

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

SOUTHERN AFRICA: FOOD INSECURITY

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The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

This Information Bulletin (no. 1/2005) is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

As experienced in 2002-2003, the food security situation across much of southern Africa looks bleak. While formal harvest assessments are pending in much of the region, the early indications are generally poor and several countries have already declared a state of emergency.

Learning from their experience over the last three years, the National Red Cross Societies in southern Africa are already taking a more integrated approach to their programming. Focusing more on existing HIV and AIDS programmes, with their effective targeting, a comprehensive food security approach can provide an effective safety net for some of the most vulnerable and food-insecure people in the region.

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The Situation

Erratic rainfall with uneven distribution is expected to lead to poor harvests in parts of Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Other parts of the region may also be affected. The food security situation will also be worsened by a number of other factors, including economic decline, chronic and extreme poverty, and most significantly the impact of the growing HIV and AIDS pandemic. HIV and AIDS are intimately related to food insecurity and poverty in a cyclical relationship. HIV and AIDS impact negatively on agricultural productivity and increases dependency ratios, resulting in increased food insecurity. Reduced access to and utilization of food in turn leads to increased poverty. People may adopt coping strategies which increase their exposure to HIV and AIDS; a lack of food decreases resistance and increases the impact of opportunistic infections for those already living with HIV - the circle goes on.

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The World Food Summit (1996) defined food security as a condition in which all people (individual, household, national, regional and global levels) at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food over a given period to meet dietary needs and preferences for an active and healthy life. The UN has identified a “triple threat” affecting southern Africa: the combination of food insecurity, HIV and AIDS, and reduced capacity. The Red Cross strategy to meet this threat is set out in the document “Southern Africa: Not Business As Usual” (http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual05/logframes/Africa/05AA018SA.pdf). The southern Africa situation requires an integrated response, beyond simple food distribution, to ensure that food security is maintained.

Given that most of the areas hard hit by the dry spells were similarly affected by poor crop conditions last year, substantial food production shortfalls are expected in the region. A summary of reported food security status in some countries is given below:-

Table 1: Summary of food security status in southern Africa region

Angola	Reasonable yields are expected in only 60% of the production areas. Excess rain in some parts of the country could result in significant yield reductions.
Botswana	Only 3% of arable land was cultivated this season: the southern regions are badly affected by a prolonged dry spell.
Lesotho	About 70% of the cropping area is unplanted due to late rains. The southern part of the country is worst affected.
Malawi	Southern and central regions affected by erratic rainfall. 40-60% of the population are deemed likely to be in need of food aid. Government action already planned.
Mozambique	Southern and central regions affected by erratic rainfall.
Swaziland	Fourth consecutive year of drought, eastern and southern provinces most affected. At least 70% of the maize crop was lost to heavy storms during February.
Zambia	Poor and erratic rains in five of the nine provinces led to a government drought alert warning. VAC assessment reports 90% crop failure in some areas. Potential cereal shortfall of 300,000 MT.
Zimbabwe	Shortage of tillage and fertilizer will impact on harvest, as will poor and erratic rainfall across much of the country. FEWSNET reports that Matabeleland, Manicaland and Masvingo will need relief assistance.

Sources: SADC FEWSNET, VAC, IRIN, National Red Cross Societies of southern Africa¹

The Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Red Cross has been implementing integrated food security programming initiatives in the southern African region, building on the experiences of the regional drought and food shortages in 2002-2003. The lessons learned from this period include the value of programme integration, the need for effective partnerships and coordination to broaden the safety net, and the benefits of taking a longer-term, developmental approach within the emergency context. The value of using existing programmes targeting people affected by HIV and AIDS such as home-based care (HBC) programmes and support to orphans and children made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS (OVC) has been proven, although care has to be taken that the scale of food interventions does not overwhelm such programming.

