

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

16 January 2004

FOCUS ON LESOTHO, NAMIBIA, SWAZILAND, ZAMBIA AND ZIMBABWE

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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 180 countries. For more information: www.ifrc.org

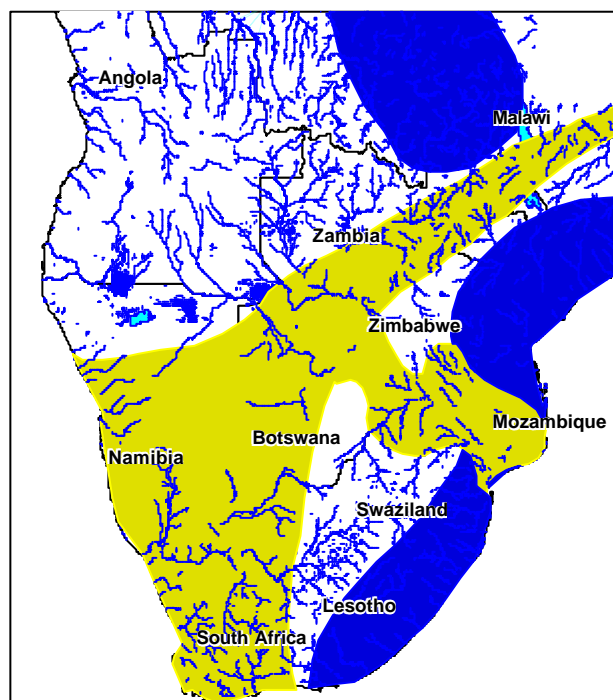
In Brief

This document is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time. Hunger continues to threaten 6.5 million people in Southern Africa; another year of erratic rainfalls threatens to worsen the situation. Whilst the Red Cross has integrated food security into ongoing longer-term programmes, it is closely monitoring developments in the region and may seek further support.

The Situation

The Red Cross's humanitarian efforts during 2002/3, which through generous donor funding had significantly reduced the impact of massive food shortages, and prevented further deterioration of vulnerable communities through integrating the food component into the health programmes.

In June 2003, UN agencies estimated that approximately 6.5 million people living in rural areas would require food assistance until the next harvest in April 2004, based on the results from the 2002-2003 Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)/ World Food Programme (WFP) Crop Supply assessments. Despite the below average early season rainfall, healthy harvest yields are still possible according to Famine Early Warning System Network (FEW). Precipitation forecast suggest near-normal rainfall in eastern Africa, and below-normal rainfall in western southern Africa. Statistical interpretation suggests that near-normal end of season maize crop water conditions are likely. The prospects for the season will be considerably clearer by end of January 2004.



■ Drought-risk area

■ Heavy rainfall risk area

Southern Africa: Food insecurity; Information Bulletin no. 1/2004
Focus on Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe

However, pockets of food security problems due to crop failure and other causes can already be confirmed for some areas of the region in Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Southern Africa was plunged into a humanitarian crisis in 2002, when food shortages affected 14 million people in six countries: Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Humanitarian agencies said the shortages were brought on by adverse weather conditions and governance failures, worsened by the prevalence of HIV/AIDS.

Lesotho

Severe drought continues in most parts of the country and after the winter wheat harvest vegetables crops are failing on a wide scale. The maize crops have been heavily damaged by pest, further exacerbating the drought situation. Veterinary staff reported that the condition of cattle is also poor due to hunger. Lesotho expects to produce no more than 20 percent of its food requirement in the next harvest. The WFP has appealed for food assistance for 322,000 people in Lesotho, although it is currently experiencing pipeline and funding constraints.

Namibia

The Namibian government recently issued an appeal for food assistance to 643,000 people in northern part of the country. A recent WFP, UNICEF and WHO assessment mission indicated that there is serious food insecurity among household in the northern regions due to drought, floods, poor health and environmental degradation. Accessibility to food has also proved to be the main problem fuelling the food insecurity. The assessment also indicated that malnutrition cases are strongly linked to HIV/AIDS, and there is heightened concern about the growing number of orphans and other vulnerable children (OVC).

