

## II. CRISIS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

### Countdown to the crisis

6. The first signs of an evolving humanitarian emergency in Southern Africa came in January-February 2001, when heavy rainfall across the region caused water-logging of fields and displacement of farming families, notably in southern Malawi, Swaziland, northern Zambia and central Mozambique, where 380,000 people were displaced. Early projections of another good harvest, following the bumper crop of 2000, were immediately revised downward, and the World Food Programme (WFP) launched Emergency Operations to assist flood-affected people in several countries. A large production deficit was also forecast in Zimbabwe, because of a 40% fall in the area planted as a consequence of farm seizures under ZANU-PF's "fast-track land resettlement" programme. In July 2001 the Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) post-harvest crop assessments concluded that maize production was 23% down across the region.

7. The official response was slow. The maize-gap in affected countries was expected to be covered by secondary food-crops (such as cassava), commercial and informal imports within the region (from South Africa, Kenya, even northern Mozambique), and national grain reserve stocks. By September-October, however, signs of distress were being reported in several countries: empty granaries, escalating food prices, rising malnutrition rates. Rural areas, where most of the population of southern Africa live, experienced the most severe food shortages and the sharpest increases in food prices. Smallholder families were worst affected, except in Zimbabwe where retrenched farm workers were most vulnerable. In the early months of 2002, at the peak of the annual "hungry season", several hundred hunger-related deaths were recorded in Malawi, and reports of famine were broadcast by the world's media. In April the UN commissioned vulnerability assessments in the six worst-affected countries, and in July WFP launched an appeal for about one million tons of food aid, to assist 10 million people across the six countries of Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Following another poor harvest in mid-2002, the number of people considered to be "at risk" by WFP had risen to 16 million by December 2002. Fortunately, by the end of 2002 the international response was reasonably generous, although still patchy and markedly less generous for non-food items (see paragraphs 73-74). By February 2003 the appeal was approximately 70% funded, a level of funding which WFP expected would allow it to meet 85% of its commodity requirements<sup>5</sup>—and the information and logistical constraints that had retarded the response in late 2001 were less binding. At the time of writing, the relief programme appears to be on track and a repetition of the crisis of early 2002 is not expected. However, as the UN's Mid-Term Review of the consolidated inter-agency appeals emphasises, the international community must not become complacent and must stay engaged. Many lives have been saved, but the causes of the crisis have not been removed; "without continued support from the international community, lives and livelihoods of millions remain on the edge of the abyss."<sup>6</sup>

8. According to the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) Emergency Food Security Assessment Report, across the six countries included in the UN's appeal, 15.25 million people have needed 733,000 metric tonnes (MT) of food aid from

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<sup>5</sup> *WFP Emergency Report*, no. 6, 2003. Available at [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)

<sup>6</sup> *UN Mid-Term Review of Inter-Agency Consolidated Appeals*, February 2003, p. 1. Available at [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)

December 2002 to March 2003.<sup>7</sup> Zimbabwe has both the greatest number and the highest percentage of its people in need. Early indications from the current production season are that there will be major food shortages in the coming year too, with the March-April 2003 harvest expected to be well below normal.<sup>8</sup> We are unwilling to speculate on the possible number of deaths due to the crisis. In a context of extreme poverty and high HIV/AIDS prevalence rates, it is not easy to differentiate between deaths due to hunger and deaths due to poverty or HIV/AIDS. None of our witnesses have seen fit to speculate on the body-count. In addition, it is our strong belief that humanitarian crises should not be assessed solely in terms of the numbers dying. The humanitarian crisis in southern Africa, as well as leading to avoidable death and suffering, will push millions of households further into poverty, and make it harder for them to escape poverty and to move towards sustainable livelihoods.