National Red Cross Societies are currently providing food packages to OVC and HBC clients in several countries as part of an integrated food security package that also includes water and sanitation components, support to agricultural production, and other livelihoods interventions. Across the region, 43,000 chronically-ill people are directly benefiting from home-based care. A further 69,000 vulnerable children receive care and support. When the households of these beneficiaries are included, there is potential to reach almost 400,000 people with a food-based safety net, should the situation require it.

National Red Cross Societies are also engaged in general distributions in some countries as a partner with WFP. Some examples of current activities are given below:

¹ SADC FEWSNET – Southern Africa Development Community famine early warning system network;
VAC – vulnerability assessment committee; IRIN – UN-OCHA integrated regional information network

Table 2: Current Red Cross activities in southern Africa

Lesotho	HBC and OVC clients in four HBC projects are currently getting food baskets with support from ECHO /German Red Cross Society and WFP. Lesotho Red Cross Society also works on other WFP distributions.
Malawi	Malawi Red Cross Society is a WFP implementing partner and undertakes general distributions. Malawi Red Cross society also runs 12 HBC projects with small scale self help nutritional projects.
Mozambique	Mozambique Red Cross Society has 20 HBC projects, and they have 800 nutritional gardens. Mozambique Red Cross Society works with WFP in food for work projects in Maputo.
Swaziland	Baphalali Swaziland Red Cross Society has three HBC projects, although not in the most food insecure areas. A pilot food security initiative has been in place for three year. Food support has also been provided through ECHO, Finnish and Germany Red Cross Societies.
Zambia	Zambia Red Cross Society has a well developed HBC programme in seven locations, and an operational partnership with WFP for work with refugees. Opportunities exist to include more food security elements within the HBC projects.
Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe Red Cross Society has 27 HBC projects across the country. All HBC households and OVC benefit from food rations and agricultural inputs; many also from water and sanitation and other livelihoods support. A partnership around HBC with WFP is being planned.

Coordination

As part of the coordinated response to the food crisis in the region, the national societies are working with the governments of the respective countries, WFP and other UN bodies, the SADC FEWSNET and partner national societies (PNS).

In order to provide a comprehensive and effective safety net for HBC clients and OVC, a number of programme implementation strategies have been adopted. Some programme elements are delivered directly by the Red Cross; the HBC and OVC programmes themselves and much of the water and sanitation programming falls into this category. Some elements are delivered in partnership with UN agencies or NGOs. This has included food distribution with WFP, provision of agricultural inputs with FAO and NGOs, OVC support with UNICEF. Partnerships also exist with governments across a number of programme sectors. Finally, Red Cross can also advocate on behalf of vulnerable people to ensure their access to projects run by other agencies – agricultural water supply and prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) being two good examples.

Federation and WFP have recently signed a joint letter identifying areas for collaboration. One such area focuses on people affected by the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Efforts are already underway to build on this global agreement and on national partnerships to develop a regional approach, in support of the regional HIV and AIDS programme.

As the early indications that southern Africa is again facing a period of reduced food security, the Red Cross movement is committed to including food provision to people living with HIV and AIDS (PLHIV) and to OVC, as part of a more comprehensive and longer-term food security strategy.

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For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's 2005 Annual Appeals; see table below.

National Society	Federation website hyperlink to 2005 Annual Appeal
Angola Red Cross	http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual05/05AA008.pdf
Botswana Red Cross Society	http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual05/05AA009.pdf
Lesotho Red Cross Society	http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual05/05AA010.pdf
Malawi Red Cross Society	http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual05/05AA011.pdf
Mozambique Red Cross Society	http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual05/05AA012.pdf
Namibia Red Cross	http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual05/05AA013.pdf
South African Red Cross Society	http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual05/05AA014.pdf
Baphalali Swaziland Red Cross Society	http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual05/05AA015.pdf
Zambia Red Cross Society	http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual05/05AA016.pdf
Zimbabwe Red Cross Society	http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual05/05AA017.pdf
Southern Africa regional programmes	http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual05/05AA018.pdf

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