An Individual Household Assessment (IHA) Approach in the Lowveld Cattle-Cotton & Maize Livelihood Zone

An Exploratory Analysis
Focusing on

Food Access, Income and Expenditure

Swazi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (Swazi VAC)

Funded by DFID through the Regional Vulnerability Assessment Committee (RVAC)

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The Swaziland Vulnerability Assessment Committee (Swazi VAC) began the Individual Household Analysis (IHA) on the 15th of March 2004. The data collection process was divided into two phases – the first was data collection (field work) and the second – an overlapping field-based data capture process that lasted for two weeks.

The field work and data capture phase of the survey benefited from the participation of Sindi Dlamini (MOAC), Choice Ginindza (CSO), Nathi Vilakati (Save the Children), Sfiso Mdluli (Save the Children), Wonderboy Khumalo (World Vision), Thembinkosi Kunene (MOAC), Luke Masuku (MOAC), Nkululeko Mkhabela (LDS), Mandla Dlamini (MOAC), Thembumenzi Dube (MOAC), Lungile Mndzebele (MOAC) and Alex Rees (Livelihoods Advisor). The team is applauded for the effort that was put into ensuring that the consultative weeks of fieldwork yielded detailed and consistent results.

Gratitude is also forwarded to all the men and women of the Mamisa community who participated in this exercise, sharing the details of their everyday lives with the team. It is hoped that their experiences have been accurately represented.

Due to other high priority activities (the April CFSAM, two rounds of assessments May to July & report editing), the analysis phase of this pilot IHA exercise was delayed. Following a further two weeks of data cleaning and management in July, the analysis and report writing started on the 7th of August 2004. Led by Jeremy Jackson (consultant) and Choice Ginindza (CSO) with the support of the core team members of the Swazi VAC, this latter phase of work lasted for about three weeks. Special thanks are due to this team for their efforts in analysing and presenting the initial results. Following circulation of the first draft within the Swazi VAC, a number of comments and revisions have been made to this October version of the report.

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Mr. George Ndlangamandla
Swazi VAC Chairperson

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Acronyms

AEU	: ADULT EQUIVALENT UNIT
AIDS	: ACQUIRED IMMUNO-DEFICIENCY SYNDROME
CFSAM	: CROP & FOOD SUPPLY ASSESSMENT MISSION
CSO	: CENTRAL STATISTICS OFFICE
DFID	: DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
EA	: ENUMERATION AREA
EMOP	: EMERGENCY OPERATIONS
FANR	: FOOD, AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES DIRECTORATE (SADC)
FAO	: FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANISATION
FEZ	: FOOD ECONOMY ZONE
GOS	: GOVERNMENT OF SWAZILAND
HH	: HOUSEHOLDS
HIV	: HUMAN IMMUNO-DEFICIENCY VIRUS
KCALS	: KILOCALORIES
LZ	: LIVELIHOOD ZONE (ALSO KNOWN AS FOOD ECONOMY ZONE)
MEPD	: MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING
MOAC	: MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE & COOPERATIVES
MT	: METRIC TONNES
MZ	: MAIZE
NEWU	: NATIONAL EARLY WARNING UNIT
NGO	: NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION
NMC	: NATIONAL MAIZE CORPORATION
NVAC	: NATIONAL VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE
RVAC	: REGIONAL VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE
SADC	: SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
SC SZ	: SAVE THE CHILDREN SWAZILAND
SC UK	: SAVE THE CHILDREN UK
SEG	: SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUP
SFDF	: SWAZILAND FARMERS DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION
SMI	: SWAZILAND MEAT INDUSTRIES
SNL	: SWAZI NATION LAND
SWAZI VAC	: SWAZILAND VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE
UNAIDS	: JOINT UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS
UNICEF	: UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
VAC	: VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE
VAM	: VULNERABILITY ANALYSIS AND MAPPING UNIT (WFP)
WFP	: WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

> *Increasing numbers of households are not just 'vulnerable' but are experiencing 'livelihood failures' and 'economic collapse' -- this situation is particularly acute in the Lowveld Areas of Swaziland*
>
> *Swazi VAC,*
> *Annual Vulnerability Monitoring Report,*
> *May 2004*

Swaziland's rural livelihoods have been in crisis since the beginning of the millennium. The most visible symptoms are of a 'poor' and 'depressed' rural economy which is characterised by food insecurity and poverty at the local level. Since early 2001, the Swaziland VAC has repeatedly highlighted the *Lowveld Cattle-Cotton & Maize Livelihood Zone* as a particular area of concern. Livelihoods have suffered from a complicated combination of shocks that have detrimentally affected livelihoods of all socio-economic groups. Economic collapse and chronic poverty are the main attributions to the dire conditions facing many households.

This study presents the initial findings of a pilot survey of an individual household assessment (IHA). The Swazi VAC is piloting this tool as an alternative and more in-depth approach to existing Household Economy Analysis (HEA).

The study was carried out with the participation of the Mamisa community located in the southwest corner of Lowveld Cattle-Cotton & Maize Livelihood Zone of Swaziland.

The aim of the study was to test and familiarise the Swazi VAC with the use of individual household economy methods and to:

- better understand household and community vulnerability in a typical Lowveld area of Swaziland;
- analyse the main features of the livelihoods in relation to assessed levels of food access;
- analyse the relative vulnerability and socio-economic status within the community;
- assess the overall quality/consistency of the evidence and,
- provide decision-makers with enhanced information to support ongoing development strategies and interventions.

The IHA household survey describes and quantifies the components of food access, incomes and expenditures. A total of 137 households were systematically drawn using an unbiased systematic sampling method from eight CSO Enumeration Areas (EAs). Detailed demographic information was collected on all 958 household members.

Information gathered in the field has been selectively captured in a form ready for statistical and/or other analysis. These include all the demographic data and the sub-totals of the core components of food access, income/employment and expenditures. There remains a lot of detail item-by-item information yet to be captured. This information will facilitate, among a number of possibilities, the assessment of a 'standard of income' - which is the expenditure of each household required to meet a

defined standard of living and the generation of a measure of 'disposable income' (e.g. money available to the household after meeting their basic needs).

At this stage of exploratory analysis, the surveyed households have been stratified according to their total Kcal/Adult Equivalent/Day and then grouped into deciles providing an index of food access/well-being for ten stratified groups of households. Food Access/AEU/Day is compared with the threshold need of 2100 Kilocalories (Kcals), and an estimate of Income/AEU/Day is compared to the 1.00 US $/Day equivalent.

The reference year for the survey was September 2002 to August 2003, which was a period when the community was in receipt of Emergency Operation Programme (EMOP) food aid.

Highlights of main findings and recommendations

- Agriculture's contribution toward overall livelihoods and wellbeing is currently so low that even major leaps in productivity will contribute small changes to overall income levels. The promotion of agricultural production and recovery programmes should therefore not be the only component of a livelihood recovery programme.

- Setting aside the recent phases of food aid deliveries, food purchases remain the most important part (30-48%) of total food access in this livelihood zone. The continued functioning and improvement of the food marketing infrastructure and services should be targeted for support and development.

- The evidence of miss-targeted food aid and over supply, highlights the need to break away of the current mould of 'emergency response'. Improvements in effectiveness and efficiency of a reduced food-aid programme could shift resources into recovery and development programmes.

- At present, the Swazi maize industry is failing to either maximize national production or secure viable returns to producers. The national cereal balance indicates a growing dependency on imports, while better-off farmers in surplus producing areas of the Highveld and Middleveld, are apparently sitting on up to two years of unsold maize.

- Where possible and appropriate, food aid budgets should be diverted to supporting market-based interventions and cash transfers. The best targeting systems should employ several critical elements, including: self-targeting under various food- or cash-for-work schemes, plus administratively targeted 'free' food or cash injections for those who are unable or cannot work.

- The collapse of the cotton industry has contributed to very low levels of cash income, poverty and vulnerability. Along with the rehabilitation of the cotton industry, some form of cash injections into the economy could play a role in jump-starting the longer recovery of the Lowveld economy.

