Furthermore, 30% of food insecure households reported recent temporary migration, compared to only 18% of food secure households.

- Pressure to seek alternative income makes people vulnerable to infections: With few income earning options, women in particular can be forced into prostitution. Prostitution is particularly high in border areas and those well served by major roads. Livingstone, a Zambian district bordering Zimbabwe, has one of the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence for Zambia (31%), 50% more than the national average.
- HIV/AIDS depletes human capital and agricultural production: In Zambia, while 25% of rural households with chronically ill members did not harvest cereals during 2001/02, only 13% of households without chronically ill members did not harvest cereals. Further, the death of an adult (16 to 59 years) during 2002 is associated with a 16% reduction in the amount of land planted during this planting season as compared to last season.
- Households without adults have less income: Poor households typically have a high dependence on casual labour as an income source. Loss of a productive adult member reduces such income opportunities. In Malawi, poor households without adult members received less than half as much income from casual labour as those with adults. Indicative of this loss of income source, the sale of livestock by households without adults is 67% higher than for households with adults.
- HIV/AIDS increases expenditures on health and funerals: In Zambia, while 42% of households with chronically ill members had unusually high expenses in health care, this was the case for only 14% of households without chronically ill members. For households that had at least one member dying during 2002, 76% of them indicated that they incurred high unusual expenses in funeral costs.
- Presence of orphans decreases food security in already stressed households: In Zimbabwe, households with orphans had 42% less income per capita than households without orphans. Female-headed households – already identified by the VAC assessments as a particularly vulnerable group – are 48% more likely than male-headed households to take in orphans. Furthermore, elderly female-headed households are 95% more likely to take in orphans than non-elderly female-headed household.

With these and other linkages with food security, the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa are playing a fundamental role in dismantling the economic and social structure of rural society. As such the pandemic is central in deepening the already serious food shortages into a complex and unique humanitarian crisis that will have lasting effects on both household and national level food security.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF FOOD INSECURITY ON NUTRITIONAL STATUS?

In August, national nutrition surveys undertaken by the national VACs in four of the six countries indicated that acute malnutrition (wasting) amongst children under five years of age was found to be below the 10-15% level expected in a severe food crisis. In November, a nutritional survey was conducted only in Mozambique, where wasting was found to be below 10% in all provinces except Gaza where the rate was 10% exactly. Indications from smaller nutrition studies conducted in other countries indicate that in general wasting levels are still not a cause for concern. For example in Binga district of Zimbabwe, a Save the Children (UK) survey found rates to be under 5%. Similarly, in several district level studies in Malawi undertaken by different NGOs in November and December 2002, wasting levels of above 5% were found in only one district. These low levels of under-5 wasting are surprising given the high levels of household food insecurity observed in the region. It indicates that current food access at household level combined with supplementary feeding programmes have helped contain under-5 malnutrition. This is no cause for complacency, however, as the national VAC reports clearly indicate that households are stemming malnutrition at a high cost i.e. through non-sustainable coping strategies that reduce resilience to the arduous conditions likely next year.

In addition, it should be stressed that these findings do not mean that there are no pockets of severe malnutrition, nor undernutrition related deaths in the region, although available evidence does indicate that global nutritional status is not a cause for concern at present. Adult undernutrition could be greater than child malnutrition in the region, although so far no studies have been undertaken to investigate this. Further information on under-5 nutrition rates at a national level is expected in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Lesotho in February / March. Throughout the region, continued food assistance and programme monitoring is required to ensure nutrition status of the population does not deteriorate during the "hungry months" of January to March 2003.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF FOOD INSECURITY ON EDUCATION?

Preliminary information was gathered at the national level to assess the impact of food insecurity on children's education. This followed early signs of high drop-out and absenteeism rates as poor households are no longer able to afford to send their children to school as their scarce income must be redirected to purchase basic food items, which have in some cases doubled in price since last year. There are also indications that children are being withdrawn from school to undertake productive activities to help fill household food gaps, and in some

cases to care for sick relatives. The school drop-out is increasing for all six countries with a very significant trend for Zimbabwe. Drop-out rates this year have reportedly increased in Mozambique by 2.9 %. In Zambia drop-out rates are higher in remote areas. Most country reports indicate that the drop-out rate is higher for boys than for girls.

