

**Development of Food Security and  
Vulnerability Information Systems  
In Southern Africa:**

**The Experience of Save the Children UK**

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## GLOSSARY

CAP	Consolidated Appeal Process
CFSAM	Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission
CHS	Community and Household Surveillance
C-SAFE	Consortium for Southern Africa Food Security Emergency
DFID	Department For International Development
EMOP	Emergency Operation (WFP)
FANR	Food and Natural Resources Directorate (of SADC in Harare, Zimbabwe)
FANR-D	Food and Natural Resources Directorate (of SADC in Gaborone, Botswana)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FEG	Food Economy Group
FEWS	Famine Early Warning System
FEWS-NET	Famine Early Warning System Network
FSIT	Food Security Information Team
HEA	Household Economy Approach
HHFS&N	Household Food Security and Nutrition
HIS	Humanitarian Information System
LBVA	Livelihoods Based Vulnerability Assessment
NEWU	National Early Warning Unit
NVAC	National Vulnerability Assessment Committee
OCHA	Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
REWS	Regional Early Warning System
REWU	Regional Early Warning Unit
RIACSO	Regional Inter Agency Coordination and Support Office
RVAC	Regional Vulnerability Assessment Committee
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADCC	Southern African Development Coordination Conference
SC (UK)	Save the Children Fund (UK)
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VA	Vulnerability Assessment
WFP	World Food Programme

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of this paper is to provide lessons of experience for managers and technicians concerned with food security and vulnerability information systems, particularly systems which involve several countries within a region. The lessons are derived from an analysis of the development of food security and vulnerability monitoring in Southern Africa. This analysis is done from the perspective of Save the Children (UK), and it is accepted that other institutions may have other perspectives on the events presented. The paper is intended to contribute to a larger body of reference and guideline material that can be used by SC (UK) and other stakeholders to advocate for the development of appropriate food security and vulnerability information systems. This larger body of work will also draw on SC (UK)'s experiences elsewhere in Africa.

Critical learning points come from an exploration of the development of both institutions and methodologies in the Southern African context. The paper draws out key issues from different "stages" of development in these areas. The stages are:

1. Food security and vulnerability assessment in Southern Africa in the context of famine early warning: 1993 – 99.
2. The development of regional co-ordination mechanisms for vulnerability assessment: 1999 – 2002.
3. Food insecurity and vulnerability monitoring in a regional food crisis: The rolling assessments of 2002-03.
4. Beyond vulnerability to food insecurity: Vulnerability Assessment in the context of new meanings of vulnerability and links to poverty monitoring.

These stages offer a number of opportunities for learning which may be grouped as follows:

- Integrating understanding Vulnerability Analysis into regional early warning systems
  - Capitalising on opportunities for influence
  - Institutional and methodological considerations in a regional food crisis
  - Relationships within and between different information system stakeholders
  - Beyond vulnerability to food insecurity – other vulnerabilities and poverty
- 
- **Integrating Vulnerability Analysis into regional early warning systems:** The history of regional early warning in Southern Africa indicates that a self –sustaining (i.e. fully government financed) regional food security system is not an impossible dream. It is possible to achieve but it takes a great deal of time and considerable expense to set up, demanding significant technical support over several years. Further, once functioning, it will not be free of serious funding and capacity constraints. Vulnerability Assessment is a vital part of early warning. Integrating it into existing early warning systems may not be easy however, especially if those systems themselves are already under strain. In order to avoid confusion and duplication at country level and encourage consistency at regional level, there is need for strong interagency collaboration. This may be best achieved by formation of a regional technical hub, in which methodologies can be agreed and consistent messages can be passed to agency country offices and national governments. Indeed, the formation of a regional multi-agency body, including and chaired by regional technical institutions lends credibility to regional leadership and builds consensus amongst participating institutions.

There are various ways to conduct Vulnerability Assessment (VA). Like all approaches, the Household Economy Approach (HEA) developed by SC (UK) has its strengths and weaknesses. The main strengths of HEA are that it clearly uncovers the proximate and often also the underlying causes of vulnerability and presents strongly logical and practically quantified food security outcomes. It is, however, technically demanding to administer, particularly its analytical components. The choice of VA method will depend on the mixture of objectives and constraints which apply in a particular context. In the interest of improving

national assessment capability as well as securing institutional buy-in quickly, the balance of emphasis between detailed micro-level assessment work and more general macro (national level coverage) should be tipped towards the latter. Providers of VA information need to have an understanding of the politics of donor and government decision-making and tailor their information management strategies accordingly.

- **Capitalising on opportunities for influence:** The Southern African experience demonstrates the need to move quickly when opportunities arise for influencing decision-making, particularly at the start of a food crisis. One aspect of this is the ability to mobilise an assessment quickly: in 2001, results of a rapid HEA assessment in Malawi gave an entry point to SC (UK) to lobby at international level. Without the assessment there would have been no basis for lobbying. Timely interventions at high-level gatherings can have big pay-offs also. In mid 2002, a regional UN humanitarian conference was targeted as a key event by the Regional Vulnerability Assessment Committee (RVAC) – of which SC(UK) was a key member. By making a strong presentation at the conference, the RVAC was able to kick-start a VAC *system* which entailed coordinating and facilitating National level Vulnerability Assessment Committees (NVACs) in six countries. If this opportunity had been missed, the whole development of Vulnerability Assessment in Southern Africa would probably have been much slower. Those involved in development of information systems need to seize upon opportunities for partnerships with influential agencies, but to go in to this “with eyes open”. In Southern Africa, a partnership between WFP, the RVAC and DFID started because it appeared beneficial to all parties. There were ups and downs along the way but overall the strong links formed between the RVAC and these two influential stakeholders was of enormous benefit to the development of food security and vulnerability information systems at national and regional levels.
- **Institutional and methodological considerations in a regional food crisis:** Various lessons can be learned from the methodological and institutional developments during the Southern Africa Crisis of 2001-03. One lesson is that when there are opportunities for institutionalising methods and information systems these should be taken, with funding and technical support strategies tailored accordingly. In retrospect, SC(UK) should have put more effort into building capacity in and ownership of HEA and RiskMap methods Southern Africa in the 1990’s. This would have increased the likelihood of HEA methods being used from the outset of the Crisis, saving considerable sums of money and avoiding the need for rapid development of totally new instruments to assess food security. Secondly, compromise and collaboration are critical to the success of inter-agency emergency assessments. Collaboration sometimes means overriding individual agency objectives. The RVAC was able to agree on a methodology that borrowed from different agency approaches. Whilst not perfect by any means, it was the best that could be developed at the start of the assessment process. The methodology was implemented simultaneously across six countries and there was a direct translation of the results into decision making at the regional level (the revised EMOP) and to varying degrees at the national level. This was an impressive achievement, made possible only through a process of compromise and high degree of collaboration between the key technical agencies on the RVAC, SADC and DFID. In retrospect, however, too much emphasis was placed upon large assessment exercises relative to less intensive monitoring of key variables. This led to survey fatigue and delays in producing assessment reports.

During the emergency assessment period, new institutions and new interests came into the picture. The increased presence of humanitarian UN agencies led to a re-definition of the role of vulnerability assessment: away from a pure food security focus to a more holistic concept of human security. Whilst it is valid and correct that food vulnerability information systems should cover areas such as health and education insofar as they relate to vulnerability to food insecurity, there are some fundamental differences between food security and vulnerability information systems and humanitarian information systems. In an emergency situation, expansion of the existing food vulnerability information system to encompass non-food

security related vulnerabilities should be approached with caution, as there is a risk of overstretching the system. Increased pressure on food security and vulnerability information systems is more likely when the imperative for timely humanitarian information is not being met by other means. The UN system should ensure that OCHA is adequately resourced to set up adequate humanitarian information systems quickly.

- **Relationships between different information system stakeholders:** The VAC system in Southern Africa is built around multi-agency committees comprising government ministries, UN agencies and NGO, at regional and national levels. This has benefits which include encouragement of consensus, reduction of duplication and increased institutional buy-in. A key weakness is consensus driven pressure not to “rock the boat” and be critical of committee process or findings. This argues for robust mechanisms which ensure that constructive dissent is welcomed, so that dissenting committee members are not ostracised from future activities. In regional – national relationships, a balance has to be struck between regional uniformity and quality control on the one hand and relevance and ownership at national level on the other. This balance can be difficult to achieve, especially when relationships are more or less informal. It is important therefore to establish clear and mutually agreed responsibilities. In general, strong links between institutions providing vulnerability information and central decision making organs of government are to be encouraged. However, the possibility that these links could be used by governments to repress or distort findings (as occurred in Zimbabwe) reinforces the case for enshrining the right of individual agencies to produce “minority reports” outside of “official” channels using their own logos.
- **Beyond vulnerability to food insecurity – other vulnerabilities and poverty:** The scope of vulnerability assessment in Southern Africa has changed over the last three years in particular. From an initial consensus that the vulnerability in question was vulnerability to food insecurity, ideas have changed to encompass a broader concept of vulnerability which includes non-food sectors and a concern to link vulnerability assessment with poverty monitoring and instruments like Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). These changes pose methodological and institutional challenges and imply a changing role for VA in the region.

Over the past six months, the RVAC has spearheaded a stakeholder consultation process to develop consensus on the most appropriate way forward at national and regional level. From this, some answers to key questions are emerging. Tying vulnerability assessment institutions to national early warning systems would help achieve one important information objective of VA (to strengthen famine early warning analysis) and is in line with SADC’s thinking. It may, however, be difficult to forge strong links into monitoring of non-food vulnerabilities, poverty monitoring and development policy decision making from an early warning niche. Placing the NVAC in central government planning organs and or an institution that has top level executive power (e.g. the President’s office) would help achieve a stronger link with poverty analysis. A stronger poverty focus for the NVACs has potential implications for the location, chairmanship and membership of the RVAC. If poverty links are strengthened and NVACs are housed away from Ministries of Agriculture and Disaster Management Authorities, it may be difficult for the RVAC to provide future leadership whilst it is chaired by regional early warning staff within the Food and Natural Resources Directorate of SADC (formerly the separate Regional Early Warning Unit).

These issues have implications for methodologies. Relying on HEA as the only methodology would restrict the links between the NVACs and poverty and social sector monitoring. Additional tools are likely to be useful at times for specific purposes. Whilst a “HEA only” route could be less complicated to implement and manage than a “hybrid” (HEA and other methodologies) route, it seems inevitable that methodological innovation needs to occur. Experience in Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland suggests that placement of a dedicated

livelihood advisor on the NVAC can bring major benefits in terms of catalysing institutionalisation processes and methodological development.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The objective of this paper is to provide lessons of experience for managers and technicians concerned with food security and vulnerability information systems, particularly systems which involve several countries within a region. The lessons are derived from an analysis of the development of food security and vulnerability monitoring in Southern Africa. This analysis is done from the perspective of Save the Children (UK), and it is accepted that other institutions may have other perspectives on the events presented. The paper is intended to contribute to a larger body of reference and guideline material that can be used by SC(UK) and other stakeholders to advocate for the development of appropriate food security and vulnerability information systems. This larger body of work will also draw on SC(UK)'s experiences elsewhere in Africa.

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4. Beyond vulnerability to food insecurity: Vulnerability Assessment in the context of new meanings of vulnerability and links to poverty monitoring.

These sections are preceded by some definitions and an explanation of the scope of the paper.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

***Food insecurity*** can be defined as:

"Ensured access of all people at all times to enough food for an active and healthy life"<sup>1</sup>.

The food security of a given social or economic unit (individual, household, community, nation) is comprised of two key components: food availability (food supply) and access to food through exchange (e.g. purchase, barter, labour exchange or gifts). The social units may be chronically food insecure, suffer from seasonal food insecurity and/or be prone to acute episodic food insecurity.

Some definitions of food insecurity include the concept of food utilisation by the human body<sup>2</sup>. Inadequate utilisation is caused by infection or disease. This paper considers food utilisation to be in the domain of nutrition and health, however, and best measured by nutrition assessment and health techniques. These techniques and the associated information systems are not central to the purpose of this paper, although lessons from the attempted integration of nutrition assessment with food security assessment in Southern Africa are drawn.

***Vulnerability to food insecurity*** can be defined as;

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank 1986

<sup>2</sup> See for example the definition given in "Guidelines for National FIVIMS: Background and Principles" (IAWG 2000, FAO, Rome).

“The probability of an acute decline in food access or consumption, often in reference to some critical value that defines minimum levels of human well being”<sup>3</sup>

The degree of vulnerability of a given social unit to food insecurity is a function of external (to the unit) hazards (drought, devaluation etc) and internal coping capacities (defined by assets and capabilities).