- Decision & Policy makers require guidelines on a wider range of options for intervention. These include the above and ways of facilitating access to land, labour, the creation of productive assets, support to non-farm employment and the self employed plus improved community-level ownership and management of local natural resource base in a more comprehensive sustainable livelihoods approach.

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Why individual household analysis in Swaziland?

Individual Household Analyses (IHAs) occupy a particular niche in vulnerability analyses (VAs). The approach is particularly suited to situations where the diversity of individual livelihood strategies means that it is more useful to model individual households than to analyse 'typical households'[1]. However, well-executed IHAs provide a wealth of detailed information on livelihoods that can nonetheless be used for conventional Household Economy Analysis (HEA). In-depth information from IHA generates improved descriptions of livelihoods and a far superior basis from which to examine the effects of shocks or programme-induced changes – albeit at an individual household or more generalized level using grouped data. In the absence of secondary or up-to-date sources, IHA also plays a crucial role in providing locally specific and current information. It generates a wide range of livelihood indicators that open up an array of analytical agendas and potential uses.

Swaziland's rural livelihoods have been in crisis since 2000-01. The most visible symptom has been food insecurity at the local level - especially in the Lowveld areas of the country. It seems that the subsequent response has been based more on early warning-cum-food security information rather than on in-depth local needs assessments. As a consequence there has been an obvious food-aid bias in programming. While a recurrent commitment to food aid in Swaziland is clearly unsustainable, the existing humanitarian system none-the-less relies on a standard set of food security responses. Given the benefit of hindsight, this 'food focused' view is part of a wider process of humanitarian interventions wherein: (i) 'affected people' with 'needs' become targeted as 'beneficiaries' of food aid; and (ii) given the busy implementation schedules for partners, there has been little time for critical reflection of the appropriateness of food aid in different circumstances nor for the investigation of the potential for various livelihoods-based interventions.

Questions have therefore been raised about the appropriateness and amount of food aid that has been deployed. While there are pressures to move onto a 'recovery' and 'development' phase and eliminate free forms of food aid, further elements of emergency response are likely to be put in place for 2004-05. Every effort should be made to ensure that:

(i) food aid is not poorly targeted;
(ii) producer prices and production are not depressed;
(iii) trade and local social reciprocity networks are not disrupted;
(iv) there is efficient and effective use of scarce resources; and
(v) strengthened guidelines for 'best practice' are put in place.

Swazi VAC recognizes that: (i) more time, energy and resources needs to have been spent on monitoring and evaluation throughout the recent EMOP; (ii), greater emphasis should be placed on highlighting findings about what people are doing for themselves; and (iii) decision-makers need guidelines on a wider range of options for intervention. These could include: market interventions, ways of facilitating access to land, labour, the creation of productive assets, support to non-farm employment and

[1]. Given that the same principles that apply to standard HEA analysis also apply to IHA, the information can also be used to support a number of standard HEA agendas. Secondly, being based on a representative sample of the population it is possible to produce more accurate and statistically robust descriptive profiles of 'typical households'.

the self employed plus improved community-level ownership and management of local natural resource base in a more comprehensive sustainable livelihoods approach

1.2 Shifting trends in vulnerability assessment work in Swaziland.

In the late 1990s, a Household Food Economy (HEA) Vulnerability assessment tool was developed to assist the Government of Swaziland, to respond to recurrent droughts.[2] This early (HEA) work divided the country into eight food economy zones and 24 typical patterns of livelihoods. It used a combination of (rapid) methods to construct profiles of livelihoods - drawing on secondary sources, key informant and community level focused group interviews.[3] Using a dedicated risk-mapping program (Riskmap version 1.2), estimates of the shocks of severe weather conditions - floods and droughts - were investigated to simulate their likely impacts on Food Economy Zones (FEZ) and livelihoods of relative wealth groups. The basic approach of using livelihood baselines and current hazard information to generate scenarios of likely outcomes grew rapidly in Swaziland. This type of risk mapping provided the basis of geographic targeting (between food economy zones) and socio-economic targeting (between relative wealth groups within areas). This was in contrast to much of the earlier food security work focused at high levels of aggregation.

The initial 1998 Swaziland Riskmap provided a nationwide coverage. The choice of technique used to define livelihoods was a particular version of HEA geared to wide area analysis. Following Swaziland's incorporation into the regional emergency operational programme (EMOP) in 2001, it was decided to continue using the existing HEA / Riskmap approach for the national vulnerability assessments. However, it was considered appropriate to update the livelihood profiles surveyed in 1998. This was done (broadly using the same rapid assessment techniques) in a period of three weeks in November-December 2001. The national database was updated in early 2002. Supported by ongoing monitoring work and specialist studies, this information has provided the foundation of the SVAC work carried out since early 2002. While robust and adequate for its original purpose, the level of detail on the livelihood profiles generated is limited. The information is narrowly geared toward assessing the adequacy of food access.

1.3 Macro context in Swaziland

A range of impacts in the period 2001-04 has increased vulnerability throughout the country. Swaziland has experienced depressed employment opportunities, poor agricultural production, inflation, rising staple food prices and the negative effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. High levels of poverty combined with erratic weather

[2] The idea for a National Risk Mapping Exercise arose from the disaster preparedness work of the Lutheran Development Service (LDS), the Swaziland Council of Churches, Save the Children Fund-Swaziland (SCF), Swaziland Farmers Development Foundation (SFDF) and was carried forward with the backing of the government and the NGOs See Report of the Swaziland National Risk Mapping Project April- October 1998.

[3] The data collection was carried out using techniques of rapid rural appraisal, based on semi-structured interviews with key informants and focus groups mostly at the village level. In each FEZ, the four field teams conducted a minimum of 60 interviews over a period of five days. The requirement was for qualitative and proportionate information, not precise numbers such as exact volumes of harvested grain or enumerated household budgets.

patterns and poor economic growth have worsened endemic poverty on Swazi National Land (SNL).[4]

Economic growth was limited in the mid 1990's. The country experienced a significant fall in the numbers of formally employed in South Africa. Employment levels in the private and public sectors have been at a virtual standstill for several years. Over the past four years, static and declining real wages plus low incomes, negatively impacted on the ability of many households to purchase or secure food and basic social services. The fall of disposable household income reduced demand for casual employment. In the Lowveld, economic hardship and food insecurity has also increased because of the collapse of the cotton industry - reducing producer incomes and the earnings of large numbers of casual workers associated with the industry.

Maize and cotton markets have been constrained by existing institutional and marketing arrangements. The informal maize market is currently large while the official maize sales are rather small. Over the past two years low prices have not attracted farmers to sell much of their maize to the National Maize Corporation (NMC). At present, the Swazi maize industry is failing to either maximize national production or secure viable returns to producers. The national cereal balance indicates a growing dependency on imports, while better-off farmers in surplus producing areas of the Highveld and Middleveld, are apparently sitting on up to two years of unsold maize.

The collapse of the cotton industry of the Lowveld is closely associated with the input-supply loan recovery scheme linked to the national procurement of the cotton. The system accumulated a vast unrecoverable debt closing the country's only ginnery in 2002-03. This has had a massive impact on livelihoods in an area where there has been no other drought resistant cash crop.

Countrywide, livestock conditions have been poor for several years and overall numbers of cattle and goats have been declining - especially in the Lowveld. Grazing conditions have been poor and water availability limited. Over the past three years, animals have had little time to recover their condition - given a succession of shocks.

In addition to the economic difficulties faced by rural households, HIV/AIDS is having a major impact on livelihoods. The virus has increased morbidity and mortality rates, reducing the viability of weakened households. The numbers of chronically ill, child/orphan-headed and chronically vulnerable households are growing at a significant rate. This is contributing to growing levels of poverty and destitution.[5]

1.4 The need for deeper livelihoods analysis – Lowveld Cattle & Cotton Areas

To date, it is fair to say that some modest (but inadequate) progress has been made in understanding the micro economic effects of drought, inflation, market failures and HIV/AIDS. IHA approaches are therefore being examined to see what role they

[4] It is estimated 70 percent of the population contributes to the sector's modest 10% share of gross domestic product.

[5] For further background information readers are referred to the SVAC May 2004 Annual Vulnerability Monitoring Report.

may play in providing up-to-date and more detailed information on hot spots or on issues of particular concern.