All countries included in WFP's regional EMOP are undertaking school feeding programmes. However, the coverage of such programmes varies markedly from one country to another, with good coverage in Lesotho, but low coverage in Zambia. School feeding programmes have proven to have a very positive impact on children's well being and lead to a decrease in the number of dropouts and an increase in enrolment rate. Based on available information, school attendance is better where school feeding programmes have varied menus during the school week.







WHAT IS THE WATER AND SANITATION SITUATION?

Unseasonably dry conditions in most of the affected areas since November have likely exacerbated the already low river and reservoir levels. At the community level, key informants across the region complained about the disruption of water supplies due to poor rainfall and decreased access to safe water in relation to the same time last year. In Zimbabwe, the current food emergency has negatively affected sanitation conditions as communities have shifted their attention from rehabilitating damaged structures to spending more time seeking food. Poor maintenance of existing water sources was commonly cited as a major problem in Lesotho, reducing access to safe water. In Mozambique around 15% of households stated that they were consuming less water than at the same time last year. In Zambia and Lesotho, an increased number of gastro-intestinal infections was reported. There was no mention of abnormally severe Cholera outbreaks in the VAC surveys. In December and January, tropical depression "Delphina" has caused flooding in Northern Mozambique and Malawi. The Mozambiquan government has put the number of people in an emergency situation in Cabo Delgado province alone at 105,000. In Malawi, more than 15,000 people are reported to have been left homeless by recent flooding.

While the above findings give cause for some preliminary concern, it is important to bear in mind that the bulk of the seasonal rains normally fall in the January to March/April period, during which time the hydrological situation may change considerably. Additional monitoring and more detailed analysis is required to determine the areas where specific impacts are likely to occur if current dry trends persist.

WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS FOR THE 2002/03 CROP PRODUCTION SEASON?

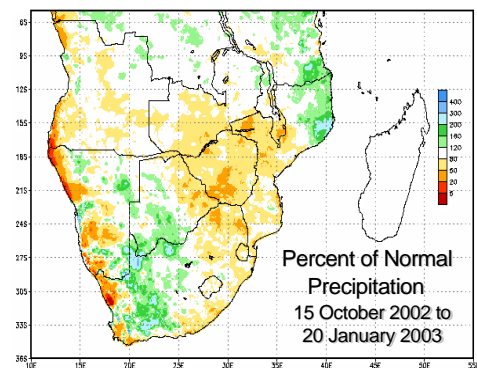
Review of the Start of the 2002/03 Production Season