The extent to which these different aspects of food insecurity and vulnerability are measured, how they are measured and the level at which measurement takes place (household, district, national etc) varies according to the type of VA method and/or system in operation. This is explored in the next section.

In this paper, **vulnerability assessment (VA)** is understood as being a sub-set of food security analysis, thus the vulnerability in question is vulnerability to food insecurity. As noted by Riely, VA:

“..begins with a more or less static view of the chronic or current level of food security and then incorporates the elements of risk and coping capacity into an analysis that is more forward-looking and dynamic.... VA traces the trajectory of household livelihoods, food access and consumption over successive cycles of relatively good, or relatively bad, economic conditions. Because of this dynamic perspective....VA provide(s) a conceptual and analytical framework for linking relief and development activities. With a vulnerability perspective, the concern of food security and programs broadens from efforts to address the current constraints to food access and improved levels of well-being, to those that address likely threats to current levels of access and well-being”. (Riely 2000:1).

Whilst methodologies vary, today all types of VA try to identify:

- who and where are the most food insecure or vulnerable to becoming food insecure (to help prioritise/target populations for development/emergency interventions)

and

- why they are vulnerable (to help prioritise the most appropriate type of intervention to meet their needs). VA can be used in a number of contexts, but its most common use in Southern Africa has been for early warning of the impact of slow onset livelihood shocks – typically drought.

**HEA** is a methodology which applies a VA analytical framework to understanding the causes of vulnerability to food insecurity and measuring the results of that vulnerability. In common with other VA methods, HEA consists of a number of steps.

- information on food security conditions before a particular food security shock or change (e.g. average maize yields in the previous years);
- assessment of the magnitude of change in those conditions;
- assessment of the effect or impact of the change on food security status or outcomes;
- recommendations for response;
- monitoring of indicators related to changes and responses

The key **differences** between HEA and other forms of VA are in terms of the types of information collected, how the information is collected and how the outcome of vulnerability is quantified in terms of food security outcomes.

For country area coverage a piece of analytical software called **RiskMap** was developed to produce scenarios, derived from HEA fieldwork, which could be used to quantify the level of acute food insecurity for populations groups defined by geography and socio-economic status.

As well as their application in VA, HEA baseline analysis can be used for project planning and livelihood monitoring. Links can also be made to poverty mapping .<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Riely 2000: 2

### **3. FOOD SECURITY AND VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA IN THE CONTEXT OF FAMINE EARLY WARNING: 1993 – 99.**

#### ***3.1 Early Warning and Vulnerability Assessment.***

The importance of developing a regional system to monitor food security in Southern Africa has long been recognized. FAO was approached by the Government of Zimbabwe on behalf of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) as long ago as 1981<sup>5</sup> to undertake a feasibility study on the establishment of a Regional Early Warning System (REWS) for food security. It was intended that this would establish a food data recording system that would monitor food availability in terms of stocks, progress during the production season and final output. This was based on the premise that the amount of food produced is subject to large fluctuations mainly owing to seasonal variations in weather patterns. Food security, in terms of availability, accessibility and stability of food supplies, may easily be affected by disruptions in any of these three elements. The availability of timely and reliable information on the supply and demand for food, in particular cereals, is therefore of critical importance in ensuring a steady flow of food supplies from surplus to deficit areas<sup>6</sup>.

SADCC's request led to a two phase FAO project (1987 – 90 and 1990 – 96) which set up a Regional Early Warning Unit (REWU) - located in the SADC Food Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR) building in Harare – and National Early Warning Units (NEWUs) in each of the SADC states. At regional level the REWU was supported by the Regional Remote Sensing Unit (RRSU) – also based at FANR - which provided satellite imagery and climatological inputs into regional early warning<sup>7</sup>. By the end of this 10 year programme of support, which cost in excess of US\$ 20 million, SADC states were fully funding the REWU and the NEWUs and full-time expatriate technical advisers had been pulled out. The REWU and most NEWUs were producing regular food security bulletins, although there were concerns about the depth of analysis and dissemination issues (FAO 1999:33). Perhaps the two biggest problems were funding constraints caused by erratic government financing and high turnover of staff from the NEWUs.

Within SADCC, it was recognized that food security was determined not just by availability of food but also by access to food. This led to a revision of the SADCC Food Security Programme in 1987, placing new emphasis on access to food by vulnerable population groups. Increasing attention was given to looking at the food access situation and the nutritional well-being of the population<sup>8</sup>. Despite this, however, regional early warning tended to focus on food availability issues much more than access issues. Access was monitored through reporting on prices, but very little vulnerability analysis or household level analysis was incorporated in the NEWS and REWS food security monitoring. Indeed it was only in Mozambique and Zambia where attempts were made to integrate information generated by household food security projects into national early warning systems.

In the light of this, SADCC requested FAO to prepare a project document on household food security and nutrition (HHFS&N) activities which would complement and supplement the REWS project. As a result, a two year pilot project was signed in 1993 covering Mozambique, Swaziland and Zimbabwe.

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<sup>4</sup> These issues are explored in greater depth in Section 6 below.

<sup>5</sup> SADCC became the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 1992.

<sup>6</sup> FAO 1999: 2-3

<sup>7</sup> National Early Warning Units are responsible for providing information on crop, livestock and market performance and on potential hazards affecting these, and thereby providing advance information on food security prospects. The Regional Early Warning Unit coordinates the activities of NEWUs and provides technical support and regional overviews.

<sup>8</sup> FAO 1999:16

The project was subsequently extended by 16 months, ending finally on March 31 1997. The immediate objectives of the project were:

“ 1. Timely nutrition and socio-economic information on vulnerable population groups provided on a regular basis to, and utilised by decision makers for emergency/ relief operations, action programmes, local level interventions and sectoral planning to enhance household food security and improve nutritional status in Mozambique, Swaziland and Zimbabwe by the end of the project

And

2. An operational framework established for the creation of a regional food security and nutrition system. “<sup>9</sup>

The project achieved mixed success in meeting its objectives. One common theme for all three countries was that there was a lack of “hard, quantifiable nutrition and food security data” (FAO 1997: 11), this resulted in the development of methodology and training in obtaining “softer” data such as using Rapid Food Security Assessment using PRA /RRA techniques. HEA was used extensively in Mozambique. Indeed, most success was achieved in Mozambique, where the HEA approach was taken up by Ministry of Health nutritionists through support of FAO. (see FAO 2001). Between 1996 and 1999 “baselines”<sup>10</sup> had been completed in 134 out of 138 districts. These were done mainly by Ministry of Health staff who had been trained in the HEA. By the end of the 1990’s there were high hopes that the HEA had been institutionalised within the Ministry of Health and that this could then provide a platform for sustainable engagement with the government of Mozambique in staff development, refining and future development of the methodology including wider use of the Risk Map (see Jackson and Sawdon 2000: 11-13). In Swaziland, most effort was placed on data collation and attempts to see if it were possible to determine household level food security conditions using existing secondary data. In addition, attempts were made to train Ministry of Agriculture and NGO staff in PRA techniques for rapid food security assessment. The project met with least success in Zimbabwe, where the development of a robust HHFS&N information system was frustrated by the failure to establish institutional linkages and ownership outside of the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Water Development.

Outside of the three pilot countries, the project attempted to lay the ground work for expansion of HHFS&N systems in other SADC countries, and some progress on this was made in certain countries. At the regional level, there were calls by major donors for the development of a proposal to build regional food access analytical capability in Harare, to operate alongside the REWU at the FANR. The proposal was not developed however.

Aside from these FAO led initiatives, other players were developing and implementing methods and systems for understanding vulnerability to food insecurity at the household level. Some relied on increasingly sophisticated techniques to analyse secondary data and produce indicators of vulnerability which could be used to generate vulnerability indices<sup>11</sup>. The Famine Early Warning System (FEWS) was producing regular food security bulletins for those SADC countries in which there were FEWS offices (Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe). These bulletins were widely circulated. The approach used by FEWS relied heavily on the analysis of secondary data on agricultural production and prices, together with climatic and satellite data. In addition, regional reports were produced by the regional FEWS representative who was initially attached to the USAID office in Harare, but from 1998 sat in the SADC-FANR. FEWS offices also worked with the NEWUs

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<sup>9</sup> FAO 1997: 8

<sup>10</sup> A baseline consists of documenting and analysing access to food in a non-crisis or “typical” year in the recent past (generally one of the 5 years preceding the assessment). This is effectively a livelihood assessment. The baseline picture then serves as the context against which the current or likely future food security picture can be compared, in order to derive appropriate interventions to address current or likely future problems.

<sup>11</sup> WFP and FEWS tended to use these techniques, referred to collectively as “indicator approaches”.

in their countries and provided technical support to the REWU at regional level. In some countries, e.g. Malawi, FEWS developed sophisticated vulnerability maps which used clusters of indicators to pin-point differences in vulnerability according to geography and livelihood patterns. ***Whilst such methods can indicate differences in vulnerability outcomes across space, they are weak at isolating underlying causes***<sup>12</sup>.

WFP was also an active player in the 1990's in the region. Like FEWS, WFP focused on the use of agro-ecological, climatic and socio-economic indicators derived from the analysis of secondary data. The analysis was used to generate "vulnerability maps" which could be used for the purposes of monitoring and targeting. FEWS and WFP collaborated in Zambia, working with the NEWU and other government and non-government agencies to develop an indicator approach to analysis of vulnerability in the country.

Financed by an EU grant, SC(UK)'s efforts during the mid - 1990s onwards focused on undertaking Household Economy Approach (HEA) assessments and analyzing the results using the Risk Map software in Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. These efforts were spearheaded initially by expatriate experts who would conduct rapid baseline exercises (e.g. in Malawi, Zimbabwe and Mozambique) and later by a Technical Risk Map adviser based in SC UK's office in Harare, supported from London. Most of the effort went into the creation of HEA baselines in these countries. Efforts were made to engage NEWU staff through training in the household food security and vulnerability concepts that underlie the construction of livelihood baseline profiles. In addition, in 1999, SC(UK) hosted a regional training programme attended by participants from Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland and Zimbabwe which focused on modeling and analysing the impact of particular shocks given particular baseline profiles.

SC(UK) experts collaborated with FAO in Mozambique to develop livelihood profiling using the HEA and Risk Map (see above). In addition, considerable work was done in the late 1990's in Swaziland, following the FAO pilot project. In Swaziland, the National Risk Mapping Project involved a national 1998-99 baseline survey, and construction of food economy zones. The national Risk Map was launched in 1999 and demonstrated to 60 policy makers and technicians. Staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, Save the Children Swaziland and the Lutheran Development Service were trained in the use of Risk Map.

Of all the countries in Southern Africa where the HEA and associated RiskMap were implemented during the 1990's it was in Swaziland where the techniques were internalised to the highest degree within government. In Mozambique there was also a good degree of institutional buy-in. In Lesotho, Malawi and Zimbabwe, however, the take up of the approach by local institutions was non-existent. ***This was partly due to a heavily expatriate-led approach, with short term consultancies to carry out assessments in which there was little emphasis on building local capacity and ownership***, which in turn was related to constraints imposed by the nature of the funding for the work. In addition, there were the inherent complexities of administering the method compared to the simpler indicator based approaches and high turnover, and loss, of government staff.

From the mid-1990's onwards, various coalitions of agencies were being formed in some SADC countries to facilitate the generation and dissemination of VA information. These formed the basis of what were later to become National Vulnerability Assessment Committees (NVACs). In Mozambique, an "intersectoral group including various ministries, NGOs and UN agencies" (SADC 2000: 60) was in operation by 1997. In Zambia a technical committee was set up in 1999 with a similar structure. In both countries, the NEWU was part of the committee / group. In Zambia, WFP and FEWSNET played the leading technical role. In Swaziland, a small grouping consisting of the Ministry of Agriculture, Save the Children Swaziland and the Lutheran Development Service was formed around the development of a national Risk Map process led by SC(UK). Vulnerability assessment groups had also been started in Lesotho and Malawi.

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<sup>12</sup> As explained, for example, by Riely (2000:5).

It is of course the case that these were not the only methods used in the region to assess food security. For example, during the 90's various NGOs in the region undertook assessments focusing on the geographical areas in which they operated. A variety of PRA/RRA techniques were used in particular to gain an understanding of the causes of food insecurity and the types of coping strategies used. Similarly, sample survey techniques were used on a fairly wide scale in some countries e.g. Malawi, where IFPRI, Cornell University and UNICEF provided technical support to enable a series of household food security and nutrition surveys to take place through the Ministry of Agriculture in 1991 – 93. Both indicator and HEA-based VA approaches utilised these studies on food security to develop and validate analyses and conclusions.

