



SADC DRR Updates - An Introduction

This series of regular bulletins from the SADC DRR Coordination Unit (DRRU) intends to keep stakeholders [including decision makers, DRR practitioners, media] abreast of developments in the SADC region that are relevant to disaster risk management. These bulletins draw and summarise information from several sources including the National Disaster Management Offices in the Member States, the media, Water management authorities, Health Practitioners, Meteorologists, international cooperating partners and satellite remote sensing data. Contributions and comments can be sent to the SADC DRRU using the contacts given at the bottom of the page.

Highlights

- Below average rains received in the first two months of the rainfall season
- Delayed start of rains in some parts of the region
- High food insecurity levels persist in the region
- Cholera outbreak concerns in parts of the region

Rainfall Performance

Below average rainfall received in most parts of the region in the October-November 2013 period

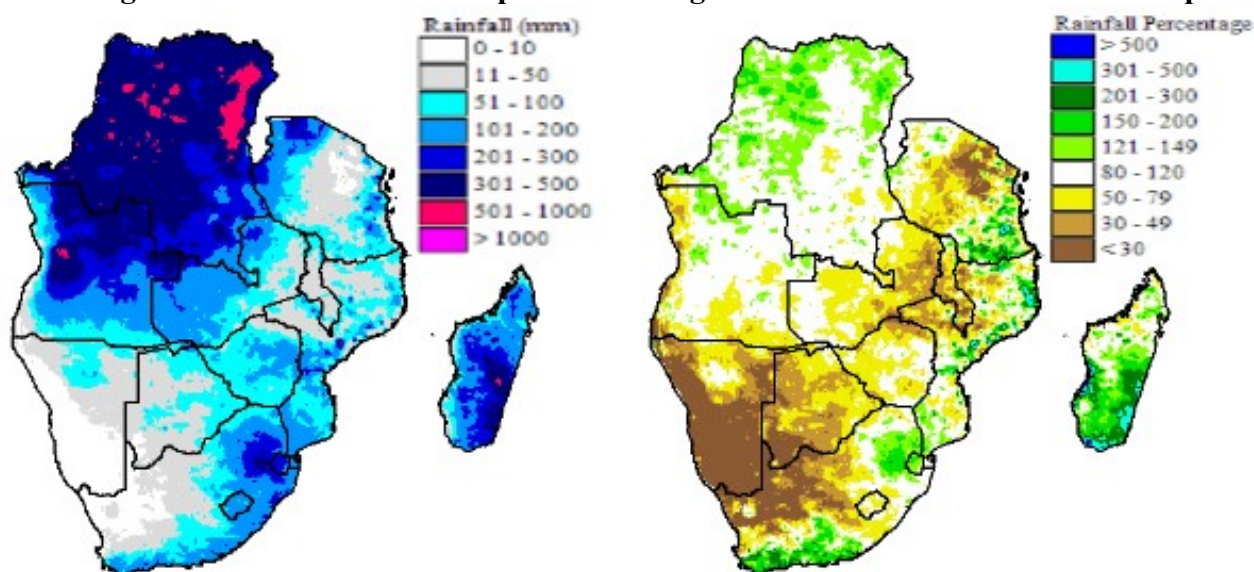


Figure 1 – Rainfall Performance Maps – left: rainfall totals for October and November; right: totals compared to average

Rainfall estimates suggest that below average rainfall amounts were received in the central and western parts of the region, including most of Botswana and Namibia, where the effects of drought from the previous season are still being felt. Areas with below average monthly rainfall include – Zambia, parts of Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, Malawi, western South Africa, southern Angola, central and northern Tanzania.

Start of rainfall season delayed in some parts of the region

Water balance models indicated that while some parts of the region have already received enough rains for sowing, there are some parts where these rains have not been enough for sowing and the start of the season has been delayed by up to one month. Areas

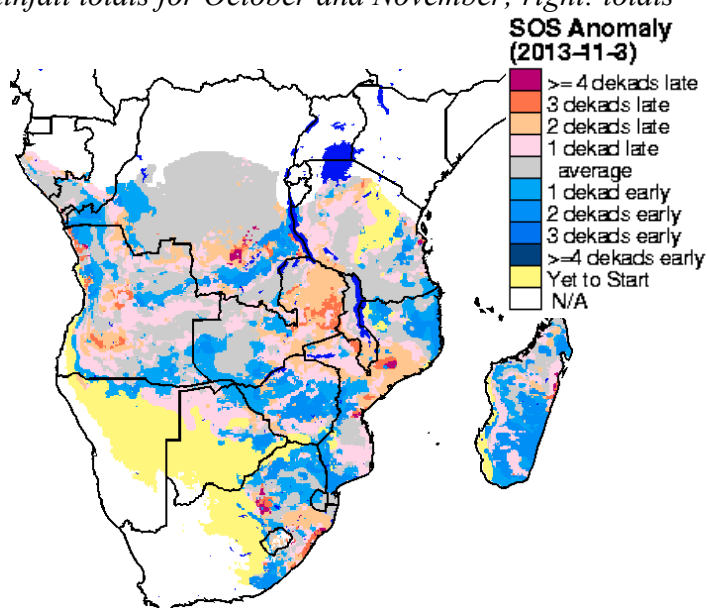


Figure 2 - Start of Season compared with average



where the start of season has been delayed include eastern Zambia – where it is late by one month, southern Malawi, where start is late by about 3 weeks.