## **Across the region<sup>9</sup>**

### ***Zimbabwe***

9. The crisis is at its most acute in Zimbabwe. Fifty-two per cent of its population or 7.2 million people have been in need of food aid, with total requirements amounting to 345,000 MT from December 2002 to March 2003.<sup>10</sup> Thirty-five per cent of adults are HIV-positive. The immediate cause of the humanitarian crisis is a huge shortfall in cereal production. Cereal production for consumption in the current marketing year (April 2002 to March 2003) is 57% down from last year's poor harvest and 69% down from that in 1999/2000. The production of maize is down by 67% on last year and by 77% on 1999/2000.<sup>11</sup> By February 2003, the food security situation had deteriorated across the country, and there were concerns about continuing food shortages beyond the March harvest. The number of commercial farm workers affected by the fast track settlement programme had risen from 488,000 in August 2002 to 1,000,000 in December 2002.<sup>12</sup>

10. In Zimbabwe poor government is the key factor behind the humanitarian crisis. Zimbabwe's badly-planned land redistribution programme has severely disrupted the rural economy—both commercial farms and smallholders—and created a new class of vulnerable people, the displaced farm workers and their families.<sup>13</sup> The politicisation of food aid, the exclusion of the private sector from any role in importing food, and poor relationships between the Government and donors have hindered responses to the crisis. Zimbabwe would normally help to alleviate food shortages in southern Africa. Instead, it is a major cause of the crisis, and an obstacle to an effective humanitarian response.

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<sup>7</sup> SADC Food Agriculture and Natural Resources, Vulnerability Assessment Committee, *Regional Food Security Assessment* [SADC-FANR Assessment], December 2002 - see footnote 2.

<sup>8</sup> *SADC-FANR Assessment*, December 2002 - see footnote 2.

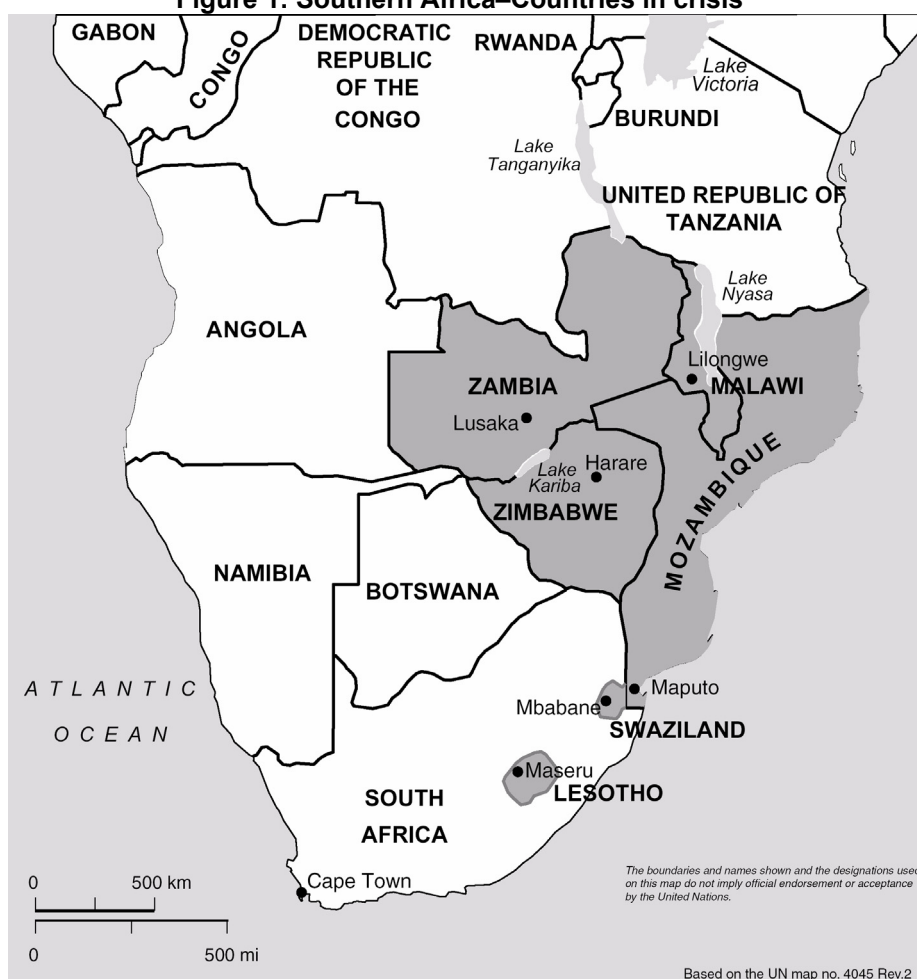
<sup>9</sup> A detailed chronology is provided as an annex to this report - see pp. 94-101.

