

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Objectives of the Report

This report aims to provide programme and policy decision-makers with a broad livelihoods based understanding of vulnerability in Swaziland. It outlines the relative vulnerability of households by geographic area and by socio-economic group throughout Swaziland by presenting overall income/food deficits. The income/food deficits outlined in each zone and for each wealth group represents the shortfall of income and/or food that is likely to be experienced by households during the 2004/5 consumption year because of declining food production, cash crop and all other sales, trade, non-food production, livestock, gifts and wild-foods during the 2003/4 consumption year. The actual deficit faced by households will vary according to the extent of the shock experienced, their wealth status and resulting coping strategies employed by households. The diversity of livelihoods throughout Swaziland makes such an undertaking extremely difficult. This large area vulnerability analysis is credible but planners will require more detailed assessments of specific areas before proceeding with interventions.

### Background

Swaziland borders the Republic of South Africa and Mozambique. Landlocked and mountainous it is 17,364 km<sup>2</sup> in size. Arable land makes up about 11% of the total surface area. Significant cattle populations utilise the extensive mountain range lands and semi-arid areas of the Lowveld in a mixed farming system. The country is divided into four agro-ecological zones – the Lubombo Plateau, the Lowveld, the Middleveld and the Highveld. The sub-tropical climate is characterised by wide ranges in total annual rainfall including periods of droughts that particularly affect the Lowveld and Middleveld. However, in addition to protracted dry spells, heavy rainfalls, storms and flooding also negatively impact agricultural production. This is especially so when summer tropical cyclones (Jan-March) strike the southern coast of Mozambique. Maize is the main cereal crop grown. Between 1990 and 2000 the area under maize has fallen by 40%. While average yields have gone up, the net effect was that production in 2000 was down (-10%) on what it was in 1990. Swaziland normally imports cereals (maize, wheat and rice) estimated to be about 28% of national consumption needs. However, in the past four years there has been a significant fall in the self-sufficiency ratio with significant increases in the imports of wheat and rice. Swaziland has an economy that is heavily dependent on South Africa from which it receives 83% of its imports and sends 74% of its exports. South Africa's economic success has had negative effects on the Swaziland economy as a result of its attraction to foreign investors. In 2001 Swaziland only attracted US\$20 million in foreign direct investment.

Agriculture and the agro-industry form the basis of the economy with sugar, citrus and wood pulp as the main products. Subsistence agriculture employs about 60% of the population. As Swaziland continues to benefit from the United State's Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), it is likely that real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth will increase, consolidated by an acceleration of real GDP growth in South Africa, which is Swaziland's main export market.<sup>1</sup>

The country is divided into four regional administrative divisions – Hhohho, Manzini, Shiselweni and Lubombo. These are further subdivided into Tinkhundla which commonly include four or five chiefdoms. Depending on their size and populations - 1-3 poling divisions are located within individual Tinkhundla. There is considerable scope for confusion between the Lubombo administrative region and the Lubombo agro-ecological region. The latter is defined by the Lubombo Mountains and is made up of three Tinkhundla – Tikhuba, Lugongolweni and Lomahasha. The Lubombo administrative region is much bigger and is made up of a total of 11 Tinkhundla and occupies most of the northern Lowveld and the Lubombo Plateau.

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<sup>1</sup> As long as AGOA status is maintained as this is currently pending approval by the US Congress

Local production and market relations define nine Livelihood Zones (LZs) within the overall parameters of four agro-ecological regions (see figure 1). The Highveld has been divided into two main zones - the **Timber Highlands** and the **Highveld Maize and Cattle** zones. The **Peri-Urban Corridor** traverses the Highveld and forms a tract of dense peri-urban settlement that links Manzini, Mbabane and surrounding areas to the Oshoek / Ngwenya border. The corridor also crosses the central Middleveld and terminates just east of the second city of Manzini. The Middleveld is split into two areas based on agro-ecological reasons and logically called the **Wet Middleveld** and **Dry Middleveld**. As a whole the Middleveld forms a long broken escarpment between the wetter Highveld and drier Lowveld. The Lowveld is currently subdivided into two parts – the dry southern **Lowveld Cattle and Cotton** and the more diversified northern **Lowveld Cattle, Cotton and Maize**. Within the Lowveld there are large tracts of industrial sugar production. The Lubombo Plateau is also divided into two – the more remote **Lubombo Plateau** in the centre and, in the north, the **Lomahasha Trading and Arable** that straddles the main road through to Maputo and Mozambique. The sugar estates, national parks, forest reserves and all urban areas are excluded from the LZs and the estimates of LZ populations.