COUNTRY	INPUT SUPPLY	START OF THE RAINFALL SEASON
 LESOTHO	Planting was been constrained by shortages of tractors, draught power, improved seed and fertilizer. Government introduced a policy of leaving no land unplanted and subsidized inputs to capable farmers. However, based on inputs distributed by the end of November, the area planted to cereals could be less than half of last year's area.	Rains were good in early to mid-September, enabling planting in mountainous areas. October was drier, with light rains towards the end of the month. November was dry with late season frosts destroying seedlings in some areas. Although rains were good in December, many farmers were be unable to replant so late in the season.
 MALAWI	Maize seed was reported in short supply in some areas, with input prices stable but too high for poor households. Three million families were targeted to receive free "starter packs", which could make Malawi self-sufficient in maize if rains are good. Government seed purchases may have caused shortages in the market. Cassava has been promoted.	By the end of October, significant rains had fallen only in parts of the southern region. Rainfall was heavier and more even in early-November, followed by a dry spell causing emerging crops to wilt and halting germination. Mid-December rains encouraged planting, but the growing season could be short, especially in southern and central regions.
 MOZAMBIQUE	Based on input availability and distribution plans, the area under cereals could increase by 3% over last year. Farmers were urged to plant early, and to plant cassava, sorghum, millet and short-cycle maize. The mid-November to early December dry spell caused wilting in some areas. Farmers in central areas may have replanted if seed was available.	Good rains were reported in southern and central areas at the end of October and beginning of November, marking the onset of the rainy season. These however were followed by a dry spell across most of the country raising serious concerns about seasonal prospects, especially in southern areas. Rains in northern areas normally begin in December.
 SWAZILAND	While key inputs were largely available in most markets, production could be hampered by localized shortages of fertilizer, draught power and tractor rentals. Some 20,000 families have reportedly received input assistance. Some small farmers have shifted to sugar cane production, which could affect staple food production and food supply.	Planting was delayed due to poor September rains, which improved towards the end of October, but were still too light to encourage widespread planting. November and early-December rains were general been poor, although planting in lowland areas had commenced. Only 15% of farmers have reportedly planted, compared to the normal 75%.
 ZAMBIA	Seeds were reportedly in short supply in some parts of the country, with high prices limiting their use. Fertilizer supplies were reportedly adequate to meet demand. Limited government assistance was below plans. Early planting and good germination was reported where conservation farming is practiced in Southern and Eastern Provinces.	Overall, northern areas received good, although at times lighter than normal, rains in late-August/early-September. Planting rains began at the end of October, but stopped in most parts of the country be mid-November, causing damage to germinating crops. Most maize planting normally takes place from November to early-December.
 ZIMBABWE	Government reported shortages of maize seed in anticipation of a 25% increase in the area planted, when in fact the areas under maize is less than 40% of normal. Access to seeds by poor farmers was severely constrained due to high prices and the slow pace of assistance programmes. Fertilizer and tractor services were reported in short supply.	The rains began towards the end of October, and overall were significant and well distributed in many areas through early-November, marking the start of the planting season and encouraging land preparation. Most parts of the country experienced a dry spell from mid-November to early December, affecting germination. Rains picked up in mid-December.

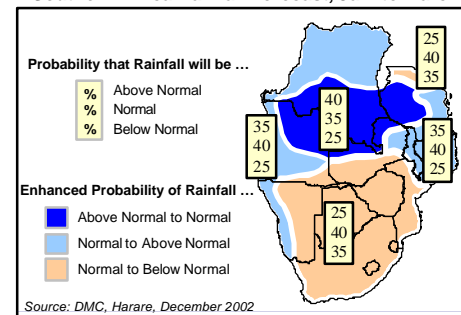
According to satellite imagery, seasonal rainfall between 15 October 2002 and 20 January 2003 was on average only 60% of normal in the areas most affected by food shortages. Crop yields in these areas will most certainly be adversely affected by the poor rainfall performance during the first half the season. Recent flooding in southern Malawi and northern Mozambique may also negatively impact crop production.

The SADC Drought Monitoring Centre rainfall forecast for the remainder of the season is also cause for concern. During the period January to March 2002, there is an enhanced probability of normal to below normal rainfall in most southern parts of the region, including the same areas adversely affected by last season's dry spell. The forecast has been influenced by the current El Niño event, which typically indicates dry conditions for southern Africa. The current El Niño, however, remains moderate and is significantly less than the 1997/98 El Niño. According to the SADC Regional Remote Sensing Unit and the USGS, the negative impact on rainfall is also expected to be less than in 1997/98.

The level and distribution of rains during the first half of the season, combined with below normal forecasts for the second half of the maize cropping cycle, are strong indications that the coming consumption year (April 2003 to March 2004 in most SADC countries) will yet again suffer from below normal cereal harvests.