Swaziland

Another crop failure is expected in the lowveld of Swaziland. WFP is feeding an estimated 245,000 people, or about a quarter of the population in Swaziland. IRIN states:

“The eastern lowveld has suffered diminishing rainfall for a decade, and has not recovered from a prolonged drought in 1992-94 that rendered much of the eastern Lubombo region uninhabitable. Despite some government studies that suggest that Lubombo area is not suitable for subsistence farming, several hundred thousands Swazis continue to live there on communal Swazi Nation Land under chiefs appointed by king Mswati.”

Although the portion of the middleveld and lowveld are suffering from similar adverse climatic conditions, the affected population in the middleveld have not qualified for food assistance from the humanitarian community.

Zambia

Food insecurity persists in the Southern and Western provinces of Zambia despite the overall good maize harvest. Cereal harvests in parts of the Southern and Western province have failed almost completely. A high percentage of approximately 770,000 population already burdened by the effects of HIV/AIDS and other poverty related factors will solely depend on food aid for survival.

Zimbabwe

The food security situation continues to deteriorate. The planting season is almost over but lack of inputs coupled with high prices of fuel has dampened the hope for a good harvest. Relatively modest shocks associated with below-normal rainfall could produce troubling outcomes and projections for the coming year are not great due to the limited amount of seeds in the ground. Recent FEW NET reports indicated that between 4.36 and 5.02 million people currently need food aid, while severe constraints on seeds and other inputs will limit agricultural production. The current food situation in Zimbabwe has deteriorated as the country continues to depend on last year's harvest until May 2004.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Zimbabwe ([Zimbabwe Red Cross Society](#))

In Zimbabwe, the Federation supports 68,750 HIV/AIDS affected and infected beneficiaries with food assistance in the five provinces – Manicaland, Mashonaland West, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland Central and Midlands. The Matebeleland North, Matebeleland South and Masvingo province are supported by the British and the Danish Red Cross through ECHO funding.

In 2004, the Federation is appealing for CHF 3,862,000 for food to support the vulnerable until the harvest in May. If the harvest is beyond satisfactory, the Federation will be concentrating on a nutritional supplement for persons living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). If the harvest is poor, the food programme will be expanded.

Zambia ([Zambia Red Cross Society](#))

In Zambia, the Netherlands Red Cross supported by ECHO is providing targeted food assistance to 17,000 beneficiaries to PLWHA until May 2004. In 2004, The Federation has appealed for CHF 175,000 for food ration to support PLWHA in the Southern and Western provinces of Zambia. The Federation is closely monitoring the food situation and if it worsens they may decide to launch an appeal.

Swaziland ([Baphalali Swaziland Red Cross](#))

The Swaziland government had in the past asked the Red Cross to intervene in the middleveld. Consequently the Baphalali Swaziland Red Cross supported by the Finnish Red Cross and ECHO are distributing food rations to 10,000 beneficiaries in the middleveld until May 2004. In addition the Baphalali Swaziland Red Cross has been distributing food with the assistance of the government to 50,000 beneficiaries. In 2004 the Federation has appealed for food parcels to enhance nutrition diet for PLWHA.

Namibia ([Namibia Red Cross](#))

The Federation Annual Appeal 2004 for Namibia highlights the issue of inaccessibility to food in the country and is asking for CHF 4.5 million for the implementation of the integrated HIV/AIDS food security programme.

Lesotho ([Lesotho Red Cross Society](#))

In 2004, the Federation is planning to support food packs distribution to PLWHA and OVC in Lesotho.

For a full description of the National Society profile, click on the name above, or see www.ifrc.org

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All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeals:

- [Lesotho: Annual Appeal no. 01.13/2004](#)
- [Namibia: Annual Appeal no. 01.16/2004](#)
- [Swaziland: Annual Appeal no. 01.18/2004](#)
- [Zambia: Annual Appeal no. 01.19/2004](#)
- [Zimbabwe: Annual Appeal no. 01.20/2004](#)