The results from the Swazi VAC November-December 2002 Assessment Report highlighted the Lowveld as a priority area for in depth analysis.[6] *The worst affected areas remain the Lowveld, Lubombo and parts of the Middleveld. Here up to 297,000 people are facing food deficits of 2-4 month duration.* The Lowveld has suffered from a complicated combination of shocks that have detrimentally affected livelihoods of all socio-economic groups.

The March 2003 assessment noted the following key issues:

1) Given the likely controversy surrounding the provision of food aid in the immediate post harvest period, the WFP and its implementing partners should take the SVAC early warning findings and carry out rapid (field-based) food need assessments in the core-affected areas. Wherever possible, food aid should be accompanied by interventions that protect existing livelihoods.

2) Special attention needs to be given to targeting the most vulnerable in terms of geographical, temporal and socio economic considerations, and to monitoring the status of vulnerable groups that fall just outside of current targeting thresholds. Future programming needs to integrate livelihood provisioning, protection and promotion such that emergency relief can save lives and maintain nutrition levels, while concurrent rehabilitation/safety-nets help to protect livelihood systems from the erosion of their assets or assists in their recovery, while development work should seek to improve the resilience and sustainability of currently viable livelihoods.

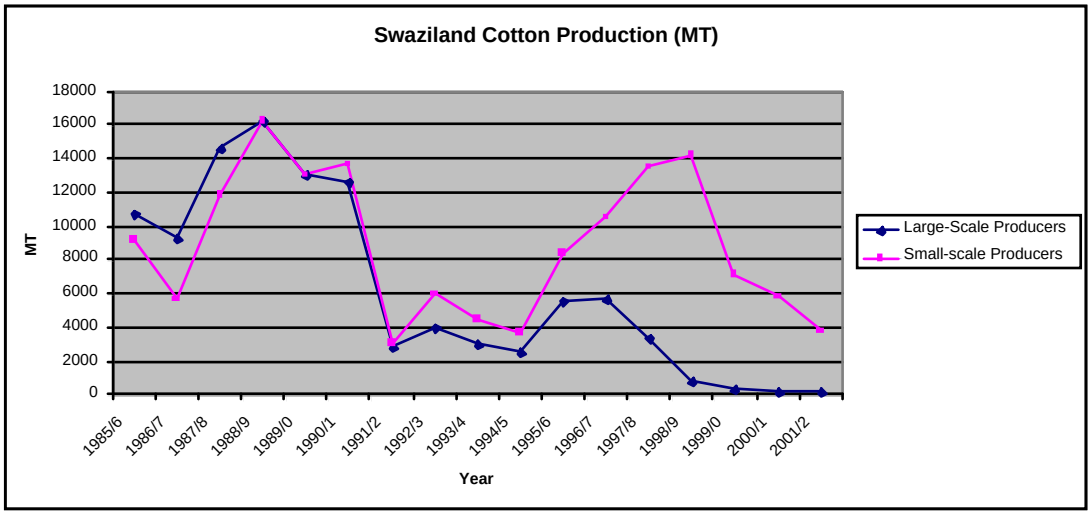
Thus, as part of its planned activities for 2004, the Swaziland Vulnerability Assessment Committee (SVAC) therefore decided to pilot and explores the use of IHA techniques to better understand vulnerable livelihoods in a typical Lowveld area of Swaziland. The exercise also aimed to use the opportunity to build Swazi VAC capacity and awareness about emerging new tools for analysis.

1.4.1 Collapse of the Lowveld Cotton Industry

Cotton production has been a significant (but volatile) source of income for many families in the Lowveld during the past twenty years. At its height in the late 1980s and early 1990s, thousands of smallholders were directly involved in growing cotton. The virtual collapse of the cotton industry in the late 1990's has played a significant part in the severe economic hardship and growing food insecurity experienced by many households in Lowveld Cattle & Cotton and Cattle-Cotton & Maize zones. (See production data in Figure 1). In addition to reduced cash incomes for producers, there has been an important knock-on effect on casual employment. A high percentage of the rural workforce has lost the income that they used to generate from this labour-intensive crop.

[6] It was further noted that an additional large (but less affected) group 127,000 people would benefit from a short injection of food as they approach the lean pre harvest season. Their needs will be affected by the progress and uncertainty surrounding the current agricultural season – especially whether employment will be maintained at normal levels. The prospect of poor rains plus a severely depressed cotton industry will limit employment opportunities in the worst affected areas of the Lowveld".

Figure 1.



1.4.2 Compounding Shocks

After three years of below normal rains and grazing conditions, cattle productivity in 2003-04 was very low and many cattle succumbed to exhaustion and death in the first half of the agricultural season. While improved water access and grazing resulted in an improvement in cattle condition, hot humid conditions decimated the legume harvest. Many households did not (or could not) re-plant maize when significant rains finally came in January 2004. The overall maize production for the area was estimated at 20-30% of normal – but many experienced crop failure. Cash crops production, mostly cotton, remained exceedingly low - estimated at 0-10% of normal.

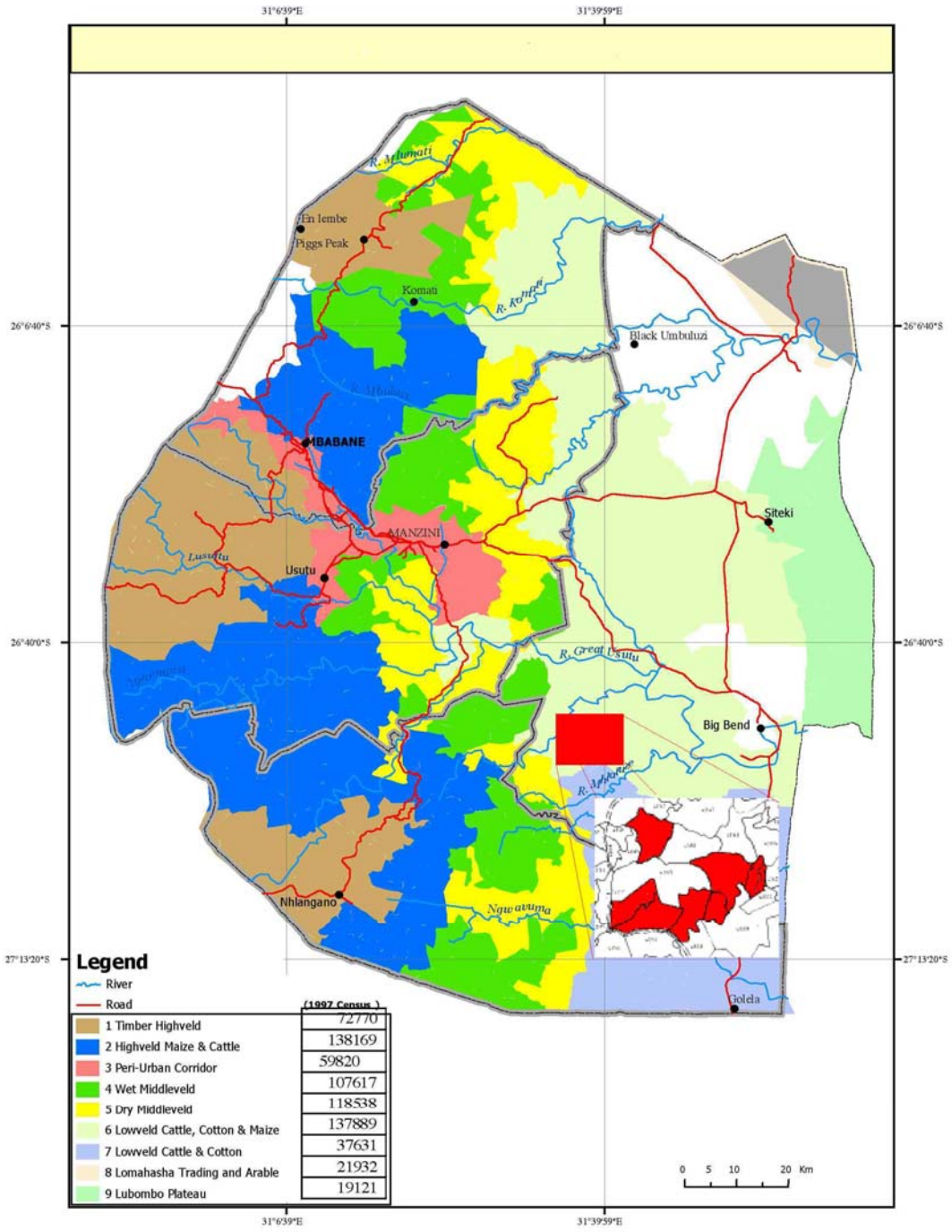
In 2003-04, local food prices increased in communities receiving food aid. Traders affected by food aid deliveries, were able to inflate local prices as they sought higher profit margins on a reduced total volume of periodic sales. Livestock and livestock product prices also increased rapidly, negatively affecting the poorer groups access to milk and meat.