Southern Africa Rainfall Forecast, Jan. to March



Impact on Livestock

Unlike climatic patterns of last year, the current rainy season may pose the additional challenge of increased livestock deaths and diseases. While last year's rainfall distribution caused marked reductions in harvests, cumulative rainfall was not far from average. This year, with rains already reduced and the increased probability of below average rainfall in the second half of the season, the region could suffer well below average cumulative rainfall, as well as prolonged dry spells. Impacts on livestock watering holes and grazing lands could be significant, and this would decrease value and increase morbidity and mortality of small stock and cattle in particular. This in turn would further deprive households of vital assets usually exchanged for grain thus increasing vulnerability to food insecurity.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR DECISION-MAKING?

Considering the present situation and future outlook, topics that deserve particular attention by governments and humanitarian stakeholders include the following.

Targeting/Prioritisation: Each of the VAC country reports provides targeting and prioritisation information to enable relief efforts to maximize use of limited resources. In the case where food aid resources are not enough to fully benefit the entire number of vulnerable people, difficult decisions must be made on whether to concentrate relief efforts only on selected areas or to spread resources more thinly so as to reach a larger number of people, albeit with less resources. All areas identified as being in need should receive at least some assistance (even at varying ration levels), allowing people within those areas to redistribute and make the most judicious use of available food aid resources. The alternative – full exclusion of critical areas in need – could plunge excluded households into a perilous situation indeed.

The HIV/AIDS Pandemic: Given the alarmingly high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in all six affected countries as well as the many and strong linkages with food security, all aspects of response to the current and future crisis should be designed to break or mitigate the vicious bi-directional relationship between HIV/AIDS and food insecurity. This includes vulnerability analysis, emergency programme design, advocacy, and longer-term recovery and development efforts.

- Given the sensitivity of identifying PLWA, innovative food aid programmes should be designed to meet their needs (such as the distribution of food aid through community clinics, home-based care, etc.).

Food aid rations should be adjusted to reflect the higher protein and energy requirements of AIDS affected populations.

- It is known that migration, prostitution and sending children away from home are coping strategies that increase HIV transmission rates. Efforts should aim to mitigate these strategies through food aid, as well as through longer-term productivity and asset enhancing interventions. Awareness and educational programmes should be redoubled.
- Integration of Anti-retro-viral (ARV) therapy with food security interventions is an issue that warrants debate.

Looking Ahead: With all signs indicating an equal or worse food emergency next year, governments and the international community should be making early preparations.

- Government policies require careful review to fully enable food production and effective response from private, government, and international sectors. In particular, the role of the private commercial sector should be ensured, and coordinated with government and international efforts. Trade regulations need review to improve the flow of goods within the region, especially the transport of relief supplies from coastal ports to landlocked countries. As well, positions over genetically modified foods should be clarified and planned for early on so as to avoid bottlenecks next year.
- Given the number and severity of current and emerging crises across the globe (Ethiopia, Afghanistan, North Korea, Iraq and elsewhere) Southern Africa stakeholders will need to advocate vigorously to the international community for limited global food aid resources during the coming year. Unique compared to the other crisis areas noted is the high HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in Southern Africa and the role that food aid can play in mitigating its spread.
- Future food security assessments and monitoring activities should be planned.
 - The role of the SADC FANR VAC should be further articulated and developed. SADC is also reviewing the possibility of formalizing multi-sectoral representation on the VAC.
 - Decisions on whether or not FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Missions (CFSAM) will be fielded should be made early enough to ensure coordination with VAC assessment plans, and to review methodologies to build on lessons learned from last year's assessments.
 - Because of the likely long-term nature of the crisis, nutrition surveys should be synchronized with regards to both timing and methods.

The Chronic Nature of Vulnerability in the Region: Longer-term and more fundamental issues underpin the current food crisis. Critical adverse trends include HIV/AIDS, government economic and agricultural policies, transparent governance, regional and international trade agreements, and dietary patterns that disproportionately rely on maize. Within the current situation lies the opportunity to address these and other issues to ensure food security in the future. There is the need for political commitment at all levels within the region and for coordinated support in the longer-term to improve food security. This should include a close partnership between National Governments, SADC, UN, NGOs, donors, and civil society.

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