### 3.2 *Strengths and Weaknesses of Different Methodologies*

The various initiatives undertaken during the 1990's in the region had similarities and differences, strengths and weaknesses.

**Table 1: *Main Types of Vulnerability Assessment Used in Southern Africa in the 1990s.***

Type of assessment / monitoring	Time frame	Associated agency(ies)	Concept of vulnerability	Concept of food security	Strengths	Weaknesses
Mainly secondary data Indicator approach	Early 1990s onwards	FEWSNET, WFP	External hazards (strong); internal capacities (weak)	Food availability and food access; distinguishes chronic from acute	Separates chronic from acute food insecurity; Can be quick and cheap (depending on data availability); allows consistent and therefore easily comparable indices of relative vulnerability to be developed.	Poor coverage of "internal" coping capacity of households; weak on identifying causes of vulnerability; indicator availability is often limited in areas of key concern and data sources are not always updated on a regular basis
Mainly secondary data Income Accounting approach	Mid 1990s onwards	FEWSNET, WFP	External hazards and internal capacities (indirectly)	Food availability and food access; distinguishes chronic from acute	As above and in addition is intuitively logical and estimates income and consumption shares, thus better on "internal" vulnerability.	Indicator availability is often limited in areas of key concern and data sources are not always updated on a regular basis; weak on identifying causes of vulnerability; can be unwieldy and complex to develop proxies; heroic assumptions about relationships between income sources and outcomes can be a problem
Primary data and secondary data qualitative and quantitative approach	Mid 1990's onwards	SC(UK), FAO, FEG	External hazards and internal capacities (more directly)	Food availability and food access; distinguishes chronic from acute	Highly logical model which affords an excellent understanding of livelihoods and causes of vulnerability; generates quantified outcomes (income/food deficits) which can be compared across space and time	Data collected is generally not made available for external verification; requires highly skilled practitioners and thus not easily transferable; potential methodological difficulties due to problems with participant recall.

### 3.3 *Coordination and Integration at Country and Regional Level*

The need for stronger regional co-ordination of household food security assessment activities (including VA) was acknowledged by FAO in 1997 (FAO 1997: 20). Amongst the four main technical agencies involved in VA (WFP, FAO, FEWS and SC(UK)) coordination of technical efforts at country level was generally not strong<sup>13</sup>. One potential vehicle for technical co-ordination was the

<sup>13</sup> Some useful co-ordination did take place however, most notably between FAO and FEWS in anticipation of the phasing out of project support to the REWU and the NEWUs in the mid-1990s. FAO closely collaborated

Inter-Agency Working Group on Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems (FIVIMS). This was launched in 1997 in the wake of the 1996 World Food Summit. The objectives of FIVIMS are broadly to improve the quality and timeliness of food security related data and analysis at global, regional, national and sub-national levels and to improve sharing of information through networking. The extent to which the FIVIMS initiative per se was a pro-active force for greater co-ordination of VA within Southern Africa is debatable. Whilst technically an Inter-Agency initiative<sup>14</sup>, FIVIMS was spearheaded and promoted by FAO in the region. Some agencies felt (and feel) that the influence that FIVIMS had on overall coordination of VA was minor, although FAO might dispute this.

By the end of the decade there were inter-agency VA groupings in some of the countries (Mozambique, Zambia, Swaziland) and the beginnings of such groupings in others (Malawi, Lesotho). The apparent lack of co-ordination of VA methods led to frustration at the country level. As noted at a High Level Technical Consultation in 2000:

“Traditionally, different approaches have been used by various organisations in the design and implementation of vulnerability assessments, often competing for scarce human and financial resources. In this regard, it is not always clear to the SADC member government institutions which option is the best approach to fit their unique situation, or how to combine the products of different approaches in a meaningful manner.” RVAC (2001(a):1)

Within the SADC regional early warning system there was growing acknowledgement that the NEWS should address food access issues in addition to food availability and should also provide information on the situation at sub-national level (see FAO:1997; SADC FANR:2000a). This raised the possibility of bringing VA techniques into the REWS, although this would have added further strains to a system that was already underperforming. By the end of phase II of the project “Regional Early Warning System for Food Security” eight out of eleven SADC countries were in arrears in their payments to the REWS. The NEWUs were poorly funded in most countries and there were concerns about the timeliness and credibility of early warning information in several countries.

In 2000 a new FEWS was launched: FEWS-NET. Significantly, for the first time FEWS moved away from an indicator approach to a HEA –type of VA component as central to its early warning work. The expertise for this was provided by the Food Economy Group (FEG), a group of former SC(UK) HEA experts. This development changed the balance in terms of VA methodology in the region towards the HEA type of approach being advocated by SC(UK).

#### LEARNING POINTS

- **The history of the REWS in Southern Africa indicates that it is possible to have a functioning government financed food security monitoring system at national and regional levels. However, this may take a great deal of time and considerable expense to set up and be hampered by funding and capacity problems once in operation.**
- **VA is a vital part of early warning. Integrating it into existing early warning systems may not be easy, however, especially if those systems themselves are already under financial and capacity strain.**
- **There are various ways to conduct VA. Like all approaches, HEA has its strengths and weaknesses. The main strengths of HEA are that it clearly uncovers the causes of vulnerability and presents strongly logical and practically quantified food security outcomes. It is, however, technically demanding to administer. The choice of VA method will depend on the mixture of objectives and constraints which apply in a particular context.**
- **Strong interagency collaboration is needed to avoid confusion and duplication at country level and encourage consistency at regional level. This may be best achieved by formation of a regional technical hub, in which methodologies can be agreed and consistent messages can be passed to agency country offices and national governments.**

#### **4. THE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL CO-ORDINATION MECHANISMS FOR VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT: 1999 – 2002.**

This period was characterized by institutional development and strengthening at regional and national levels.

##### ***4.1 The Formation of the Regional VAC (RVAC)***

In early 1999, the then Director of the FANR Sector Development Unit (SDU) established a Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC). This signaled that SADC now formally acknowledged the need to understand better and exploit the potential benefits of vulnerability assessment methods and tools in the SADC region, and that a VAC was required to provide leadership in development and dissemination of these tools at country level. The SADC-FANR-VAC (later called simply the “RVAC”) was initially comprised of representatives from the FANR Sector Development Unit, SADC’s Regional Early Warning Unit (REWU), the SADC Database Project, FEWSNET, FAO, WFP and Save the Children Fund-UK. In broad terms, the objective of the RVAC was to,

*... keep abreast and encourage co-ordinated development in the field of vulnerability assessments and risk mapping, with a view to determine the relevance and efficacy of linking such developments to the activities that fall under Regional and National Early Warning Information Systems for Food Security in the SADC Region.*

In terms of the establishment of a coordinated regional information system concerned with assessing vulnerability to food insecurity, this was an important development. One key point was that it provided a platform for better coordination between the key technical agencies - SC(UK), WFP, FAO<sup>15</sup> and FEWS-NET. Secondly, these agencies were, through the formation of the committee, in a new kind of partnership with SADC and SADC-FANR projects. Of particular significance in this respect was the inclusion of the Regional Early Warning Unit and its role as chair of the RVAC. Alone amongst SADC FANR projects, the REWU was fully funded by SADC member states themselves. In addition, the REWU was the regional hub for the NEWUs, and the links between the REWU and the NEWUs were strong. These issues added credibility to the RVAC at national level.

The formation of the RVAC was facilitated by the fact that two of the key technical agencies, SC (UK) and FEWS-NET, had regional representation in the main SADC-FANR building in Harare, while another key agency, FAO, was also nearby. This close proximity had distinct advantages in terms of ease of communication and collaboration. In contrast, the regional food security analyst for WFP-VAM was based in Maputo. This limited the input of WFP-VAM in the decision making of the RVAC.

##### ***4.2 The Kariba Consultation***

In September 2000, the RVAC organised a “High level Vulnerability Assessment Technical Consultation” in Kariba, Zimbabwe. This brought together around 100 participants drawn from within the region and also from the global headquarters of SC(UK), FAO, WFP, and FEWS-NET. There was also high level donor representation. The idea behind the consultation was to improve understanding of vulnerability assessment and improve linkages between stakeholders (information providers and consumers) in the region.

One of the major outcomes of the consultation was a consensus around the central role that the RVAC had to play in the development of vulnerability assessment at national level within SADC, in terms of technical support to assessment activities, facilitating information flows and training. For a full list of

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<sup>15</sup> FAO was keen to see a coordinated approach in accordance with principles established under the inter-agency FIVIMS initiative.

recommendations from the Kariba consultation, readers are referred to annex 3. The consultation gave added impetus to the formation / formalisation of national VACs in several SADC states.

#### **4.3 *The RVAC Capacity Building Proposal and Subsequent “DFID Proposal”***

The Kariba recommendations were crystallized by the RVAC into a funding proposal in 2001. The objectives of the proposal were to:

1. Strengthen the capacity of the SADC-FANR Vulnerability Assessment Committee effectively and efficiently to fulfill its mandate in the region.
2. Build national level capacity to undertake vulnerability assessments, including conducting baseline livelihood field assessments, monitoring potential hazards, and analysing available information in order to identify and understand groups at risk of food insecurity.
3. Ensure that the results of vulnerability assessments are well understood and appropriately applied to enhance decision-making to improve livelihood and food security conditions through improved emergency, rehabilitation and development programming and policies.

The capacity building proposal was subsequently incorporated into a further project document which was developed with the support of DFID. Under this second document, “VA capacity building” was included as one of four “components” of a draft Regional Food Security Programme. During the period September 2001 to June 2002, strong links were formed between the RVAC and the DFID regional office, then in Harare. This was important both for the continued development of the proposal itself and also for funding of the “rolling-assessment” process in 2002-03 (see below).

#### **4.4 *Renewed Mandate for RVAC from SADC Ministers***

In August 2001, SADC Ministers of Agriculture set out a medium term strategy to combat food insecurity in the region. As a central part of this strategy, Ministers encouraged member states to establish cross-sectoral and inter-agency vulnerability assessment groups or units. These were charged with providing a better understanding of household food security and livelihood conditions to allow for better targeting of emergency and development interventions. The Ministers called on the RVAC to provide leadership and technical backstopping to these national level groups or units.

The backing of SADC Ministers was another important building block in terms of establishing the credibility of the RVAC with member states. This added to the authority that the RVAC could command in relation to development of VA at national level.

#### **4.5 *The Practice of Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Assessment***

At the same time as these institutional changes and developments were taking place, food security and vulnerability monitoring continued. The role of the NEWUs was formally expanded in 1999 to include food access issues; however, this did not affect the nature of their food security surveillance which remained firmly focused on availability issues and reporting “external” threats to food security. FEWS-NET continued its regular reporting, focusing on hazards and including food access issues mainly using secondary data on prices. More systematic food access information was fed into FEWS-NET through the efforts of the FEG. The HEA work of both SC(UK) and FEG was focused at the sub-national level: *there was very little further work done on developing or updating national level livelihood baseline profiles developed in the 1990s in Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Swaziland.* Key pieces of work were completed in Zambia (the Siavonga valley); in Zimbabwe (an urban assessment in Harare and assessments in commercial farming, informal mining and peri-urban settlements and in the Zambezi valley); in Mozambique (the Limpopo valley), in three regions in

Tanzania (Singida, Dodoma and Arusha) and in three Food Economy Zones in Malawi. A number of these – especially in Mozambique and Zimbabwe – occurred as part of emergency preparedness or response work. Training of national staff was done often in conjunction with such assessments and also in dedicated training exercises. One large regional training event took place in Malawi in September 2001, in which SC(UK) and FEG specialists trained NEWU staff from around SADC in livelihoods based vulnerability assessment using HEA.

As well as being useful in their own right, these pieces of work raised the profile of HEA type assessments, both within the countries concerned and also at regional level. This was useful for the RVAC in terms of advocating the merits of this kind of approach in the funding proposal detailed at 4.3 above, and helped the RVAC develop relationships with DFID which would be useful later on when funding was needed for the “rolling assessments”.