1.5 The Study Area

Located in the Southwest portion of the Lowveld Cattle-Cotton and Maize FEZ, the community of Mamisa was chosen as a representative and typical area of the Lowveld. The community and is defined by 12 Enumeration Areas (EAs) that fall under the CSO's national sampling frame (See Map 1). It has three primary schools, one clinic, seven grocery stores, one dip-tank, a women's handicraft centre and an agricultural extension officer's house. Other infrastructure includes three community gardens, a reticulated water supply system and a borehole, three earth dams and two bridges that cross the Mtimpofu River. The community is situated off the tarred main road from Siphofaneni to Big Bend – which is a thirty kilometres journey. Mamisa borders a citrus plantation at Tambuti. In the process of responses to the drought in the period of 1991 to 1996, the community has had established a long-standing relationship with Save the Children (Swaziland). In the period 1997 to 2001 some drought mitigation projects have been initiated. At the time of the survey, the community continued to benefit from the EMOP that was started in 2002.

Map 1

Location of Eight Selected Enumeration Areas within Mamisa Community



2 ANALYTICAL APPROACH AND METHODS

2.1 Household Economy Analysis (HEA) and the emergence of Individual Household Economy Analysis (IHA)

Household economy approaches provide an analytical framework for understanding how people access food and income and for predicting the impact of shocks or changes on basic survival and developmental needs. They can be used to generate information on the livelihood effects of macro level and global policies - as well as more local events - and to identify practical ways of achieving greater economic security and higher living standards for the poor. The purpose of household economy research is to influence policy, and to support interventions that reduce poverty and prevent destitution.[7]

The purpose of a standard HEA assessment is to describe the way in which households normally acquire food and cash income in a defined geographical area, and to analyse the way in which they are likely to be affected by economic change or shocks-such as a fall in the value of household income derived from one or more sources, a rise in production costs, or loss of access to markets. (See Annex 3 for key terms used in HEA-based work). It provides information in a form that can easily be used for monitoring situations and modelling potential scenarios: for example, the effect of crop failure on livestock prices. The output has a wide range of applications including for example, disaster preparedness, poverty reduction strategies and political economy[8].

The IHA approach - an individual household level of investigation and analysis, works with a representative sample of individual households. The aim of this tool remains the same but focuses at the level of the individual households where the diversity of individual livelihood strategies (or the nature of the shock) means that it is more useful to model individual households than to analyse a 'typical household'.

2.2 Field work and analysis

The field research was divided into two phases – 'Phase One' involved all the preparatory activities and 'Phase Two' involved the implementation of the household level interviews plus the daily capture of information in the field.

Phase One

- Since the drought period of 1992, Save The Children (Swaziland) has developed a working relationship with the Mamisa community in the Southwest Lowveld. Mamisa was chosen from among several possible alternatives because of an existing relationship of 'trust'. This was expected to have a positive influence on the likely level of co-operation during the survey. A community leaders meeting was arranged and this was followed by a key informants discussions with members of the Swazi VAC core team. These discussions were aimed at establishing the background information on the

[15] Save the Children UK, Petty, C. Household Economy Approaches and Poverty Analysis, June 2003.

[8] Unpublished notes: Save the Children (UK), J. Seaman, and Petty, C, Guideline and Training Notes for IHA.

study community from the resident's perspective. Information collected included a seasonal calendar and activities, prices, local measurements and weights and the wealth ranking of the residents through proportional piling.

- For purposes of familiarization of the team members, pre-testing of the tool was conducted a few days before the actual fieldwork. This type of research requires the use of skilled HEA practitioners. The approach uses a semi-structured interview approach in combination with a detailed spreadsheet checklist to capture responses in detail. Following some initial exposure to the approach, a one-day training/debriefing exercise was conducted to share experiences and identify the difficulties that could arise.
- Prior to the selection of the sample, the boundaries of the community were established with the assistance of the Central Statistical Office using enumeration area maps and the guidance of the elders in the community.
- The data collection team was made up of officers from different institutions (government and non-governmental organizations) with wide experience in field data collection. There were five teams of two members lead by a team leader/mentor. The mentor took the lead during the interviews while the second member dedicated all their effort to recording the responses.
- A systematic sampling exercise based on eight EA's came up with a sample of 144 homesteads. During the interviews it became clear that seven homesteads were long-abandoned. The final number of returns came to 137 – there were no refusals. The teams enumerated all households within the homesteads visited.
- The returns represent an unbiased sample of the population. There was no stratification.

Phase two.

- HEA is based on intensive fieldwork and on maintaining the quality of fieldwork. It is important to recognise that 'quality control' and the elimination of non-sampling error takes place in the field as interviews unfold. Each team checks to see whether the separate pieces of information make sense. Are the separate bits of information collectively telling a coherent and plausible story? The enumeration teams are constantly judging whether the process is measuring 'the reality' at the household level or whether the measurement process itself is faulty. Keeping 'a running account' of household consumption (in relation to anticipated need) is part of the 'hands-on' skills and knowledge of HEA practitioners.

- The data capture data cleaning happened in two distinct phases of the research. The first was during the fieldwork and the second was office-based in Mbabane. While in the field, information from individual interviews was captured daily on spreadsheets. The final output is in the form of 137 household records stored in Excel workbooks. An example household record is presented in Annex 1. Subsequently, every record was re-checked and the responsible field teams were asked to clarify any apparent errors or omissions before the records were presented for further synthesis and analysis.

2.3 Strategy and objectives for the analysis

The analysis was broken down into a very tight schedule of 12-days, August 7th to 23rd. Thus, it was recognized that this piece of work would, of necessity, should be

an initial exploratory phase of analysis. The report therefore makes recommendations about the direction for further data capture and analysis.

The main objectives for this phase of work were to:

- better understand household and community vulnerability in a typical Lowveld area of Swaziland;
- analyse the main features of the livelihoods related to levels of food access;
- establish any relationships between food aid recipients, relative vulnerability and socio-economic status within the community;
- assess the overall quality/consistency of the evidence; and,
- provide decision-makers with enhanced information to support ongoing development strategies and interventions.

2.4 Description of the analytical process

This section provides a brief overview of the activities that contributed to the following analysis. The analysis phase data-capture selectively used the evidence supplied in the 137 spreadsheets. A number of summary database (excel) files were captured and imported into SPSS. Because of time and resource constraints the data extraction has been quite discerning. Ideally, all the evidence should be captured so that the detail food access, income and expenditure data can be used in further rounds of analyses

2.4.1 Demographic Details and Adult Equivalents

All the demographic detail collected in the field was captured into a separate single file of records per person (See Annex 2). This file contains information on a total of 958 individuals. The full list of variables attached to each record is presented in Annex 2. This basic demographic data was then manipulated to generate a measure of the number of Adult Equivalents in each household. Information on the age and gender of each person was used to generate a measure of their status as an 'Adult Equivalent'. These values were then summed at the level of the household to generate new household level variable – Total Adult Equivalent Units (AEUs) in the household. This is done to facilitate a comparison of relative household-level food access, incomes and expenditures. Poverty is, in most cases, studied and measured in terms of individuals rather than households. Thus, the conversion of household level results into per capita and AEUs is a widespread and standardized practice to overcome the difficulty of comparing households with widely differing composition.