<sup>10</sup> *SADC-FANR Assessment*, December 2002 - see footnote 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ev 116 [CARE International UK memorandum]

<sup>12</sup> Famine and Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET), *Zimbabwe Monthly Food Security Update*, February 2003. Available at [www.fews.net](http://www.fews.net)

<sup>13</sup> Ev 2, para 5 [DFID memorandum]

Figure 1: Southern Africa—Countries in crisis<sup>14</sup>

	Zimbabwe	Malawi	Zambia	Lesotho	Mozambique	Swaziland
<b>Population, 2001</b>	12.8 million	10.5 million	10.3 million	2.1 million	18.1 million	1.1 million
<b>Rural population</b>	64%	85%	60%	71%	67%	73%
<b>Income per capita (GNI, US\$, PPP, 2001)</b>	2340	620	790	2670	1000	4690
<b>Poverty (less than \$2 per day)</b>	64%	85% (estimate)	87%	66%	78%	No data
<b>HIV Adult-infection rate</b>	35%	15%	20%	31%	13%	34%
<b>Peak food aid needs, Dec 02-March 2003</b>	52% 7.2 million	31% 3.6 million	28% 2.8 million	34% 0.76 million	3% 0.65 million	28% 0.3 million
Data sources: Population—World Bank, World Development Report, 2003, Table 1 – see <a href="http://econ.worldbank.org/wdr/wdr2003/">http://econ.worldbank.org/wdr/wdr2003/</a> Rural population—World Bank Country Data Profiles – see <a href="http://www.worldbank.org/data/countrydata/countrydata.html">www.worldbank.org/data/countrydata/countrydata.html</a> Income – World Bank, World Development Report, 2003, Table 1. Poverty – World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2002, Table 2.6 – see <a href="http://www.worldbank.org/data/wdi2002/">www.worldbank.org/data/wdi2002/</a> Malawi's PRSP estimates that 65.3% consume less than 10.47 kwacha per day, which is about \$1/day in PPP terms. HIV/AIDS—UNAIDS Epidemiological Factsheets, 2002 – see <a href="http://www.unaids.org/hivaidsinfo/statistics/fact_sheets/">www.unaids.org/hivaidsinfo/statistics/fact_sheets/</a> Food aid—SADC FANR Assessment, December 2002 – see footnote 2.						

<sup>14</sup> See also Ev 23 [DFID supplementary memorandum]

### *Malawi*

11. In Malawi, 3.6 million or 31% of the population have been in need of food aid, with total requirements from December 2002 to March 2003 of 173,000 MT.<sup>15</sup> Malawi has a predominantly rural smallholder population, and—especially when contrasted with Zambia and Zimbabwe—a high population density.<sup>16</sup> Most smallholders rely on producing a single annual harvest of maize from a small plot of land. This is rarely sufficient to meet household needs. Smallholders lack access to seeds, fertiliser or credit to increase their productivity, have few livestock, and are faced with decreasing remittances from mining employment.<sup>17</sup> The addition of HIV/AIDS, with around 15% of adults infected, makes for a country with more than a third of its people at risk of starvation, and with little prospect—either at a household level or a national level—of achieving food security and sustainable livelihoods. In early 2003, Malawi suffered from flooding—damaging roads, houses and crops—which hampered the relief effort.

12. A lower than expected maize harvest in 2000/01, the sale of Malawi's Strategic Grain Reserve (SGR), and logistical bottlenecks hampering the import of maize, resulted in early 2002 “in a widespread shortage of staples and escalating prices for maize taking them beyond the reach of most families.”<sup>18</sup> As the crisis unfolded in late 2001 and early 2002, discussions between the Government of Malawi and donors about how best to address humanitarian needs were—to use DFID's phrase—“clouded” by a lack of transparency on the part of Government about the sale of the SGR.<sup>19</sup> Several hundred people, at least, died due to the food shortages.<sup>20</sup> In early 2003, floods caused by a tropical depression washed away and damaged houses, roads, bridges and crops, affecting nearly 60,000 households.<sup>21</sup>