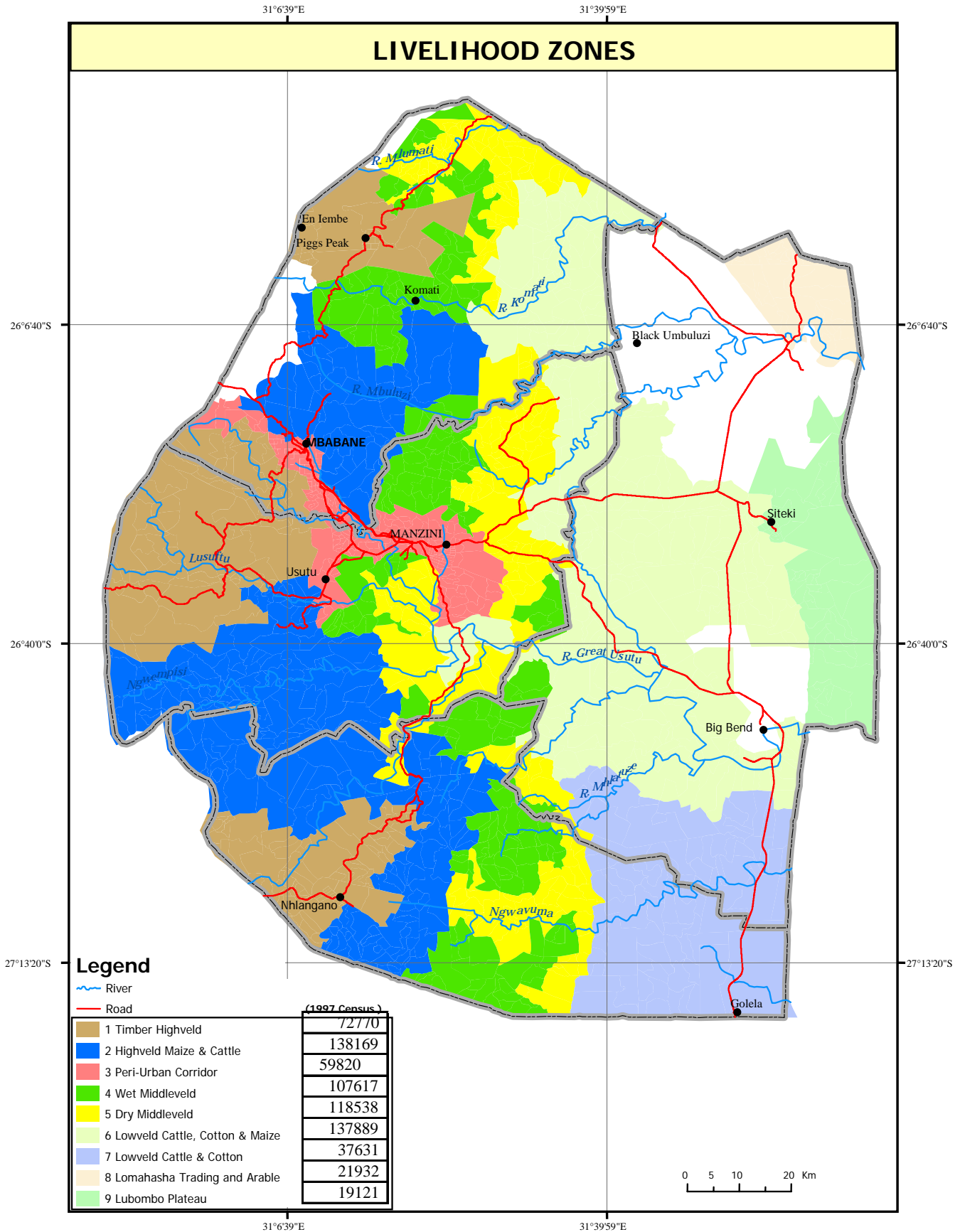
### Current Season Context

The current national economic slowdown is proving to be exceptionally deep and broad. The structural context constraining livelihood options remain little changed over the past three-to-four years. Depressed employment opportunities, poor agricultural production, plus rising staple food prices and the effects of HIV/AIDS have undermined livelihoods. The formerly important cotton industry of the Lowveld has more or less collapsed over the past five years. High levels of household vulnerability combined with the shocks of three years of erratic weather patterns and a slow-down in economic growth (2000-2003) precipitated a crisis for many Swazi communities. Poverty is endemic on Swazi National Land (SNL) where 70% of the population contribute to the agricultural sector's modest 10% share of GDP.