2.4.2 Calculating food access, expenditures and income

The core sub-totals of the food access, expenditures and incomes were extracted into a single file of records per household (See Annex 4). This file contains summary food access, expenditure and income information on each of the 137 households. A full list of the variables attached to each household is presented in Annex 3. This data was subsequently manipulated to convert household sub-totals into per AEU sub-totals. This simply involves deriving a new variable for each sub-total for the various components of food access, expenditure and income by dividing the household totals by the number of AEUs in the household – yielding a per AEU measure. The food access sub totals are measured in Kcals and the expenditure and income is measured in Emalangeni.

2.4.3 Kilocalories/Adult Equivalent Units

The 137 records containing these per AEU measures were sorted from low to high using Total Kcals/AEU – the sum of all food access sub-totals. The assumption was that Kcals/AEU would be a good measure of 'relative wellbeing'. In advance of the analysis, there was some anxiety over using this measure, given that the community was receiving food-aid. Well-targeted food aid would distort this measure. In the subsequent tabulation process the measure of Kcals/AEU/Year[9] was converted into Kcals/AEU/Day – a more commonly understood measure. Rather than present the results for each record, a decision was made to group the data into deciles. The sorted records were therefore coded into ten groups of relative food access/AEU. The evidence in the results and findings section below is therefore presented in terms of the mean values/AEU for each group. This may appear illogical given that this is an IHA. However, at this exploratory stage there is no agenda to model at the individual household level. Moreover, that possibility is somewhat dependent upon the completion of the outstanding data-capture. In order to communicate to as wide an audience as possible, a decision was also taken to present the results graphically using simple stacked bar charts.

2.4.4 Obligatory and Discretionary Expenditures

There has been no attempt in this phase of analysis to distinguish the locally specific 'obligatory' and 'discretionary' expenditures. Nor has there been any attempt to construct (on the basis of the detailed household level data) what would be a minimum standard of living for each household. There is therefore, no estimate of disposable income – the balance of total cash income less that necessary to meet the minimum standard of living.

2.4.5 Ascertaining Levels of Poverty

In order to get some estimate of the levels of poverty in the community, Total cash expenditures/AEU plus the valuation of all in-kind food access/AEU have been summed to provide a rough estimate of income/AEU. The annual measure in Emalangeni is compared with the US $/day equivalent.

[9] The reference year is September 2002 to August 2003.

3 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

3.1 Main features of relative food access

Figure 2. presents the main findings on the pattern of food access in terms of Kcals/AEU/Day. The mean values of the totals and sub-totals for each decile group are presented in a stacked-bar chart.[10] The grouped data is ranked from lowest to highest Kcals/AEU/Day. The overall total for each group can be compared with the threshold figure of 2100 Kcals/person/Day. The sub-totals indicate the composition of the total in terms of five sub categories of food access. For each household surveyed the pattern of food access was enumerated under five categories:

1. **Food Grown/Own Harvest** - this included Maize, Green Maize, Beans, Green beans, Juggo Beans, Sweet Potato, Irish Potato, Cassava, Ground Nuts, Pumpkin, Cabbage, Lettuce, Spinach, Tomatoes, Carrots, Onions, Oranges, Cowpeas and any other crops identified by the respondents.
2. **Own Animal Production** - Cows milk, beef, goat meat, chickens, eggs, pig meat and other animal products identified by respondents.
3. **Food For Labour** - Meals out/funerals etc., School meals, Meals in exchange for labour, Food for labour and any other categories defined in the course of the interview.
4. **Food Purchases** - Maize Meal, Maize, Beans, Soup Powder, Rice, Wheat Flour, Irish Potato, Sweet Potato, Groundnuts, Fresh Fruit, Tinned Fish, Meat, Eggs, Fresh Milk, Powdered Milk, Sugar, Vegetable Oil, Bread, Fat Cake, Oranges, Mangoes, Bananas, Tomatoes, Onions, Pumpkin, Cabbage, Spinach, Other Greens, Sugarcane, Salt and other items identified; and
5. **Gifts and Food Aid**.

For the detail on the individual items that make up each sub total - see Annex 4.

Excluding 'Other food Sources' which is made up of about 85-90% 'food-aid' and 10-15% 'gifts', this picture is broadly consistent with the existing SVAC baselines and assessments. Own food crops and own animal products contribute a low proportion of total food access under normal conditions. Under drought or depressed market conditions their share is further reduced and can become very low. This is especially marked in the 'middle' and 'better-off' groups in 2002-2003. Purchased foods normally dominate total food access in the poorer groups but have become the most important source of food for the wealthier groups in this year.

In the absence of 'Other Food Sources', which are composed of Gifts and Food Aid, the graph indicates that there was a broad level of vulnerability to food insecurity and that 90% of the households would have failed to reach the 2100 Kcal threshold. This is clearly in line with the SVAC of March 2003 assessment which stated that **–** '90% of the population (in the Lowveld Cattle-Cotton & Maize FEZ) are likely to experience a mean deficit of 58% of their annual food needs'. It further noted that *'rather than the EMOP being accompanied by an agricultural rehabilitation/revival in the core affected areas, the 2002-2003 year has turned out to be one of agricultural collapse. It is with a sense of disbelief that the CSO has estimated a 14,000 Ha reduction in cultivated maize in the Lowveld and Plateau areas for 2003-2004'*. Clearly there should be an interaction between the availability of food aid and incentives to produce food crops.

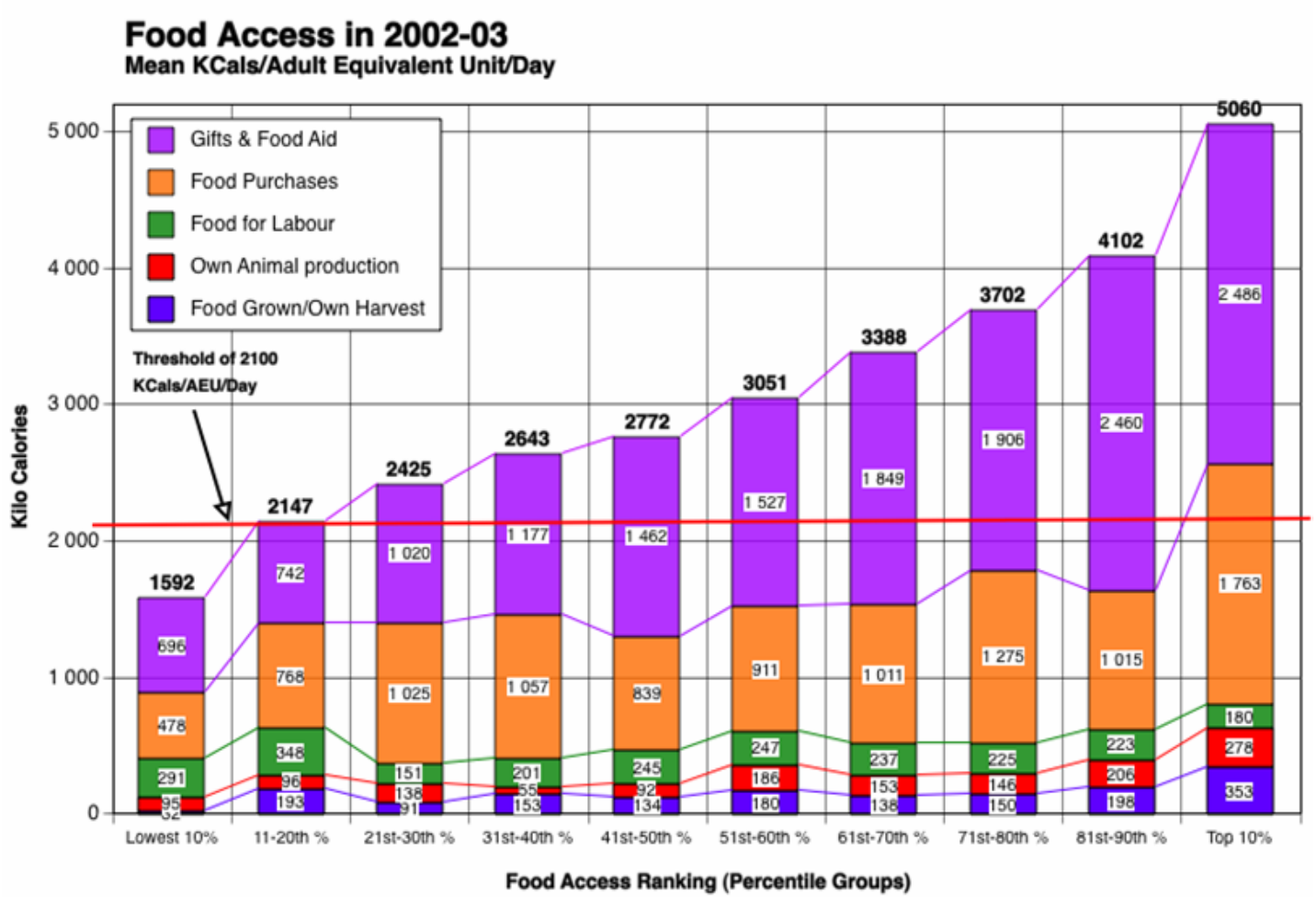
[10] Given the odd number of total records (137) the deciles are made up of either 13 or 14 household records.