One very important issue was discussions between the major technical agencies on VA methodology. In brief, WFP-VAM was concerned that the standard methodology used by SC(UK) and FEWS-NET (through FEG) was too micro-level focused and too complicated to be accessible and quickly replicable by developing country technicians. It was advocating a less demanding (but also less accurate) methodology that could derive rapid results on a larger (e.g. national) level and be straightforward enough for a rapid roll-out to national staff to take place. HEA methodology had in fact been used on a large (i.e. national) scale by SC(UK) in the 1990s to establish VA baselines in several Southern African countries. It remained the case, however, that apart from in Swaziland these were not being used by local technicians as they had not been trained in how to use them. This applied particularly to analysis and the Risk Map Software

#### **4.6 Conclusions: Institutional Progress but Not Enough Work Done on the Ground**

In comparison to 1998-99, by the end of 2001, a good deal of progress had been made in strengthening the “infrastructure” for a regional VA system: the RVAC was formed and received a strengthened mandate to provide leadership in vulnerability assessment in the region by SADC ministers; more NVACs had been formed; a large proposal for expanding and embedding the use of HEA-type assessments and monitoring had been drafted and further HEA-type exercises had taken place. There continued to be debates over methodology, but this was now in terms of the modifications that needed to be made to HEA-type assessments rather than between these and indicator-based approaches.

Despite the progress made in these areas, it remained the case that there was as yet no systematic and on-going VA using HEA-type methods at country level anywhere in Southern Africa. This undoubtedly contributed to the fact that existing early warning systems failed to detect a looming food crisis in Malawi in 2001. That the potential magnitude of the crisis was detected only by chance by SC(UK) using HEA demonstrated two things: (a) the utility of the HEA as an early warning tool for acute food insecurity and its added value in comparison to other approaches and; (b) none of SC’s earlier risk mapping work in Malawi had been taken up or institutionalised, even within the SC(UK) country office itself. Despite efforts by SC(UK) to create a risk map in Malawi for use in precisely such circumstances (in 1996-97), it had not been used as there was zero institutional buy-in to the approach in country. ***Perhaps in retrospect, SC(UK) should have put more emphasis into capacity building and developing ownership of the methodology in this earlier period,*** although this did become the focus in subsequent periods. It was partly for this reason that there was a good deal of apparent scepticism about the veracity of SC’s analysis on the technical side, which led to delays in responding to the situation. The situation was exacerbated by the reluctance of donors to intervene in Malawi due to serious governance concerns.

In Zimbabwe, a different set of circumstances contributed to the same outcome: the failure to act quickly. In Zimbabwe, FEWS-NET and SC(UK) started issuing warnings of abnormal food insecurity in early to mid 2001. In June 2001, the WFP/FAO Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission (CFSAM) had identified food availability problems in Zimbabwe, but concluded that there would be

no food aid needs<sup>16</sup>. By August/September, several INGOs including CARE, Christian Aid, CAFOD and SC(UK), had started providing food using funds provided by DFID. Prompted by the DFID-funded food distribution through the NGOs, the UN revised its assessment of the situation after a further WFP survey concluded that there was a need to feed 1 million people. National level emergency assistance was also delayed, however, by the fact that the Zimbabwean government did not issue an appeal until late October, and without this most donors were reluctant to make large-scale commitments.

In both Zimbabwe and Malawi then, the availability of HEA-type VA information failed to translate into commensurate action by decision makers and implementing agencies. In the case of Malawi, this was partly due to confusion arising from different analyses of the situation by SC, FEWS and WFP, and partly due to donor inertia induced by disapproval of government actions. In the case of Zimbabwe, certain agencies had picked up on the likelihood of unusual food access problems and the need for a response, but the UN, through WFP and FAO did not come out openly and categorically in support of this. In Zimbabwe, the emergency response was further delayed by the government's reluctance to ask for assistance. One of the critical differences between Malawi and Zimbabwe was that in Zimbabwe DFID was more disposed to act quickly to support the findings of HEA-type assessment, despite governance concerns, suggesting that other strategic factors were involved in decision-making. This illustrates the point that the link between VA and decision making may be heavily influenced by political factors (such as donor – government relationships) as well as technical issues. Those generating VA information need to be able to understand these political factors, and adjust the way in which technical findings are communicated accordingly. Amongst other things, this involves establishing good working relationships with key policy and technical advisors in government and donor agencies.

#### **KEY ISSUES / LESSONS LEARNED**

- **The formation of a regional multi-agency body, including and chaired by regional technical institutions lends credibility to regional leadership and builds consensus amongst participating institutions.**
- **Development of regional and national VA systems takes time. In the interest of maximising policy-relevance as well as securing institutional buy-in quickly, the balance of emphasis between detailed micro-level work and more general macro (national level coverage) should be tipped towards the latter.**
- **Providers of VA information need to have an understanding of the politics of donor and government decision-making and tailor their information management and alliance building strategies accordingly.**

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<sup>16</sup> It may be that this in itself was a political statement by the UN. The CFSAM mission did recognise that many people were falling rapidly into a food insecure situation and recommended that more detailed VA work should be conducted.

## **5. FOOD INSECURITY AND VULNERABILITY MONITORING IN A REGIONAL FOOD CRISIS: THE ROLLING ASSESSMENTS OF 2002-03**

The events leading up to and including the three “rolling assessments” undertaken by national VACs in six SADC countries in 2002-03 illustrate a number of technical and institutional issues. During the process, the influence of the RVAC and the individual NVACs on the conduct of the assessments changed as did the relationship between the assessments themselves and decision making. This section will describe the events, drawing out key lessons and questions.

### ***5.1 The Role of Lobbying at International Level***

In the wake of the findings of the HEA work undertaken in Malawi, SC(UK) used its position on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Food Security (IASC) to lobby for concerted emergency intervention in that country. In addition, SC(UK) lobbied at both international and regional levels for an expansion of the ambit of the 2002 CFSAMs to include much greater emphasis on livelihood and food access issues. At international level, this culminated in a meeting in Rome in March of that year, which presented detailed HEA analysis on Malawi and Zimbabwe and qualitative information on several other countries in the region, including Angola and Lesotho. In the event, however, the CFSAMs were heavily biased towards food availability issues, although the lobbying activity did result in SC(UK) being able to carry out a parallel HEA update and RiskMap modeling in Malawi which was cross-checked against the CFSAM results.

### ***5.2 The 2002 Crop and Food Supply Assessments and the Johannesburg Conference***

By early 2002, it was clear that there was going to be poor cereal harvests in six Southern African countries, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. As a consequence, governments in these countries called on the FAO and the WFP to conduct CFSAMs in April/May. The NVACs and the RVAC were not involved in conducting the analysis or contributing to decisions on numbers and locations of people in need of assistance.

The results of the CFSAMs were presented at a large conference in Johannesburg in June 2002, hosted by the UN and attended by donors, governments, non-UN development agencies and with representation from SADC, the RVAC and NVACs. The CFSAM results suggested that 12.8 million people in rural areas in the six countries most affected by food shortages would not be able to access adequate food on their own. This was automatically translated into a need for food aid. No assessment was done of urban food insecurity in any of the six countries.

At the conference, the RVAC made a presentation which argued the case for using NVACs, coordinated by the RVAC, to monitor household food security in the countries (the presentation was put on to the agenda only after lobbying by the RVAC). As a result of this, discussions ensued between WFP-VAM and the RVAC on how best to collaborate in the assessment process. The outcome of this was a plan to conduct three “rolling assessments” over the course of the planned Emergency Operation (EMOP) (July 2002 – June 2003). From WFP’s perspective, the objective of the rolling assessments was to “fine-tune” the findings of the earlier CFSAMs in terms of numbers of people in need of food assistance. This was largely to be done through a much better understanding of the food access side of the equation.

The rationale and justification for the rolling assessment strategy was summed up in an operational plan produced by the RVAC in July 2002:

“The VAC assessment strategy has two principal axes. First, it uses a sequential process of ‘best-practices’ in assessment and monitoring, drawn from the extensive and varied experience of the VAC partners, to meet a broad range of critical information needs at both the spatial and socio-economic targeting levels. The sequential nature of the approach not only provides richer details of the “access side” of the food security equation, but it adds the very important temporal dimension as well. From an operational (i.e. response) perspective, the latter

is critical. Second, by approaching food security assessment through a coordinated, collaborative process, the strategy integrates the most influential assessment and response players into the ongoing effort, thereby gaining privileged access to national and agency datasets and expert technicians and increases the likelihood of consensus between national governments, implementing partners, and major donors. This ‘partnering’ strategy links the major players and stakeholders including regional institutions, national governments, response agencies, NGOs and donors for on-going, intensive ‘rolling’ assessment coverage of food security conditions on the ground.”

#### LEARNING POINTS

- **The results of HEA assessments (in Malawi and Zimbabwe) gave an entry point to SC(UK) to lobby at international level. Without the assessments there would have been no basis for lobbying.**
- **The Johannesburg workshop was targeted as a key event by the RVAC. The emergence of the food crisis represented an excellent opportunity to kick-start a VAC system (which would entail the RVAC coordinating and facilitating the NVACs). It also presented an opportunity for SADC to show some leadership in the analysis of the crisis. *If the RVAC had not intervened at the workshop, it is not clear what role it and the NVACs would have played in the subsequent assessment process – it could have been sidelined.***
- **The partnership between WFP and the RVAC started because it appeared mutually beneficial for both parties. WFP-VAM had a responsibility to monitor the crisis in the countries and the VAC system was the obvious partner: The RVAC already had a SADC mandate to provide leadership, and by collaborating with the VACs, WFP could be seen to be using and building local capacity. From the RVAC perspective, partnership with WFP put the VACs centre-stage in the assessment of the food crisis. It was hoped that this would have an *immediate benefit*: rapid development of a VAC system to conduct emergency needs assessment as well acting as a springboard for *longer term support* for mainstream VA capability in the region and livelihood monitoring.**

### 5.3 The First Round of Assessments – July and August 2002.

The first round of VAC assessments covered a number of areas<sup>17</sup>. The core aspects of it were:

1. A food aid needs projection update (in relation to the earlier CFSAM food aid projections)
2. An analysis of vulnerability to acute food insecurity at household level

Of these, 1. was by far the most dominant, although the route by which it was reached was usually through 2.

In addition to these areas, all countries apart from Malawi did anthropometric measurement for nutrition (although none used 30 x 30 clustering). All reports included national food balance sheets and food policy analysis, and all apart from Mozambique estimated agricultural input needs for the coming season some countries the assessments covered. Strenuous attempts were made by the RVAC to ensure that the NVAC reports were of similar format and had been subjected to quality control at the regional level (by the RVAC). These efforts were partially successful.

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<sup>17</sup> For a description of these as well as a comparison between the three rounds of assessments, readers are referred to annex 6.

The calculation of the degree of vulnerability to acute food insecurity and the resultant food aid needs was made using a questionnaire in all countries apart from Mozambique<sup>18</sup>. The questionnaire was similar, but not identical between countries. An example of the questionnaire used in Zimbabwe is attached as annex 4. The questionnaire approach was designed to look at both food access and food availability at household level. It borrowed some attributes from HEA:

- In most cases, food economy zones (FEZs) were used as a stratification stratum in the sampling of households, and in some case food aid need results were presented according to FEZ
- Wealth groups were used as a further stratification stratum in most countries<sup>19</sup>

The questionnaires attempted to get a sense of “how people lived” through detailed questions on food and income sources and food insecurity coping strategies, and so in this sense also they were similar in scope to HEA exercises.

The questionnaire approach faced a number of challenges. These can be listed as follows:

- The calculation of food needs was based partly on respondents’ views about their ability to earn income or food later in the season. There was no way of knowing at the time just how accurate these predictions were going to be. A number of factors can influence people’s perceptions of the future, including a desire to be given food aid (leading to over-estimates of need) and past experiences which may be irrelevant for current or future situations. In addition, even if perceptions are realistic, unforeseen events such as price shocks or disease outbreaks can result in unforeseen food security outcomes. This is quite a serious drawback given that most of the lower income groups in Southern Africa are net food consumers i.e. they consume more food through exchanging something else for it than they do from own production, and most of the exchange activity tends to take place after August (when the survey was conducted). *It should be noted that this limitation would apply to any approach, including HEA, which is done without the benefit of a suitable baseline against which comparisons of current conditions can be made and with which certain parameters could be set to guide the interpretation of the future.*
- The definition of “food” was narrow – generally based on cereal consumption only, although root crops and tubers were included in some cases (e.g. Zambia). Certain assumptions were made about the correlation between changes in cereal consumption and changes in availability and consumption of other foods. To the extent that it makes up approximately 70% of total caloric intake in most parts of rural Southern Africa, focusing on cereal only has some justification. It remains the case however, that the methodology was unable to pick up potential changes in the ratio between cereal and non-cereal in the diet when cereal became scarce.
- Training and sampling problems: Undertaking the assessment was a huge logistical task. Although the surveys were restricted to rural areas they were (with the exception of Zambia) national in scope. Whilst some limited testing had been done in Zimbabwe, the methodology was essentially untried. Large teams of enumerators - some with little or no experience of administering a questionnaire - were assembled and trained at very short notice, and the timetable for data collection, entry and analysis was short. In these circumstances, errors and a certain degree of confusion was inevitable. In some cases, household sampling was not properly done, so that the estimates generated by the results could not be said to be statistically reliable.