In July 2002 Swaziland was incorporated as a beneficiary under a WFP Regional Emergency Operational Plan (EMOP) which is currently still in operation. A total of 144,000 people were originally targeted for a general food distribution (GFD) but this was extended to 217,000 in 2003. The WFP and a consortium of national NGOs formed a partnership to distribute food aid to the most affected areas. The Government of Swaziland provided significant food aid support during 2003 in other affected areas of the country in partnership with WFP. As part of a regionally coordinated monitoring programme three rolling vulnerability assessments were carried out by the Swazi VAC to provide national and sub-national guidance on relative vulnerability levels during 2002 and 2003.

It was hoped that good rains and cultivation in the 2003/4 agricultural season would form a backbone for WFP and their implementing NGO partners to move away from general targeted food aid distributions to less emergency type interventions such as food for training and food for work. Indeed WFP has had plans to move from the current EMOP to a Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) since mid-2003 in which any modality for food distribution may be applied, if appropriate, other than those that are 'free'. The poor outlook for the current season, especially in the Lowveld, has meant that stakeholders remain concerned about the on-going emergency need in a theoretical climate of recovery. Most recently, the start of the PRRO has been delayed until 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005 and is planned to last for three years. A continuation of challenging circumstances led the new Government of Swaziland to declare a state of national disaster in February 2004 focusing on poverty, drought, HIV/AIDS and soil erosion. A Disaster Management Bill was made a priority by the new Government for discussion by the new Parliament but has not yet been passed and currently the implications of the bill are not fully clear.

**Figure 1: Livelihood Zone Map of Swaziland (population 1997 census)**



## **Institutional Background**

The VAC process is coordinated at regional level by the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources (FANR) Directorate's Regional Vulnerability Assessment Committee (RVAC), in collaboration with international partners (WFP, FEWS NET, SC (UK) and FAO). The Swazi VAC is part of this regional vulnerability system initiated by FANR Ministers to improve vulnerability monitoring and broaden early warning systems within member countries. The Swaziland Vulnerability Assessment Committee is currently chaired by the Agriculture and Extension Department within the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MoAC). The Secretariat of the Swazi VAC includes the National Early Warning and Marketing Advisory Units (MoAC), Central Statistical Office (CSO) of the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (MEPD), WFP, Save the Children Swaziland, National Emergency Response Council on HIV/AIDS (NERCHA) and the Coordinating Assembly for NGOs (CANGO).

Broadly, the aim of the Swazi VAC is to incorporate a unified and deeper understanding of livelihoods in emergency and development programming and broaden early warning systems. VAC analytical outputs are aimed at informing policy decision-making at the highest levels of Government, United Nations and NGOs. In the short term, the focus has been on carrying out emergency assessments focusing predominantly on identifying food aid needs. There has been an increasing demand for broader assessments focusing on the complex set of economic, social and cultural factors (including HIV/ AIDS) that embody and affect people's livelihoods in Swaziland providing strong indications of relative vulnerability, the reasons underlying the vulnerability and what types of interventions may be appropriate as a response mechanism.

Following establishment of the Swazi VAC in May 2002, three emergency food security / livelihood assessments carried out in Swaziland in July/August 2002, November/December 2002 and May/June 2003 formed the basis of the Swazi VAC work guiding emergency interventions of UN agencies, NGOs, and the Government of Swaziland. The Swazi VAC has gone on to establish regular food security and livelihood monitoring exercises such as that completed in March 2004 after the declaration of national disaster by the Government of Swaziland. In addition, a national survey to analyse the impact of HIV/AIDS on the demography and livelihoods of the rural population was undertaken in 2003 and the report is available. The Swazi VAC represents one of the few fora that channels national technical guidance for UN agencies, NGOs and Government Ministries to ensure that necessary humanitarian and livelihood support is directed to the most vulnerable people at the correct time.

Commitments to improving Swaziland's vulnerability assessment and analysis information systems have been made by Swaziland Government Ministers at several regional fora. Some of these commitments and fora are listed below:

- Regional vulnerability analysis consultation in Kariba, Zimbabwe in 2000 which articulated a set of recommendations through a communiqué. It was agreed to: *"To improve the understanding, collaboration, and use of Vulnerability Assessments to enhance the effectiveness and utility of food security information and analysis in the SADC region"*.
- FANR Ministers in August 2001 convened a special meeting to develop strategies to mitigate against the food shortages that were already evident at the time
- By the Swaziland Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives at the FANR Ministers meeting during February 2004 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in preparation for the "Extraordinary Summit on Agriculture and Food security" planned for May 2004. At the meeting it was agreed that member states would: "...strengthen Early Warning Systems and vulnerability monitoring capabilities including the rapid collection, analysis and dissemination of credible information" in an attempt to enhance disaster preparedness.