This in-depth local assessment confirms the breadth of the vulnerability within the population over a three year period, beginning in the 2000 agriculture season. In 2002-2003, food-aid is likely to have been the biggest single source of food in this community. However, the pattern of distribution across the continuum of relative food access groups is very revealing. Exclusion occurs in targeting programmes, when people eligible to receive food aid do not get it. Inclusion is the opposite – individuals accessing food are not eligible to receive it.

Notwithstanding the activities of the EMOP and the receipt of food aid the bottom 10% were estimated to be receiving less than 2100 Kcals/AEU/Day. If this is representative of a wider situation in the two Lowveld FEZs, then as many as 14000-16,000 vulnerable people could be failing to meet minimum dietary intake. At the other end of the spectrum, the top 10% are getting more than two times their basic minimum intake and are receiving three times the food aid/AEU than the bottom 10%. This is neither effective nor efficient use of resources.

This level and pattern of distribution of food aid highlights the existence of weaknesses and limitations in the existing targeting and monitoring procedures. There appears to have been both over supply and a failure to distribute food aid according to need. If this spot-check example is representative of the national situation then there could be much scope for both reducing the total amount of food aid and for improvements in targeting. While no system is perfect, humanitarian practitioners should be aiming to reduce the amount of exclusion and inclusion error in food aid distributions.

Figure 2.


Food Access in 2002-03
Mean KCals/Adult Equivalent Unit/Day
Gifts & Food Aid
Food Purchases
Food for Labour
Own Animal production
Food Grown/Own Harvest
Threshold of 2100
KCals/AEU/Day
Kilo Calories
5 000
4 000
3 000
2 000
1 000
0
1592
2147
2425
2643
2772
3051
3388
3702
4102
5060
696
478
291
95
32
742
768
348
96
193
1 020
1 025
151
138
91
1 177
1 057
201
55
153
1 462
839
245
92
134
1 527
911
247
186
180
1 849
1 011
237
153
138
1 906
1 275
225
146
150
2 460
1 015
223
206
198
2 486
1 763
180
278
353
Lowest 10%
11-20th %
21st-30th %
31st-40th %
41st-50th %
51st-60th %
61st-70th %
71st-80th %
81st-90th %
Top 10%
Food Access Ranking (Percentile Groups)

3.2 Cash expenditure and estimate of overall income level

Figure 3 presents the main findings on the pattern of expenditure in terms of Emalangeni/AEU/Year plus the monetary valuation of all in-kind food access[11] presented in Figure 2. This total is a rough attempt to define a per AEU income. The mean values of the totals for each decile group are presented in a stacked-bar chart. The grouped data remains ranked from lowest to highest Kcals/AEU/Day.

The mean values of the totals for each decile group are presented in a stacked-bar chart. The grouped data remains ranked from lowest to highest Kcals/AEU/Day. The sub-totals indicate a breakdown in terms of five sub categories:

1. **Food Purchases** - made up of Green Maize, Maize Meal/Flour, Maize Milling costs, Soup Powder, Beans, Rice, Wheat Flour, Irish Potatoes, Sweet Potatoes, Ground Nuts, Fresh Fish, Dried Fish, Meat, Eggs, Milk, Sugar, Oil, Bread, Fat Cake, Bananas, Avocados, Tomatoes, Onions, Pumpkins, Cabbage, Sukuma, Greens, Sugar Cane, Beer, Soda, Salt, Tea and other items.
2. **Household Items** - made up of Kerosene/Fuel/Gas, Candles, Firewood, Matches, Soaps bathing, Soaps Laundry/Household, Lotions, Utensils, Sheets/Blankets, Clothes, Perfume and other identified items.
3. **Social Services** - made up of Medical Services (Formal), Medicines (Formal), Medical (Traditional), Medicine (Traditional), Parent Teachers Association Funds, Primary School Fees, Secondary School Fees, Uniforms, Books, Taxes to Government, Market dues/Credit funds, Rents and any other social service expenditures.
4. **Inputs/Production Costs** - made up of Employee wages, Casual Labour Wages, Fertilizers e.g. LAN, Seeds (maize/beans) Seeds (cotton), Pesticides, Insecticides (cotton) Animal Manure, Vet Drugs, Livestock Fodder, Tools, Oxen Hire, Tractor Hire and other identified inputs.
5. **Other Expenditure** - made up of Donations/Gifts, Transport costs, Meals out, Funeral, Livestock purchases
6. **Total In-Kind Consumption** - is the Emalangeni value of food grown/harvest, animal products from household, food for labour and gifts plus food aid.

The overall total for each group can be compared with a ‘poverty’ threshold figure of 1.00 US $/Day. While the official figure for the population below the poverty datum line is 66%, these local figures suggest that it could be as high as 90% in some rural areas.

Some words of caution in interpretation are needed here. The two figures not directly comparable having been derived using different methods and refer to different units (the Swazi Nation and the Mamisa rural community). This 'extreme' figure of 90% should be interpreted as "probably worse in rural areas". It could also be a consequence of: (i) the acute conditions pertaining at that location and at that time; and (ii) measurement error.

Concerning the acute conditions, it must be remembered that this survey result is a picture of a vulnerable community during a period of acute stress. Concerning the issue of measurement error, the two-hour long interview approach used in this study will tend measure less expenditure than other more resource intensive approaches such as a standard CSO Income and Expenditure Survey. The latter involves several rounds of interviews covering a much wider range of expenditure categories and