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<sup>18</sup> In Mozambique, a questionnaire was used in the “most vulnerable districts”. The main instrument was reported to be HEA, although it is difficult to detect this on the basis of the analysis done.

<sup>19</sup> Such geographical and socio-economic stratification is not unique to HEA. However, the RVAC encouraged the NVACs to use such a scheme, in order to help lay the ground for subsequent use of HEA –type methods in later assessment rounds and subsequently. In this way, the NVACs would be able more easily to transition to VA methods which were in line with the longer term vision of the RVAC, as articulated in the “DFID proposal” (see section 4.3 above).

The national assessments were all completed, written up and published by mid September, two months after initial training. This was a very significant achievement indeed. In terms of output, the one commonality across all six countries is that the “punch line” for all the assessments was a geographical breakdown of revised figures for food aid tonnages and people in need of food aid. It was for this reason that the VAC assessments were later criticized for being too food aid focused. As noted, above, however, there was more to the first round assessment reports than simple calculations of food aid needs.

There were both conceptual and institutional reasons for this focus on food and food aid

**Conceptual:** Initially, the crisis in Southern Africa was widely seen as one of acute food insecurity, caused by a combination of climatic issues (mainly, but not exclusively, drought), economic and governance problems and HIV/AIDS<sup>20</sup>. This initial conceptualization made the VAC system, with its mandate and emphasis on vulnerability to food insecurity, the obvious partner for WFP and FAO in monitoring the situation over the period of the EMOP

**Institutional:** Following on from the initial conceptualisation, WFP became the dominant UN agency involved in assessing and tackling the crisis. This was exemplified by the structure of the UN Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Support Office (RIACSO), which was headed by the WFP’s Regional Director for East and Southern Africa. WFP, together with DFID put up the majority of funding for the first round of assessments, and seconded a Regional VAM officer full-time to the RVAC. The timing of the assessments was set to coincide and feed into the EMOP and the CAP appeal process, with the first results expected at the end of August – a hugely ambitious timetable. The core function of the assessments, from a WFP perspective, was to update the CFSAM estimates of food aid needs. This is different from assessing acute food insecurity.

Why were questionnaires chosen in preference to HEA? There were both institutional and logistical reasons.

**Institutional:** There were disagreements within the RVAC as to the choice or mixture of methodologies to be used for the assessments. Initially, SC(UK) argued for updating and using the HEA baselines established in Malawi, Swaziland, Lesotho and Mozambique. It may also have been possible to have made some use of the existing baseline for Zimbabwe (although this would have required major modification due to the effects of the land reform programme). WFP and FEWS-NET, however, were against this, owing to disagreements on the quality of the baselines themselves, the difficulties in updating and then using them and concerns over the RiskMap computer programme used to make predictions of food needs.

**Logistical:** In the very limited time available, and given that (a) there were no HEA baselines “ready to go”, (b) there were very few people trained in the HEA approach in the region and (c) institutional concerns about the methodology itself, a compromise solution was arrived at. The compromise was that NVACs would be free to use whatever methodology they chose as long as the output permitted cross-country comparisons. In practice, apart from Mozambique all countries opted for the questionnaire approach as it was the most feasible solution<sup>21</sup>.

### 5.3.1 Accuracy of the Food Aid Needs Estimates

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<sup>20</sup> HIV/AIDS was recognized as a major contributory factor to the food problems (as evidenced by presentations on the subject at the UN Johannesburg meeting) but not as a crisis in its own right (Darcy et. al. 2002).

<sup>21</sup> FEWS-NET, through the FEG had intended to conduct an emergency HEA assessment in Zambia in June-July 2002, focusing on a few critical Food Economy Zones. This was considered but rejected by the RVAC because it would have tied up resources which were needed for a nation-wide exercise for which the methodology had not yet been agreed.

The following table compares the first round VAC assessments against the CFSAM estimates. With the exception of Lesotho, the VAC and CFSAM results are fairly close. This doesn't really tell us much however, as both sets of results could be equally inaccurate. One source of cross-checking comes from the limited HEA in Zimbabwe<sup>22</sup> and Risk Map (Swaziland) work done in the first round. In both cases the food aid estimates were close to the estimates derived from the questionnaire approach (although opinions differ as to whether in the case of Zimbabwe this was a coincidence). It is, unfortunately, not possible to make any further comparisons for any other of the six countries.

The CFSAMs and the VAC surveys were criticised for seriously overestimating food aid needs. This argument hinges on two things:

1. Differing conceptions of what is "normal" in Southern Africa, and, therefore, of distinguishing "normal" (or chronic) from "abnormal" (or acute) situations i.e. situations that would demand an emergency humanitarian response. The calculations of food aid needs made by the VACs were based on a standard definition of minimum caloric needs per capita per day<sup>23</sup>. The question has been asked, however, whether it is correct to adhere to such absolute standards, or whether more consideration should be given to what people actually survive on. Should some adjustment be made to the figures to reflect the fact that the normal of 5 or 10 years ago is not the normal now, and in Devereux's words, the rural poor in Southern Africa are "making less last longer"?<sup>24</sup> If such adjustments were made, the numbers requiring food aid would certainly fall, perhaps by half.
2. Related to the definition of "normal" was the fact that it was not always clear whether the VAC reports were taking account of household assets or not in the calculation of food aid needs. In other words, it was not clear whether the food aid numbers were aimed at *saving lives or saving livelihoods*. Many readers could assume that the VAC estimates were based on *saving lives*. This is to some extent encouraged by some of the language in the reports. In fact, however, the VAC estimates were for the most part based on *saving livelihoods* i.e. the food aid needs were calculated based on the assumption that households would maintain a minimum level of assets which would assist them to recover after the situation improved.

In summary, the VAC figures were derived from a certain definition of adequate caloric intake from cereals (1400 kcal per person per day) and an assumption that not all household assets would be used up before food aid would be forthcoming. Setting aside the methodological caveats noted above, if either of these parameters are relaxed then the figures would be interpreted as overestimating needs.

**Table 2: Food Aid Estimates: VAC First Round vs. CFSAM**

Country	Max. No. of people in need: CFSAM	Max. No. of people in need: VAC	Max % of total population CFSAM	Max % of total population VAC	Cumulative Requirements: Metric Tonnes Food Aid (VAC)
Zimbabwe	6,075,000	6,700,000	46%	49%	480,000
Malawi	3,188,000	3,300,000	28%	29%	237,000
Zambia	2,329,000	2,900,000	21%	26%	224,000
Lesotho	444,800	650,000	20%	30%	36,000
Swaziland	231,000	270,000	21%	24%	20,000
Mozambique	515,000	590,000	3%	3%	48,000
TOTAL	12,783,000	14,400,000	22%	25%	1,000,000

<sup>22</sup> The HEA covered 4 Food Economy Zones, one of which was also covered by the VAC assessment. Food aid figures from the three remaining zones (dealing with commercial farming, resettlement and informal mining areas) were not included in the total food aid figures for Zimbabwe.

<sup>23</sup> The benchmark used was 1400 kcal per person per day from cereal. It was assumed that cereal should make up about 2/3rds of total caloric intake, i.e. 2,100 kcal, which is the standard set by Sphere and used also by WFP amongst others.

<sup>24</sup> Devereaux S. 'Making Less last Longer: Informal Safety Nets in Malawi. IDS Discussion Paper 373. (1999)

### 5.3.2 The Relationship Between the VAC Results and Decision Making

There was a direct relationship between the VAC results and the revision of the EMOP appeal. The VAC revised upwards the CFSAM estimates of numbers in need of food aid from 12.8 million to 14.4 million. In addition, the VAC assessments were used to varying degrees by WFP offices to guide temporal and sub-national targeting. Within the six countries, Zimbabwe and Lesotho were probably at two ends of a spectrum in this regard. In Zimbabwe, there appeared to be a very strong link between WFP's initial targeting decisions and the VAC results<sup>25</sup>. This is significant given that the food aid requirement in Zimbabwe was almost half of the total requirement for the six countries. In contrast in Lesotho, where the divergence between the VAC figures and the CFSAM figures was largest in percentage terms (see Table 2 above) the WFP country office effectively dismissed the results and carried on being guided by the earlier CFSAM.

#### LEARNING POINTS

- **Compromise and collaboration are critical to the success of inter-agency emergency assessments. Collaboration sometimes means overriding individual agency objectives: The RVAC was able to agree on an approach that used primary data collection to obtain vulnerability information. The methodology was implemented simultaneously across six countries. There was a direct translation of the results into decision making at the regional level (the revised EMOP) and to varying degrees guided sub-national level targeting. This was an impressive achievement, made possible only through a process of compromise and high degree of collaboration between the key technical agencies, REWU and DFID.**
- **The RVAC and WFP tried to strike a balance between uniformity of methodology across the six countries, and giving the NVACs latitude to modify the questionnaires to suit local conditions. This was by and large successful, although there were some problems of comparability between countries and quality control.**
- **A major problem faced was that apart from Swaziland, there was no suitable livelihood baseline (a) against which current information could be compared and (b) with which certain parameters could be set to guide the interpretation of the future. This made technical justification of food aid estimates more problematic than it would otherwise have been.**
- **In retrospect, SC(UK) should have put more effort into building capacity in and ownership of HEA and RiskMap methods Southern Africa in the 1990's. This would have increased the likelihood of HEA methods being used more widely.**
- **The choice of a sample survey questionnaire approach was the only feasible option given the institutional, logistical and technical constraints faced. There was no time to do the HEA work which would have been required.**

<sup>25</sup> Whilst WFP and other agencies' initial targeting *decisions* were based on the VAC results, WFP faced very significant problems scaling up and getting implementing partners to the necessary areas. This was not helped by the Government of Zimbabwe blocking new INGOs from registering and stopping established agencies from being WFP partners.

#### 5.4 *The Second Round of Assessments – November – December 2002.*

As for the first round of assessments, three elements were present in the second round.

1. A food aid projection update (in relation to the first round)
2. An analysis of vulnerability to acute food insecurity at household level
3. An assessment of non-food humanitarian issues / needs

In contrast to the first round, non-food humanitarian issues figured much more highly in the analysis and outputs of the surveys. This was due largely to the intervention of UN agencies, in particular by UNICEF<sup>26</sup>. UNICEF argued that it was inadequate to assess the crisis through a food security lens (and particularly a *food aid* lens), as the NVACs had done in the first round. What was necessary was to look at the crisis and vulnerabilities more holistically. Essentially, although it did not use the term, UNICEF was saying that it was necessary to look at vulnerability to the broader concept of *human insecurity*<sup>27</sup>. This would by necessity entail making the assessments much more explicitly multi-sectoral, and removing food security per se from the centre of things.

In terms of methodology, whereas in the August assessments a fairly standard *food security questionnaire* was used as the core instrument of data collection for household food security in every country<sup>28</sup>, in the December round it was used only in Lesotho, Malawi and Zambia. For four of the countries, the role of *HEA/Risk Map methods* was similar in both rounds i.e. it was mainly confined to (a) the use of FEZs as a stratification criterion for the questionnaire and as a way of presenting the food security results and (b) the use of community wealth ranking. In Swaziland and Mozambique, however, the situation was different. In the former, a Risk Map simulation totally replaced the questionnaire, and in the latter all reference to HEA and Risk Map was dropped entirely. Instead, a “multi-sectoral” questionnaire combined with a RRA for food security was preferred.

In line with the greater “multi-sectoral” emphasis advocated by the UN, one major change from the first round was the considerably greater emphasis put on *HIV/AIDS, other health issues and water and sanitation*. All VACs with the exception of Zimbabwe raised the profile of *HIV issues*<sup>29</sup> in their reports by doing either some analysis of possible HIV/AIDS impacts on food security and/or looking at more recent and relevant secondary data than in the first round. Similarly, four of the six VACs (i.e. not Swaziland and Zimbabwe) took a more detailed look at *diseases, water and sanitation issues*. These issues were included in questionnaires administered by the VACs, allowing quantitative analysis to be done. The Malawi VAC did the most analysis in these areas.