### *Zambia*

13. Twenty-eight per cent of Zambia's population, or 2.8 million people, have been in need of food aid. The total food aid required from December 2002 to March 2003 was 133,000 MT.<sup>22</sup> As DFID wrote in their supplementary memorandum: “In Zambia, successive years of adverse weather in southern districts has been compounded by declining public services and poor economic performance throughout the 1990s. Consistent disregard of rural policy by the previous government has left small farmers without access to markets or off-farm income generation opportunities.”<sup>23</sup> Small farmers are also unable to access agricultural inputs or credits.<sup>24</sup> Excessive rain in 2001 and dry spells during the 2001/02 growing season led to a major shortfall in maize production; a decrease of 42% compared with the average.<sup>25</sup> An adult HIV/AIDS prevalence rate of 20%, and the Government of Zambia's decision not to accept genetically-modified food aid, have worsened the crisis. However, the level of impact forecast in some areas has not yet happened.

<sup>15</sup> *SADC-FANR Assessment*, December 2002 – see footnote 2.

<sup>16</sup> Ev 23 [DFID supplementary memorandum]

<sup>17</sup> Ev 1, para 3 [DFID memorandum]; Ev 15, answer 1 [DFID supplementary memorandum]

<sup>18</sup> Ev 15, answer 1 [DFID supplementary memorandum]

<sup>19</sup> Ev 2, para 9 [DFID memorandum]

<sup>20</sup> See footnote 1.

<sup>21</sup> *WFP Emergency Report*, no. 4, 2003. Available at [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)

<sup>22</sup> *SADC-FANR Assessment*, December 2002 – see footnote 2.

<sup>23</sup> Ev 2, para 6 [DFID memorandum]

<sup>24</sup> Ev 57, [Christian Aid memorandum]

<sup>25</sup> Ev 118 [CARE International UK memorandum]

### *Lesotho*

14. Thirty-four per cent of Lesotho's population or 0.76 million people have been in need of food aid, with requirements totalling 36,000 MT from December 2002 to March 2003.<sup>26</sup> Thirty-one percent of adults are HIV-positive. The WFP reports that the underlying problem in Lesotho is one of falling agricultural productivity, due to soil erosion, soil degradation and declining soil fertility, problems which are exacerbated by population increase, and compounded by inappropriate agricultural policies and ineffective agricultural extension services.<sup>27</sup> The current crisis resulted from "a below average harvest, a steep increase in food prices, a reduction of employment possibilities in South Africa and the devaluation of the Rand which increased transport and input costs imposing further shocks on an already weakened economy."<sup>28</sup>

### *Mozambique*

15. The Government of Mozambique is not as badly affected as its neighbours, but 0.65 million people or 3% of its population, particularly in the Southern and Central regions, have been in need of assistance, amounting to 31,000 MT of food aid from December 2002 to March 2003.<sup>29</sup> In 2001/02 there was a maize surplus in the North, but the transport infrastructure was too weak, and the transport costs too high, to allow the Northern surplus to fulfil Central and Southern needs.<sup>30</sup> Food prices rose, leading to problems of access for the poor. Mozambique suffers recurrent droughts and has witnessed a long-term increase in vulnerability, in part due to a reduction in remittances from South Africa and Zimbabwe, and an adult HIV/AIDS prevalence rate of 13%.<sup>31</sup> In early 2003, a poor harvest was predicted, leading to greatly increased food insecurity, especially in central and southern regions.<sup>32</sup>

### *Swaziland*

16. Despite Swaziland's position as a middle income country, 28% of its population, or 0.3 million people, have been in need of assistance, with food aid requirements totalling 15,000 MT from December 2002 to March 2003.<sup>33</sup> Thirty-three percent of adults are HIV-positive. The humanitarian crisis here is a complex mix of food security, poor planning, and health issues. King Mswati III's plans to purchase a luxury jet for his own use at a cost of around US\$45 million suggest that responding to the current crisis is not a priority, at least for the King.<sup>34</sup>

### **Southern Africa in context: Over-stretch for the international humanitarian system?**

17. The crisis in southern Africa is not an isolated event. During the course of the inquiry, it became apparent that Ethiopia is facing major food shortages in 2003, with at

<sup>26</sup> *SADC-FANR Assessment*, December 2002 – see footnote 2.