Rainfall Forecast – December 2013 -February 2014

High likelihood of normal to above-normal rainfall conditions

Seasonal rainfall forecast updates from the SADC Climate Services Centre (CSC) indicate that for the period of December 2013-February 2014, there is a high likelihood of normal to above-normal rainfall conditions over the bulk of SADC region including the Island States. Normal to below-normal rainfall conditions are likely to be experienced in the north-easternmost of continental SADC as well as extreme south-west coastal parts of the region.

Vegetation Performance

Poor vegetation conditions observed in many parts of the region

Due to the poor rainfall performance experienced recently, most parts of the region are currently experiencing below average vegetation conditions (Figure 3). Figure 3 (right) shows vegetation condition compared to average, with brown colour indicated below average and green indicating above average vegetation performance. Pastures in the affected areas are likely to be in poor condition, particularly in areas where low rainfall was received during the last 2 seasons. Poor rains have affected several parts of the region in the last two seasons, especially those in the southern half of the region.

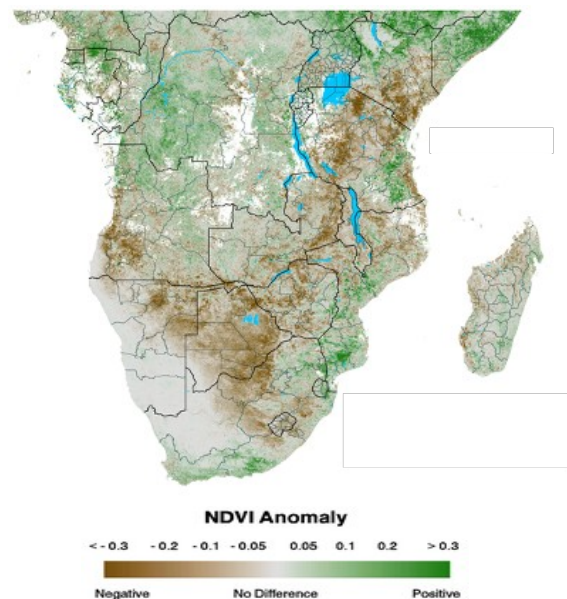


Figure 3 – [Right] Vegetation conditions compared with average; Source: USGS/EROS

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity increased in most countries of the region in 2013

Key findings from national vulnerability assessments for the year 2013 indicate that the number of food insecure populations in the region has increased in all countries except Lesotho, Malawi and Mozambique. The regional food insecure population is up 19% compared to 2012 for the 10 countries that have comparable data. The findings also indicate that some affected areas have remained the same for a long period indicating chronic vulnerability and high levels of poverty. Compared to the year 2012, the biggest increases in the number of food insecure populations were observed in Namibia (1100 %, 11 fold), Zambia (233%) and Swaziland (151%). 49% of the total rural population in Botswana was found to be food insecure. Child malnutrition levels, especially stunting, are high to very high in the region. Stunting is a sign of chronic food nutrition insecurity. This indicates that children are more vulnerable to shocks such as drought, floods, food price increases that some countries are facing in the region. This information is provided by the SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessments Committee (RVAC). Related to this, media outlets have reported extreme hunger in Chivi, a district in Zimbabwe's south-eastern Masvingo Province, where nearly 40,000 villagers urgently require food assistance if we are to avoid starvation. Food being distributed under the Government's grain loan scheme is insufficient and villagers do not have resources to buy maize. The World Food Programme (WFP) intends to start food relief operations in the district soon.

Water

Low River Flows in all river basins in Mozambique, below alert levels

Reports received from Mozambique indicate that all river basins of the country are experiencing low water flows, and remain below alert levels.



Low dam water levels for Botswana's capital, Gaborone

Reports from Water authorities in Botswana indicate critically low water levels for Gaborone's main supply dam, which was measured at 15.6% at the end of October 2013. Poor November rainfall performance in the dam's catchment area, coupled with high temperatures will likely worsen the water supply situation.

Health

Cholera outbreak claiming lives in southern Angola

Health authorities have been battling a cholera outbreak that has claimed more than 100 lives since the beginning of the year. A drought that started at the end of 2011 has led to poor supply of safe water in a number of provinces in the south of the country, with Cunene being the most affected. Some media reports have indicated that the start of the rains for the 2013/2014 season has triggered a sharp increase in number of cases and deaths in November.

Travellers to the affected areas can reduce the risk of exposure to infection by strictly observing all food and water precautions.

Cholera outbreak threat for Zimbabwe

A report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) indicates that conditions are ripe for a cholera outbreak in Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, due to a crisis in the water and sanitation system that has deprived many residents access to potable water and sanitation services. Interviews conducted by HRW in high-density suburbs of Harare suggested that the lack of household supply of treated has led to dependence on boreholes which have been shown to be contaminated. The interviews uncovered a disturbing picture of broken pipes, contaminated wells and untreated sewages, conditions reminiscent of the year 2008, when a cholera outbreak killed more than 4000 people in the country.

The report suggests that the provision of information on water quality was one of the areas where authorities could help communities at risk to deal with the risks of water-borne diseases.

Full press release can be accessed at: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/11/19/zimbabwe-water-and-sanitation-crisis>.