***What prompted the shift in the UN’s focus from food security to human security and the subsequent pressure that it put on the VAC system to widen the scope of the assessments?*** First, there was a genuine belief that the crisis was more complex than a simple food crisis (in contrast to the 1992 drought, which could be more easily characterized in food terms). Second, there was a need to gather information to support the formation of a revised CAP, and third there was the weakness of OCHA in the region and the absence of a Humanitarian Information System (HIS) which led agencies to rely more on the VACs. As noted by Darcy et. al.:

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<sup>26</sup> UNICEF intervened initially at an October 2002 workshop in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, organised by the RVAC to discuss the first round of assessments and prepare for the second round.

<sup>27</sup> Human security has been defined in several ways. At its core is ‘freedom from fear and freedom from want’ (UNDP 1994). The Commission on Human Security has proposed a working definition which argues that human security can be said to exist when the ‘vital core’ of all human lives has been safeguarded from pervasive threats in a way that is consistent with long-term human fulfillment (CHS 2001). This ‘vital core’ is essentially certain fundamental human rights. It includes liberties which are political, civil, economic and social. When basic securities are threatened, human rights are threatened or denied.

<sup>28</sup> The Mozambique VAC used this in the “less vulnerable districts”. The report states that the food economy approach was used everywhere else (check) although this is not clear from the analysis.

<sup>29</sup> More information on the VAC surveys and HIV/AIDS is contained in annex 6

*“ It is notable that OCHA played a very low-key role at both country level....and at the regional level.....a more integrated approach to assessment might have been achieved had OCHA played a more decisive part early on in coordinating the effort of UN agencies at all levels” (2002: 92-93)*

The Southern African Humanitarian Information Management System (SAHIMS), based in OCHA in Johannesburg was intended by the UN to be a key tool for information management in the region (Darcy et al 2002: 91). In the event, it simply failed to do this – certainly until well into 2003 - being slow to set up and inadequately staffed and funded. The upshot of this is that in the absence of anything else, the UN system turned to the NVACS and the RVAC to provide the information that it needed. It was at this point that the compass of the assessment process went decisively beyond the mandate (and competence) of the RVAC.

#### 5.4.1 Influence of VAC Results on Decision-Making

For the second round of assessments, UN agencies had agreed to assist the NVACs in carrying out the non-food security aspects of the assessment. In practice however, apart from WFP - which provided significant financial and technical support throughout the rolling assessment process - very little extra UN support was forthcoming. The result was that the NVACs become overstretched. The deadline for finalization of national assessment reports had been December 15. Only Zimbabwe met this. All other VACs did not complete until January at the earliest and Lesotho did not complete until February 19<sup>th</sup>. Missing deadlines reduced the impact of the reports and their influence on decision making. ***An opportunity had been missed to use the results of the assessments for the revised CAP.***

#### **LEARNING POINTS**

- **There are some fundamental differences between food security and vulnerability information systems and humanitarian information systems. In an emergency situation, expansion of the existing food vulnerability information system to encompass non-food security related vulnerabilities should be approached with caution. There is a risk of over-stretching the system.**
- **Increased pressure on food security and vulnerability information systems is more likely when the imperative for timely humanitarian information is not being met by other means.**
- **The UN system should ensure that OCHA is adequately resourced to set up adequate humanitarian information systems quickly.**
- **It is valid and correct that food vulnerability information systems should cover areas such as health and education insofar as they relate to vulnerability to food insecurity.**

#### **5.5 The Third Round of Assessments, April – July 2003**

The third round of assessments continued the movement away from the use of livelihood influenced questionnaires to calculate food aid needs to the use of HEA methods to gain a greater understanding of the depth and reasons for vulnerability to household food insecurity. This movement was encouraged by the understanding that the food crisis was a manifestation of deep-seated and chronic poverty. The links between vulnerability and poverty needed to be understood better and this argued for the more in-depth livelihood approach represented by HEA. The emphasis on examining “multi-sectoral linkages” was maintained.

The objectives of the assessment were as follows:

- Review food security situation and response in 2002-03 marketing year, and develop projections for food security from April 2003 - March 2004. Identify and suggest appropriate food and non-food interventions.
- Increase emphasis on livelihoods-based (HEA-type) assessment.
- Harmonize approaches across the region, bearing in mind individual country context.
- Depending on additional support available (from the UN agencies), examine linkages between food security and HIV/AIDS, health, education, child protection, water and sanitation.
- Incorporate relevant secondary information as available, including CFSAM results and recent nutrition survey data.

In comparison to December, there was greater use of HEA. This were central in Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland and was used in combination with (and was of roughly equal importance as) a questionnaire in Zambia. In Mozambique, once again a multi-sectoral questionnaire was the core instrument – this time including food security sections - and HEA methods were not used at all. The VAC in Zimbabwe also used a questionnaire, but the reasons for it doing so were quite different from Mozambique. Whereas in Mozambique the VAC did not agree that the HEA was the most appropriate method, in Zimbabwe, the VAC had by then bought into the use of HEA and planned to use it in conjunction with a questionnaire survey as had been done in Zambia. *There was insufficient technical capacity to do this, however*, so the VAC opted for the questionnaire as this was more feasible given the capacity constraints.

In comparison to the previous rounds, the VAC reports took much longer to finalise. Indeed we can see a trend whereby the average time taken from planning the assessment to completion of the NVAC report increased from about 2.5 months in the first round to 3 – 3.5 months in the second round to 3.5 – 5 months for the third round. This was due to a combination of survey fatigue, increased expectations and burdens put on the NVACs and depleted capacity at regional level. On the latter, the RVAC was weakened considerably by staff changes within the participating agencies and by the confusion and delays accompanying the restructuring of SADC FANR, particularly the relocation of the REWU from Harare to Gaborone.

#### 5.5.1 Influence of VAC Reports on Decision-Making

At regional and international level, the VAC assessments were intended to update the findings of the CFSAMs - which were conducted in the six countries in April and May 2003 - to feed into the new EMOP which was under preparation. Broadly, the food assistance figures of the VAC assessments were in line with the CFSAM and draft figures except for Malawi and Zambia. Here there were large differences, with the draft EMOP advocating food aid and the VAC reports saying that this was not necessary. The reason given by WFP for the differences between EMOP and VAC figures for these countries was that the VAC reports had not been finalized when the EMOP was published. There was, however, an agreement by WFP to update the EMOP with the VAC results when these became available. In the event, the distribution figures for Malawi, Zambia and also Mozambique were adjusted to reflect the VAC figures, and there were considerable purchases of food by WFP from within Zambia for distribution in Zambia and elsewhere in the region. WFP also purchased food from Malawi for redistribution within the country. Thus it would appear that the VAC figures were taken on board by WFP. A further influence on WFP's distribution and procurement practices may also have been substantial criticism of the initial EMOP figures from several sources including FEWS-NET and USAID.

In the third round, the possibility and desirability of alternatives to food aid was raised by the VACs in Lesotho, Swaziland and to some degree Malawi. There was no reflection of this in humanitarian decision making, however. More generally, there was a distinct absence of debate on different options

for addressing acute food insecurity throughout the rolling assessments. To some degree, this was due to a methodological problem i.e. that none of the existing methods – including HEA - contain a robust market analysis which would allow decision makers to make judgments about when food aid or some other form of intervention based on cash would be appropriate. In addition, apart from SC (UK), debate was not encouraged by the main technical agencies, and of course there was considerable pressure from WFP to promote food aid.

#### LEARNING POINTS

- **The balance between assessments and monitoring: By the third round, the RVAC all the NVACs were suffering from assessment fatigue. There should have been more emphasis on monitoring in round 2. Round 3 of the assessments laid the foundations for more of a monitoring system in Lesotho, Swaziland and Malawi by establishing baselines in those countries.**
- **The VAC results did appear to influence WFP decision making in relation to the EMOP. Criticism of the initial EMOP from influential partners probably also played a role in persuading WFP to modify the initial distribution figures.**
- **There was no real debate on the merits and de-merits of food aid versus other non-food interventions to increase access to food. The ability of the VAC system to advocate for non-food aid based interventions is compromised by methodological shortcomings (the lack of robust market analysis tools).**
- **The Mozambique VAC moved away from HEA tools over the assessment rounds. This illustrates that institutionalisation of HEA methods at one point does not guarantee that they will be used in future when a crisis occurs. Sustained support is necessary in the interim.**

#### **5.6 General Observations on the Role of the Southern African Crisis in the Development of a VA Information System in the Region.**

If the food crisis had not happened, how would the RVAC and the NVACs have developed? Back in early 2002, the RVAC was developing its funding proposal (see Section 3.3 above) and actively courting DFID on this. It is likely that the RVAC would have further developed the proposal and would have aimed to strengthen relationships with other potential donors, particularly USAID and the EU. If successful, the next step would have been to start a large regional training programme involving the NVACs and to have started doing livelihood baseline work using HEA methodology. At the national level, NVACs in the six countries covered by the rolling assessments were in various states of dormancy. Within SADC, the only really active NVAC was the Food Security Information Team (FSIT) in Tanzania. Without funding sourced through the RVAC, it is unlikely that this situation would have changed.

Thus, in the absence of the food crisis, the development of a VA information system involving NVACs and the RVAC would have depended heavily on RVAC efforts to get support for its funding proposal. In retrospect, it is likely that this would have been problematic, largely because donors were concerned about putting money into SADC institutions at a time of SADC restructuring<sup>30</sup>. When the

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<sup>30</sup> From late 2001, SADC started restructuring. This included the dismantling of the SADC FANR in Harare and relocation of some projects within it to SADC headquarters in Gaborone, Botswana. The whole process was fraught with uncertainty and this, together with some unfavourable audit reports, made donors very cautious about committing themselves to SADC. In addition, disagreements between the USA and SADC over the crisis in Zimbabwe, resulted in USAID refusing to initiate any new project funding. Alongside DFID, USAID would have been a major target for the RVAC in terms of funding of its capacity building project.

RVAC resumed work on the project proposal in late 2002, it proved very difficult to get a commitment from DFID.

Given that the crisis did happen, the next hypothetical question is: what role would the RVAC and NVACs have played without the partnership with WFP in the “rolling assessments”? The involvement of WFP was critical for linking the VAC system into the monitoring of the food crisis in six countries. Without the partnership with WFP, the RVAC and the six NVACs would probably have played a much lower key role in food security assessment. It was the high profile of the VAC assessments, ensured by the WFP partnership, which encouraged new institutions to join VACs at both regional and national level. The high profile also helped in securing funding for VAC activities. Over the course of the three assessments, DFID contributed well over US\$1 million to assessment activities, a figure matched by WFP.

On the negative side, the partnership with WFP knocked the RVAC off-course in terms of its longer term objectives for the NVACs. Through involvement in the rolling assessments, the NVACs were diverted into food aid focused emergency assessments using questionnaires as opposed to a broader livelihood assessment using HEA-type methods (as was envisaged under the RVAC plans). Arguably, involvement in questionnaires made it more difficult than it otherwise would have been to encourage NVACs to use HEA-type methods. However this is assuming the RVAC would have been able to secure funding for the use of such methods without WFP involvement, which is in itself questionable.

Another area for speculation is the extent to which the NVACs and the RVAC should have got involved in health, education, water and sanitation and child protection issues. As it happened, the degree of involvement varied between VACs and assessment rounds (see appendix 5 for more details). Nevertheless, the question remains, should health, education and other sectors properly be within the compass of the VACs and, if so, how? The argument of some of the RVAC members (SCUK, FEWS-NET and REWU) and some NVACs was that this can feasibly take place only if these issues are analysed insofar as they directly contribute to and are a direct product of vulnerability to food insecurity. This is different from analyzing vulnerability to ill health, poor education, child abuse etc in their own right (which should be the mandate of a humanitarian information system operating in conjunction with existing systems for collecting such data). The UN members of the RVAC (WFP, FAO and later UNICEF) were less equivocal about these issues, as RVAC representatives from these agencies were under pressure from their organisations to make the VAC assessment process “multi-sectoral”. The distinction between generalized humanitarian monitoring and food security monitoring was not always clear in the rolling assessment process and the extra workload involved in collecting information on the broader issues contributed to the over-stretching of the VAC system, with resultant delays in reporting and quality control problems. For more details on the suggested relationship between VACs and these sectors readers are referred to annex 7.

