



SADC FANR  
Vulnerability  
Assessment Committee

**SOUTHERN AFRICA DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY**

**Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources**

**VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE**

**The Current State of Livelihoods and  
Vulnerability in the Southern African  
Region**

**April 2003 – May 2004**

**Johannesburg**

**June 11<sup>th</sup> 2004**

# SADC FANR Regional Vulnerability Assessment Committee (RVAC)

- Established in 1999 by FANR
- Comprised of a multi-agency group of technical experts working to enhance food security and livelihood conditions within SADC region.
- Specifically, to :
  - Promote VAs in the region.
  - Harmonize VA methodology in the region.
  - Provide technical, institutional and financial support to National Vulnerability Committees.



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## **Members of the SADC-FANR VAC include ...**

- SADC-FANR
  - OCHA
  - WFP
- FEWS-NET
  - SC-UK
  - UNICEF
  - FAO

## **Associated agencies include ...**

- RIACSO
- UNAIDS
  - WHO
  - UNDP
  - USAID

## **With financial support from (Assessments)...**

- DFID

# National Vulnerability Assessment Committees (NVAC)

- Like the Regional VAC, National VACs are consortiums of government, NGO, UN agencies and other partners concerned with people's livelihoods and their vulnerability.
- National VACs receive technical, institutional, and financial support from the Regional SADC FANR VAC, based in Gaborone, Botswana
- National VACs led the Emergency Assessments in the six countries, 2002-03



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# Synopsis of VAC Process

Since 1999 to present	Developing longer term capacity building plans for VA in the SADC region
June 2002	Initiated a series of rolling assessments in six worst affected countries (EMOP)
August 2002	Focused on emergency food aid and updated CFSAM estimates and assumptions
December 2002	Incorporated more multi-sectoral issues, especially impacts of HIV/AIDS
May 2003	More livelihoods-based assessments, in line with longer term vision of the VACs
May 2004	Progress towards establishing National Vulnerability Monitoring Systems and Annual Assessments

# **Main Features of Livelihoods Based Vulnerability Approaches**

Broadening our understanding of populations facing food & Income Deficits: who are the affected, where they are, how they are affected and what can be done about it, by answering questions such as ...

- What is the net food & income deficit effect at household level, for different livelihood zones and wealth groups?
- What are the vulnerabilities of population groups in various livelihoods, such as small-scale farmers, farm workers and the urban poor in terms of access to food and cash?
- What coping strategies and capacities are available to people (food, income, and expenditure strategies)?
- How can agencies respond this year in a way that saves lives and supports livelihoods?

# **Regional Synthesis**

## **Summary of Households with Food/Income Deficits**

# Regional Synthesis :

## Common Findings

- Increasing poverty is partly due to poor macro economic performance, leading to the decrease and loss of incomes at the household level
- Very low levels of incomes has resulted in the inability of households to recover lost assets, thus reducing their capacity to mitigate against current and future shocks
- Additionally, increasing illness and death of household members (HIV/AIDS related) continues to have a significant negative impact on household incomes.

# Regional Synthesis :

## Common Findings

- Cereal production, acreage and yields have been in decline over the past decade,
- Increasing food (and especially maize) prices across the region
- Un-diversified livelihood and cropping patterns around maize production remains unsustainably high
- Poor Infrastructure: Access to markets
- Availability/affordability of basic services (health, education, water, etc) remains a major constraint for the majority of the rural poor.

# **Regional Synthesis**

## **HIV/AIDS Pandemic**

- On top of the economic difficulties already described, HIV and AIDS remains high priority:
- The virus has increased morbidity and mortality rates throughout the region, reducing the viability of already weakened livelihood strategies.
- Orphan numbers and chronically vulnerable households are growing at exponential rates
- Across the region health services are struggling with greater levels of morbidity, resulting in weakened and under-capacitated health system in many areas.

# Regional Synthesis

## Common Recommendations

### HIV and AIDs Pandemic

- Further economic studies are required on the impact of HIV and AIDs on livelihoods
- Government and civil society need to strengthen HIV and AIDs policies and programmes and ensure they are widely disbursed, fully understood and implemented in all sectors.
- General food distributions and supplementary feeding programmes must take into account of providing foods with high protein and micronutrient content

# Regional Synthesis

## Common Recommendations

### Improved Agriculture Production

- Improving and increasing agricultural production is intricately linked to the accessibility and affordability of agricultural inputs, especially for the rural poor.
- Diversification of crop production needs to be intensified to include short-season sorghum and millet varieties, sweet potatoes, cassava and legumes
- As part of a livelihoods rehabilitation initiative, there is a scope for the development of a livestock restocking programme across the region

# **Regional Synthesis**

## **Common Recommendations**

### **Economics and Poverty Issues**

- Reduction of vulnerability must be closely linked with poverty mitigation programmes.
- Creation of appropriate employment opportunities need to be central within all Government plans
- Targeted measures should be taken to address the availability/affordability of basic services (education, health, safe drinking water, etc) for the rural poor. Given the acute levels of vulnerability and chronic poverty, there is strong evidence for a centralized and integrated social and economic safety nets.
- Additionally, there is strong need to remain focused on comprehensive emergency preparedness programmes and disaster response strategies

# **Regional Synthesis :**

## **Conclusions**

- The re-current crisis's in southern Africa are largely an outcome of growing poverty, resulting in increasing vulnerability and failing livelihoods.
- The erosion of household assets, reduced crop production and opportunities for off farm employment, exacerbated by the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS across the region, has lowered household capacity to withstand natural/climatic and policy-related shocks