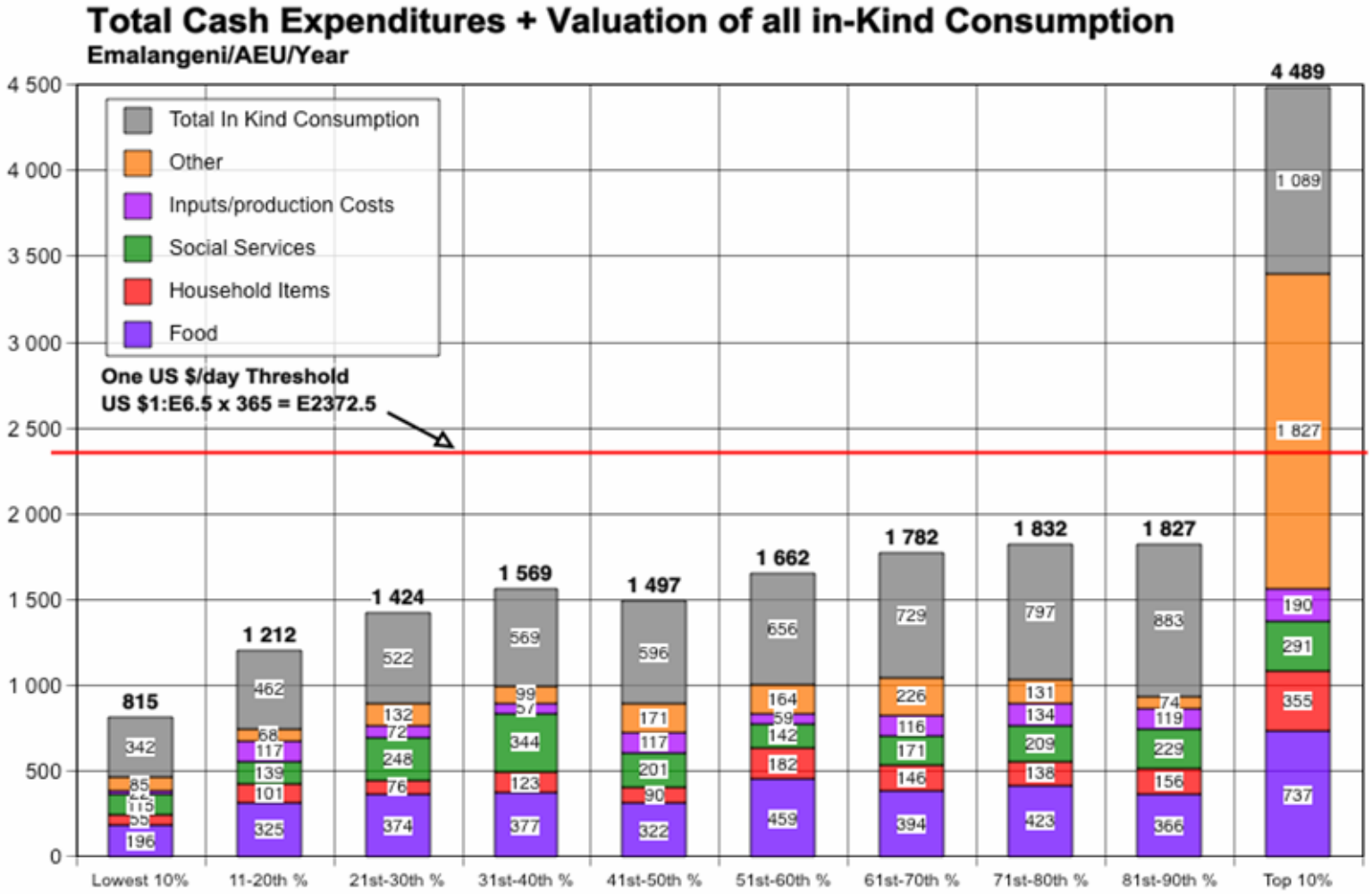
[11] Total Kcals were converted to Emalangeni using the ratio of 1 Kg Maize (in Kcals): 1 Kg Maize (in Emalangeni).

includes evidence gained from the completion of a month-long diary of daily expenditures by the household. This tendency to under-enumerate income in a short one-shot interview is to be expected. It is methodologically derived and ideally consistent across all the households surveyed. Notwithstanding the possibilities for this type of error and the above mentioned points, the evidence documents an overwhelming level of poverty.

Much of the vulnerability of livelihoods comes from these observed levels of chronic poverty. This is an underlying structural problem that is only peripherally addressed through emergency interventions. This part of the survey evidence supports the Kcal counting exercise on food access presented in Figure 2 above. It confirms a generally high level of poverty and vulnerability. Within these poverty levels of expenditure, the mean values nonetheless increase across the deciles, confirming the existence of a similar (but more extreme) pattern of inequality than evident in Figure 2. Concerning the food access situation, the top 10% has 3.1 times the Kcals/AEU/day than the bottom 10%, but has 5.5 times the Emalangeni expenditure/AEU/Year. In terms of consistency and quality of information, there is a good and close correlation between the proportions of the two separate measures of 'food access purchased' (as presented in Figure 2) and the cash expenditure on Food Purchases (as presented in Figure 3).

This evidence can be analysed to provide indicator poverty - that is, a comparison of the proportion of total income/expenditure allocated to food across the decile groups. Thus, in the case of the bottom 10%, the proportion is 66%, while in the case of the Top 10%, the proportion is 41%. This is a consistent and expected result - the highest proportion occurs in the lowest Kcals/AEU/Day group.

Figure 3.


Total Cash Expenditures + Valuation of all in-Kind Consumption
Emalangeni/AEU/Year
Total In Kind Consumption
Other
Inputs/production Costs
Social Services
Household Items
Food
One US $/day Threshold
US $1:E6.5 x 365 = E2372.5
4 500
4 000
3 500
3 000
2 500
2 000
1 500
1 000
500
0
815
1 212
1 424
1 569
1 497
1 662
1 782
1 832
1 827
4 489
Lowest 10%
11-20th %
21st-30th %
31st-40th %
41st-50th %
51st-60th %
61st-70th %
71st-80th %
81st-90th %
Top 10%

3.3 Income Levels and sources

Figure 4 presents the main findings on the pattern of incomes in terms of Emalangeni/AEU/Year. The mean values of the totals for each decile group are presented in a stacked-bar chart. The grouped data remains, as for the previous two figures, ranked from lowest to highest Kcals/AEU/Day. The sub-totals indicate a breakdown in terms of five sub categories:

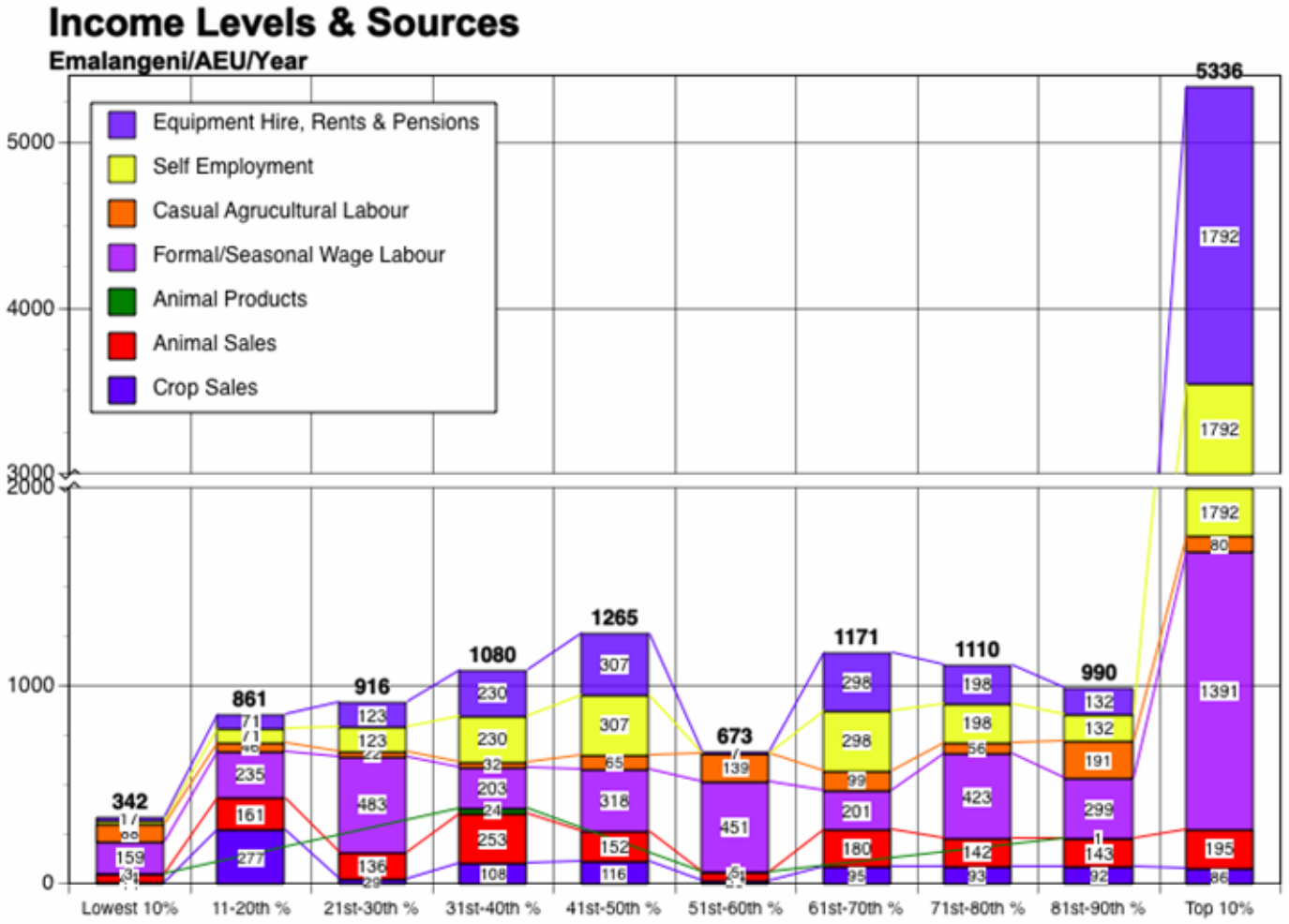
1 Crop sales - maize, beans, cotton and other crops.
2 Animal sales - Cow, Goat, Pig, donkeys and Chicken.
3 Animal product sales - milk, skins, Chicken eggs, goats and other products.
4 Formal/seasonal employment - as a specified.
5 Other casual labour - herding, harvesting, weeding of food and cash crops and other agricultural tasks.
6 Self Employment - construction, Carpenter, block-maker, Kiosk trading and other activities.
7 Other Income - rental of Oxen ploughs and tractors, interest on loans plus pensions.