VAC involvement in the rolling assessments took place in a more general context of institutional relationships. Undertaking an “institutional mapping” is useful for indicating the different perspectives of key players. The diagram overleaf sets out some of the key relationships.

The VAC institutions are situated in the middle of the diagram, signifying that their key focus was vulnerability to food insecurity. SADC FANR institutions and National Early Warning Units are placed at the top of the diagram, indicating that their primary focus insofar as food security is concerned is agricultural production and providing “hazard” information (crop failure, weather information, pest outbreaks). The C-SAFE and CHS bubbles are close to the VAC bubbles in terms of focus on vulnerability to food insecurity at national and regional levels. Thus there is scope for close collaboration between C-SAFE (Consortium for Southern Africa Food Security Emergency) and CHS (Community and Household Surveillance) and the VAC institutions but also scope for duplication. C-SAFE is a consortium of NGOs, led by CARE, World Vision and CRS set up to administer a food aid pipeline in Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia. As part of pipeline management, food security and livelihood monitoring was undertaken. The CHS was a system devised by C-SAFE and WFP primarily to monitor the impact of food aid. Much of the monitoring data collected covers the same

issues as the VAC monitoring. RIACSO and UN agencies at national level are placed towards the bottom of the diagram. This indicates that in the southern African crisis, they were particularly concerned with assessing and monitoring a broad concept of vulnerability which went beyond vulnerability to food insecurity. Various international NGOs also had this broader concern.

Certain institutional relationships had a major bearing on the conduct and impact of the rolling assessments. Of particular relevance in this regard are the following:

- Regional level relationships: in particular the RVAC, RIACSO and SADC;
- Intra- RVAC relationships;
- RVAC-NVAC relationships, and;
- Intra-NVAC relationships

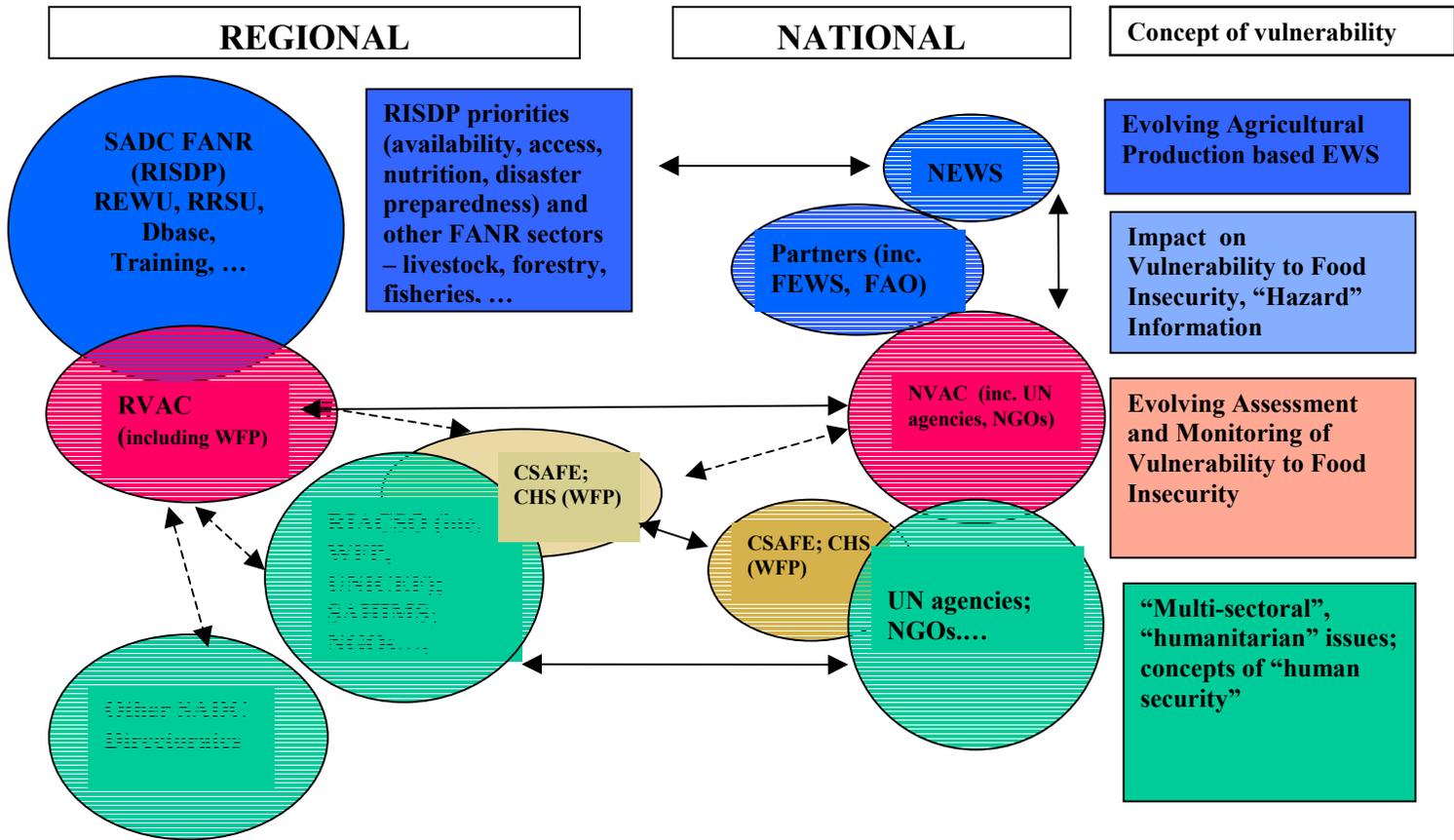
In some ways, SADC-FANR and RIACSO were pulling in opposite directions: until the second half of 2003 the former had a much more limited / focused view of vulnerability than the latter. The strong links between both of these institutions and the RVAC meant that there was a certain degree of tension and debate at regional level as to the focus of the assessments, particularly when UNICEF briefly joined the RVAC. This meant that at certain points in the assessment process there was a lack of clarity and decisiveness within the RVAC as to the direction of the assessments.

Compromises had to be made within the RVAC regarding methodology and focus of the assessments in order to maintain consensus and good working relationships. One product of this was a fairly relaxed approach in relation to the NVACs on the subject of methodology. RVAC partners could not agree on a methodological blueprint for the assessments, and so the guidance given to the NVACs focused more on achieving a common and comparable output than on the process by which this was achieved. The strength of this approach was that the NVACs were encouraged to use their own initiative, and this had an empowering effect and strengthened them at national level. The weakness of the approach was that whilst in broad terms the NVACs either used a questionnaire and / or HEA, there was quite a degree of variation in definition of terms, sampling and other issues. This meant that the NVAC assessments were not always easily comparable and also the RVAC had trouble quality controlling at times.

Relationships between the RVAC and the NVACs varied between NVACs and over time. In the first round of assessments, the RVAC played a very direct role in the shape of the assessments and the ownership of the results. Tensions arose around the issue of whom the NVAC reports were for: Were they for national level stakeholders, including national governments, or were they for regional level players – WFP and RIACSO in particular? These tensions resulted in the RVAC relaxing its control in the second round. However, whilst national level ownership of the information may have increased, quality arguably suffered. Timeliness of reporting certainly did. All this was not helped by the expansion of the second round into the “multi-sectoral” realm, without adequate guidance and support from UN partners. The third round saw something of a return of RVAC authority and direction, partly as a reaction to the untidiness of the second round. The RVAC sought to reassert itself and get the VACs “back on track” in relation to HEA-type vulnerability assessment. This process was helped by pressure from the national level in some countries (Malawi, Swaziland, and Lesotho) to establish livelihood baselines for subsequent monitoring.

Relationships within NVACs varied from country to country. More than at the regional level, NVAC membership expanded rapidly as various INGOs and UN agencies joined as the food crisis developed. With expansion came new interests and institutional mandates which had to be accommodated in some way.

**Institutional relationships, information providers and concepts of vulnerability**



**KEY**

RISDP = Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (SADC's 15 year strategic plan).

REWU; RRSU; Dbase; Training = Projects within SADC FANR.

C-SAFE = The Consortium for the Southern African Food Emergency (an NGO consortium consisting of CARE, World Vision and CRS).

CHS = Community and Household Survey (A survey designed by WFP to monitor the impact of food aid distribution).

RIACSO = Regional Inter Agency Coordination and Support Office (UN).

SAHIMS = Southern African Humanitarian Information System (OCHA).

NEWS = National Early Warning System.

↔ Major line of communication / reporting relationship

↔ Minor line of communication / reporting relationship

One factor determining the functioning of the NVACs was their relationship to the various government ministries and decision-makers in their countries. VAC food aid targeting results were generally accepted (although not without debate) and made use of by national governments in all countries. In Zimbabwe, the VAC reported to a cabinet committee – a direct line of communication with the most senior decision makers in government. In another country, this may have speeded up the decision making process and resulted in good translation of VAC findings into interventions and policy. Unfortunately, the Zimbabwean authorities used this link more as a way of slowing down the process and challenging the findings of the VAC. This point illustrates the fact that when states are failing, food insecurity and vulnerability assessment systems may be more effective if they are decoupled from government as this may allow them to report more freely (even so, however, it may not be possible to carry out such assessments without government backing).

One of the defining characteristics of the VAC assessment process at both regional and national level was that decisions were made by multi-agency committees. This had strengths and weaknesses. The key strength was that it encouraged consensus and collaboration, and reduced duplication of effort and lack of uniformity in approach to assessment at country level. It encouraged a mutually agreed division of responsibility between different institutions (government ministries, NGOs, UN agencies) under technical chairmanship of a government agency, and lended credibility and wide institutional buy-in to the results. On the other hand, whilst there was in theory provision for dissent within the committee structure, in practice this rarely if ever happened, due to peer pressure and concerns about undermining the credibility of the process and the results. This undoubtedly resulted in some valuable questioning of methodology and results being muted or absent. The key lesson here is that in such systems the option to produce a “minority report” by a dissenting committee member should not be allowed to compromise that member’s position on the committee. This is best ensured by a written constitution which is signed up to by all members and enforced through the chair of the committee.

As a final and important comment, it should be noted that the focus on six countries during the rolling assessments acted as a kind of accidental pilot project for other countries in the region. The high profile of the VACs in the EMOP countries acted as an incentive for formation / galvanizing of similar structures in other countries. This was encouraged by the RVAC, which invited representatives from non-EMOP countries to VAC workshops during this period. This made it easier to include other countries in later discussions on institutionalising VA in SADC (see next section).

## KEY ISSUES / LESSONS LEARNED

- **The food crisis had a catalysing effect on the development of a “VAC system”. Without the crisis NVACs in the six countries covered by the EMOP would have developed much more slowly.**
- **The partnership with WFP in the rolling assessments had positive implications: funding, high profile, links with decision making. On balance, these outweighed the drawbacks of being food aid focused and knocking the RVAC “off-course” in terms of its longer term plans.**
- **The high profile of the NVACs in the six EMOP countries acted as an incentive for other countries in the region to form / galvanise VAC structures and learn from the rolling-assessment experience. This made it easier to include other countries in subsequent discussions on institutionalising VACs in SADC.**
- **Undertaking an institutional analysis clearly shows where the RVAC and NVACs were “placed” relative to the conception of vulnerability and other key stakeholders. Institutional analysis helps identify potential sources of collaboration / tension / duplication.**
- **In regional – national relationships, a balance has to be struck between regional uniformity on the one hand and relevance and ownership at national level on the other. This balance can be difficult to achieve, especially when relationships are more or less informal. It is important therefore to establish clear and mutually agreed responsibilities.**
- **In general, strong links between NVACs and central decision making organs of government are to be encouraged. The possibility that these links could be used by governments to repress or distort VAC findings reinforces the case for enshrining the right of VAC members to produce “minority reports” using their own logos.**
- **A committee structure has strengths which include encouragement of consensus, reduction of duplication and increased institutional buy-in. A key weakness is consensus driven pressure not to “rock the boat” and be critical of committee process or findings. This again argues for robust mechanisms that ensure that constructive dissent is welcomed and that dissenting VAC members are not ostracised from future activities.**

## 6. BEYOND VULNERABILITY TO FOOD INSECURITY: VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF NEW MEANINGS OF VULNERABILITY AND LINKS TO POVERTY MONITORING.

During the rolling assessment process, the chairmanship of NVACs, their institutional homes, composition and linkages to other assessment activities and decision making bodies varied widely by country. In the context of the food emergency, these issues were not of major concern: what was critical was to produce the required information on time and to disseminate widely. In the wake of the rolling assessments, however, how best to establish the VAC as permanent analytical structures at national level is a key question. Without an institutional anchor, the NVACs could simply cease to exist outside of the emergency situation. The considerations involved in institutionalising the NVACs are relevant for other countries and regions involved in developing food security information systems.