<sup>27</sup> Ev 56 [Christian Aid memorandum]

<sup>28</sup> Ev 15, answer 1 [DFID supplementary memorandum]

<sup>29</sup> *SADC-FANR Assessment*, December 2002 – see footnote 2.

<sup>30</sup> Ev 59 [Christian Aid memorandum]

<sup>31</sup> Ev 15, answer 1 [DFID supplementary memorandum]

<sup>32</sup> FEWSNET, *Mozambique Monthly Food Security Update*, February 2003. Available at [www.fews.net](http://www.fews.net)

<sup>33</sup> *SADC-FANR Assessment*, December 2002 – see footnote 2.

<sup>34</sup> Ev 15, answer 1 [DFID supplementary memorandum]

least 11.3 million people in need of 1.4 million tonnes of food aid.<sup>35</sup> **The simultaneous occurrence of major crises in southern Africa and the Horn of Africa poses a serious challenge to the international community's ability and willingness to respond. We share Clare Short's concern that the international humanitarian system may be getting over-stretched.** As the Secretary of State put it: "I am really worried that we are getting to a point where the capacity of the international system to deal with the crises we have got in the world is being stretched to the level where I do not know whether it will carry on functioning."<sup>36</sup>

18. On 16 December 2002 the WFP launched the "Africa Hunger Alert Campaign" to draw international attention to the unprecedented hunger crisis which is putting 38 million people in Africa—in Ethiopia, in Eritrea, in Zimbabwe, in Malawi, in Zambia, in Lesotho, in Swaziland, in Mozambique, in Sudan, in Angola, in the Great Lakes region, and in West Africa—at risk of starvation.<sup>37</sup> Launching its consolidated inter-agency appeals for 2003, called "Hope for the future", the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA), estimated that 50 million people worldwide would need humanitarian assistance, with an estimated cost of nearly US\$3 billion.<sup>38</sup> As UN-OCHA points out in its appeal, this compares to the US\$5 billion, which is spent each year on chocolate in the UK, and the US\$7 billion, which is spent on cosmetics in the USA each year. **We are concerned that Africa is the only continent which is moving backwards as regards reaching the Millennium Development Goals.**<sup>39</sup> **If the international community fails to respond adequately to the humanitarian crises in southern Africa, Ethiopia and elsewhere, it will be impossible for countries to halve poverty and hunger by 2015 in line with the Millennium Development Goals.**

19. **Southern Africa is not suffering a drought-induced famine.**<sup>40</sup> **It is suffering a complex humanitarian crisis, which was triggered by erratic rainfall and a relatively modest fall in food production.**<sup>41</sup> There is a food security element to the crisis—people are unable to access food, either by growing or purchasing food—but this is one element of a wider problem. In contexts of extreme vulnerability, minor triggers can push poor people and households from insecurity to crisis by inflating food prices beyond their limited purchasing powers. The poor in southern Africa are extremely vulnerable. Even in a good year, many poor farmers in southern Africa only produce enough food to feed their families for half a year.<sup>42</sup> This year, they are being pushed over the edge, and it will be very difficult for them to scramble back to security and towards sustainable development.

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<sup>35</sup> *WFP Emergency Report*, no. 50, 2002. Available at [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)

<sup>36</sup> Q 165 [Clare Short]

<sup>37</sup> UN-OCHA, *Hope for the future* – see [www.wfp.org/appeals/africahungeralert/#](http://www.wfp.org/appeals/africahungeralert/#)

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> The poverty rate is increasing in Europe and Central Asia too, but remains under 4%. See [www.developmentgoals.org](http://www.developmentgoals.org)

<sup>40</sup> Edward Clay, Louise Bohn, Enrique Blanco de Armas, Singand Kabambe and Hardwick Tehale (2003), "Climatic variability, economic performance and the uses of climatic forecasting in Malawi and Southern Africa", *Disaster Risk Management Working Paper Series*, No. 7, World Bank; and, personal communication with Edward Clay.

<sup>41</sup> Ev 15, answer 1 [DFID supplementary memorandum]

<sup>42</sup> Ev 80, para 9 [Oxfam memorandum]; Ev 114 [CARE International UK memorandum]