The overall income trend is consistent with the findings on food access and expenditures, although there appears to be some inconsistencies and holes (possibly attributable to measurement errors). The first five deciles exhibit a clear trend of increasing levels of Emalangeni Income/AEU/Year. The sixth to the ninth deciles have lower than expected Income/AEU/Year. Incomes in the range of E1500-1800 would have been more consistent with expectations. The sixth decile is quite an anomaly registering no ‘self employment’ or ‘other’ incomes.

The low level of crop, animal sales and animal product sales are consistent with the baseline expectations for this Livelihood Zone. They mirror similarly low figures in the food access analysis and substantiate the collapsed state of the cotton industry. They are however, very low for a rural community where agricultural incomes might be expected to be higher. There are some important policy implications coming out of this picture. While agricultural development initiatives might be seen as the core of a ‘recovery programme’ to meet the current food gap, the required increase in productivity of three-to-ten times seems unlikely[12]. Improved productivity will therefore only be able to play a modest role in reducing the overall gap. The promotion of non-farm activities is therefore essential. Expanded cash incomes are more likely secure a larger part of total food access through purchases.

[12] It should be recognised that there can be some important gains in employment and trade through expansion of casual labour opportunities in agriculture.

Figure 4


Income Levels & Sources
Emalangeni/AEU/Year
Equipment Hire, Rents & Pensions
Self Employment
Casual Agricultural Labour
Formal/Seasonal Wage Labour
Animal Products
Animal Sales
Crop Sales
5000
4000
3000
2000
1000
0
342
861
916
1080
1265
673
1171
1110
990
5336
Lowest 10%
11-20th %
21st-30th %
31st-40th %
41st-50th %
51st-60th %
61st-70th %
71st-80th %
81st-90th %
Top 10%

As a proportion of the total incomes, animal sales in the second and fourth deciles are high – indicating the possibility that these 'poorer' groups are selling off livestock assets. This erosion of the livestock assets of the more vulnerable groups could be targeted under safety net or livestock rehabilitation programmes.

Formal/Seasonal labour is an important source of income for all groups. Agricultural casual labour is present but is much less important. These two indicate that there is some opportunity for self-targeting types of Food-For-Work or Cash-For-Work as alternatives to free food handouts. Expansion of agricultural and non-agricultural employment opportunities would considerably impact on income levels. 'Self-employment' and 'other' incomes make significant contributions to total income. It seems critical to explore the opportunities to expand and strengthen these latter two income-generating activities.

'Self-employment' and 'other' incomes make significant contributions to total income. It seems critical to explore the opportunities to expand and strengthen these income-generating activities.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evidence and discussion above presents a picture of a 'poor' and 'depressed' rural economy, which is, in the absence of food aid, characterised by broad levels of food deficits, food insecurity and poverty. The expectation for an agricultural recovery needs to be realistic. Agriculture's contribution toward overall livelihoods and wellbeing is currently so low that even major leaps in productivity will contribute small changes to overall income levels. The promotion of agricultural production and recovery programmes should therefore not be the only component of a livelihood recovery programme.

Resulting from this IHA analysis there are strong indications that alternative interventions and responses are required, these include the following:

4.1 Re-evaluating the role of Food Aid and traditional Humanitarian Responses

The evidence of poorly targeted food aid, poor monitoring and excess supply of the food highlights the need to break out of the current mould of 'emergency responses'. Improvements in effectiveness and efficiency of a reduced food-aid programme could shift resources into recovery and development programmes. However, **such a shift should not ignore the humanitarian, social welfare and development needs of the most vulnerable areas, groups and individuals** – especially those who may have been inadvertently excluded in the recent humanitarian initiatives.

There is scope to reorganise and reprioritise resources from food aid to recovery and development activities. In advance of any further food aid transfers, needs assessments should determine which population subgroups is food insecure and determine which intervention is most appropriate, recognising that food aid is not always the best intervention.

Simultaneously, there should be an enhanced programme of support for the most vulnerable – the bottom 10% elderly, orphans, HIV/AIDS affected and care givers etc. – so that coverage is enhanced and exclusion is minimised. In each locally specific context, this could include the revisiting of the eligibility criteria and the establishment of a better consensus between the community and external agencies.

4.2 Rural Market Infrastructure and Market Based Interventions

Setting aside the recent phases of food aid deliveries, food purchases remain the most important part (30-48%) of total food access in this livelihood zone. The continued functioning and improvement of the food marketing infrastructure and services should be targeted for support and development. This important arena of 'exchange entitlements' (Labour/earnings-to-Cash and Cash-to-Food) has been negatively impacted by food price inflation. There are also **clear signs of some negative interaction of food aid on producer prices, labour incentives and local and regional labour and food markets.** Market factors play a large role in determining food security. These issues need to be investigated and managed.

Where possible and appropriate, food aid budgets should be diverted to supporting market-based interventions and cash transfers. The best targeting systems should employ several critical elements, including: self-targeting under various food- or cash-for-work schemes, plus administratively targeted 'free' food or cash injections for those who are unable or cannot work. **In each context, the relative appropriateness of food versus cash-based interventions needs to be carefully assessed.** Support to public works and infrastructure rehabilitation is more successful and relevant when they are identified and planned through participatory approaches. They must be based on community needs and cannot serve local elite interests.

Support should be given to strengthening wholesale and retail markets at the local level, in ways that help to resolve the current impasse in national maize marketing system **(The unsold surpluses in the Highveld and Wet Middleveld plus the negative impacts of food aid on maize trade in the Lowveld needs to be resolved).**

4.3 Income Generation/Cash Transfers

The collapse of the cotton industry has contributed to very low levels of cash income (income generated from crop sales and earnings by casual labour employed in the production cotton), poverty and vulnerability. Along with the rehabilitation of the cotton industry, some form of **cash injections into the economy could play a role in jump-starting the longer recovery of the Lowveld economy.**

Where appropriate, support to the activities of the 'self employed' and 'other' income generating activities should be given. Needs assessments should precede any interventions, but there is scope for loans, micro-credit schemes, information sharing and technical advice.

Where support is given to agricultural production, emphasis should be placed on those activities that are labour intensive. These should include the rehabilitation of the cotton industry, small-scale irrigation, rangelands, forestry/fire management schemes and other conservation works.

4.4 Strengthening Evidence-based Responses

More resources should be allocated to rapid and in-depth assessments to inform programming.

More emphasis should be placed on learning lessons and assessing the impacts of interventions.

Capture of the outstanding item-by-item evidence on food access, income and expenditure would allow for the estimation of locally specific 'obligatory' and 'discretionary' expenditures. This information can then be used in the construction of a minimum standard of living for each household. Estimates of disposable income – the balance of total cash income less that necessary to meet the minimum standard of living - could then be used to stratify the population to examine its detailed effects on patterns of food access and expenditures. Secondly, the completed data set would be a useful resource and serve as a tool for capacity building in household level livelihoods analysis for policy, programming and decision-making. Follow-up (revisits) to the households in the survey could generate information on the impact of a range of hazards including the effects of HIV/AIDS. Exploratory analyses at the level of individual households should be carried out to see what additional information is generated about the nature of vulnerability and poverty. The data set provides very strong information base to support project planning and programming at the community level.

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