How can the process of institutionalisation best be achieved? In part, this depends on the objectives of the VAC system. Up until the rolling assessments, there was consensus amongst the key technical agencies and SADC that the VAC system should be contributing first and foremost to national famine early warning and targeting through providing information and analysis on vulnerability to food insecurity. During the assessments, the scope of the NVACs was broadened to address other vulnerabilities (in round 2) and was deepened to get a better understanding of livelihoods, vulnerability and the links to poverty (in round 3).

The following table illustrates how the scope of vulnerability assessment has changed in Southern Africa over the years and suggests some options for the future.

**Table 3: The Changing Scope of “Vulnerability Assessment” in Southern Africa**

Thematic Area	Comments
1. Vulnerability to national food insecurity, focus on food availability and external hazards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Original brief of the Regional Early Warning System (REWS) 1990 onwards</li> <li>• Included as part of the “rolling assessments” (August 2002 – May 2003)</li> </ul>
2. Vulnerability to household food insecurity using an indicator / income accounting approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Original FEWS and WFP approach</li> </ul>
3. Vulnerability to household food insecurity using HEA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Original SC (UK) approach used in EC funded project and through FAO in Mozambique</li> <li>• Later taken up and adapted by WFP, FEWS-NET and the VAC system pre-2002</li> <li>• Part of the “rolling assessments” (August 2002 – May 2003)</li> </ul>
4 Focus on calculation of food aid needs and monitoring using a household emergency food needs questionnaire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part of the “rolling assessments” (August 2002 – May 2003)</li> </ul>
5. Acute malnutrition of children under 5 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part of the “rolling assessments” (August 2002 – May 2003)</li> </ul>
6. Broader humanitarian agenda to include health, HIV/AIDS, water and sanitation, child protection, education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part of the “rolling assessments” (August 2002 – May 2003)</li> </ul>
7. To contribute to existing early warning systems by providing analysis and information on vulnerability to food insecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The focus of the VAC system 2004 onwards?</li> </ul>
8. To provide information on vulnerability to food insecurity <b>and</b> a broader range of vulnerabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The focus of the VAC system 2004 onwards?</li> </ul>
9. To provide a link between food vulnerability analysis, livelihood analysis, and poverty monitoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The focus of the VAC system 2004 onwards?</li> </ul>

The possibilities in the shaded part of the table have been discussed recently during a consultation process organised by the RVAC. This culminated at the end of July this year with a Regional Stakeholder Consultation on Vulnerability Analysis in the SADC Region<sup>31</sup>. A report on this Consultation is expected shortly. Each possibility has technical and institutional aspects, and these are relevant not just for Southern Africa but in all situations when choices on the future direction of VA information systems have to be made.

### ***6.1 Contributing to Existing Early Warning Systems by Providing Analysis and Information on Vulnerability to food insecurity***

VACs and existing early warning structures: Given that the NVACs are now moving toward using HEA-type tools as the methodology of choice for assessment of vulnerability to food insecurity, the most straightforward objective is Thematic Area 7 in Table 3. If this were the only objective, then the most obvious institutional home for the NVAC would be in the Ministry of Agriculture or the Disaster Management Authority, linked closely to the NEWU. This would appear to be the preference of SADC, as articulated in the RISDP. At the regional level, this would sit well with the current arrangement of the RVAC being chaired by the REWU and being clustered around the SADC Food and Natural Resources Directorate in Gaborone.

The need for more tools: As is clear from earlier parts of this paper, HEA goes beyond simple calculation of food aid needs, although this is often one of its key outputs. WFP, as a member of the RVAC, has an important mandate to ensure that the VAC system generates accurate estimates of food aid needs where these are relevant. At the same time, other potential uses of the information generated by HEA, relevant for early warning and also emergency response, should be assessed and presented by the VACs on the same footing as food aid estimates.

Having said this, one of the weaknesses of current emergency assessment systems - including HEA - is the absence of a proper market analysis to determine the correct blend of food and cash based emergency interventions. As a consequence, all too often we see a fall-back to the universal food aid solution, which is potentially counterproductive to food security. What is needed is a good field based methodology for conducting rapid market assessments. The RVAC, supported by SC(UK) and FEG / FEWS-NET could usefully take the lead in developing this and building capacity within the NVACs on rapid market analysis.

The link with nutrition assessment: Even if the VAC system or VACs in particular countries are to focus mainly on food security assessment only, then it will still be important to maintain strong links with other information systems. Anthropometry is particularly important. HEA-type VA seeks to quantify the impact of a particular shock or shocks on given population groups through an understanding of underlying livelihoods. The quantification of impact is given in terms of food / income equivalents. These quantifications are predictions upon which response is (supposed to be) based. As a partial measure<sup>32</sup> of (a) the accuracy / implication of the prediction in terms of nutritional outcomes / asset depletion and (b) the adequacy of the response, anthropometry has an important place. It follows that the VAC system should engage itself in coordinating with nutrition assessment initiatives geographically and in time so that results can be correlated and analysed in relation to each other. In order to achieve this, it is important that agencies with a demonstrated competence and mandate for nutrition assessment become more closely involved with the VACs at both national and regional level. The most obvious candidates for this role are UNICEF and / or IFRC.

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<sup>31</sup> Regional Stakeholder Consultation on Vulnerability Analysis in the SADC Region, Rosebank Hotel, Johannesburg, South Africa 26 – 28 July 2004.

<sup>32</sup> Anthropometric status also reflects changes in health and care variables which may not be related to food security.

## **6.2 Providing Information on a Broader Range of Vulnerabilities and Providing a Link Between Food Vulnerability Analysis, Livelihood Analysis and Poverty Monitoring.**

Institutional issues: If, in addition to food insecurity, the ambit of the VACs is broadened to encompass other vulnerabilities and poverty monitoring then the utility of positioning the NVACs in Ministries of Agriculture with close links to the NEWUs becomes more questionable. The logic of the RVAC coming under the FANR Directorate at SADC is also questionable.

There is a danger that too close an association between the NVAC and the NEWU / disaster management analytical unit would result in the perception that the VAC was firmly in the early warning / food security camp. As such, it could be difficult to “sell” the VAC’s potential for contributing to monitoring of other vulnerabilities, poverty monitoring and social impact monitoring. Experience suggests that these other information objectives would be best served by placing the VAC closer to the centre of general government decision-making. In this regard, the VAC would be better placed in an institution charged with a central policy analysis / planning function and /or one with a general high level executive decision making function. Linking closely with the central poverty monitoring unit within the Ministry of Finance or the Vice-President’s Office would be a possible example. Clearly, strong links would need to be maintained between the VAC and the NEWU / Ministry of Agriculture, as early warning should remain a core function of the VAC. One advantage of a more central placement of the VAC would be that it should help in the translation of vulnerability information into action in emergency as well as non-emergency situations. If another food crisis came along, putting the VAC at or near the centre of government decision making would normally be preferable to placement in a line Ministry<sup>33</sup>.

Recent experience in Malawi, Swaziland and Lesotho has strongly suggested that the process of institutionalisation benefits from the placement of a technical livelihood advisor on the NVAC to help steer the consultation process.

At the regional level, assuming that the chairmanship of the RVAC remains within SADC, would it really make sense for the RVAC to remain within the FANR Directorate, chaired by the REWU? Furthermore, would the location of the NVACs in central planning Ministries compromise the ability of a FANR-based RVAC to co-ordinate? The authority of the REWU in the RVAC (it currently chairs the RVAC) could over time be questioned by national level and regional level players. Arguably, the RVAC should be chaired by a different part of SADC, and moved completely out of the FANR-D. If this were to be the case then the REWU should certainly continue to be a core member of the VAC, but not its chair. This may not be possible, as SADC itself would need to be convinced first and the current indications<sup>34</sup> are that regional planners see the RVAC as contributing purely to early warning.

If it were possible, the critical question would be where should it be moved to and what implications would this have for international partners, all of whom continue to be firmly food / agriculture related (FEWS-NET, FAO, WFP and the food security part of SC(UK))? During a RVAC-NVAC meeting on July 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> 2004, it was agreed that the RVAC should be placed under the office of Chief Director of SADC so that it could “make important linkages to policy formulation processes” (RVAC 2004: 7). Discussions are also under way to expand the membership of the RVAC to include:

- SADC bodies covering social issues, health, poverty and HIV/AIDS
- OCHA and UNICEF

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<sup>33</sup> Although there are circumstances in which loosening rather than tightening links to decision-makers might be preferable, as the Zimbabwean experience shows. The possibility of needing to distance from the government can be catered for by enshrining the right of institutions on the VAC to produce “minority reports”. Whilst the VAC itself may not be able to do this, participating institutions should be free to do so, reporting under their institutional logo, not the NVAC’s.

<sup>34</sup> As articulated in the RISDP.

HIV/AIDS: NVAC assessments and monitoring need to distinguish as clearly as possible the various impacts of HIV/AIDS on different types of households, and could / should also look at the other side of the relationship i.e. the impact of food insecurity on the transmission of HIV and its progression to AIDS. There are a number of methodological possibilities:

- (a) Food security questionnaires: Some progress on this has been made through the use of proxy indicators derived from the questionnaires employed during the rolling-assessments (see appendices 5 and 6). NVACs could conduct and analyse surveys which used this approach. This could be done at a national scale – in which case the questionnaires would need to be very short, and sampling done to enable comparisons to be made between food economy zones. It could also be done at a more micro level, perhaps focusing on HIV/AIDS “hotspots”. In this case, the questionnaire could be more elaborate.
- (b) Incorporating HIV/AIDS affected households as specific population groups for village based HEA fieldwork. This could be done as part of the development of baselines and / or could be incorporated into the “problem specification” aspect of the methodology.
- (c) Using an “Individual Household” variant of HEA, using the same analytical framework but based around samples of households instead of wealth groups<sup>35</sup>.
- (d) Conducting focused case studies using PRA techniques.

Health, Education, Water and Sanitation, Child Protection: What are the relationships between food security and these issues and how should these be analysed? Here, it is useful to think in terms of: (a) health and education on the one hand and (b) water and sanitation and child protection on the other. On (a), ability to afford health and education expenses can easily be accommodated within the existing HEA methodology. This information is routinely collected by HEA as part of measuring household expenditures. To this extent, the VAC information systems will be able to link household food security with health and education if it (the system) goes down a “HEA only” route. Staying with the HEA only route would mean that the link to water and sanitation and child protection would be best achieved by co-coordinating VAC monitoring in time and geography with other initiatives which have these as their primary focus. Alternatively, the NVACs themselves could collect this information by using other instruments – e.g. questionnaires, and the Individual Household Approach to HEA (IHA) being developed by SC(UK).

Livelihood monitoring and poverty: There is much interest, not least from DFID, in linking vulnerability assessment to poverty monitoring. This is significant as DFID has been a major donor to the VAC process and is currently developing a Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Project. If the NVACs were to focus on using HEA as the main route into poverty assessment then there are at least two possibilities:

(a) At the macro level: Once baselines have been constructed, indicators - based on the livelihood patterns in the baselines – can then be selected for monitoring. As well as having an early warning function, such monitoring would serve to indicate more gradual changes in entitlements which would imply changes in poverty levels. Poverty would effectively be defined as the ability to meet basic food and non-food needs. It would theoretically be possible to do general comparisons of this between FEZs (to look for relative poverty levels). This could feasibly be one product of a national level monitoring system.

(b) At the micro level: As part of the livelihood monitoring system, detailed information using “classic” HEA could be collected in selected FEZs. It might be possible to use these as sentinel sites to feed into a broader picture, or they could just be case studies in their own right. In this case, owing to detailed calculation of incomes and assets, a further level of quantification of wealth and poverty would be possible, over and above that captured from macro-level monitoring.

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<sup>35</sup> This approach has been piloted by Save the Children in AIDS-affected communities in Mozambique and Swaziland.

In its usual format, however, HEA cannot examine poverty variables in relation to particular demographic groups such as female-headed households, elderly-headed, child headed etc., as it stratifies households by wealth group only. Moreover, although the approach is called *Household Economy*, most commonly the analysis is done at the level of the wealth group and not the individual household itself<sup>36</sup>. This makes it difficult to cross-tabulate standard HEA information with other types of socio-economic information (e.g. existing poverty, health, education, and child protection data) which *is* collected at the household level. Geographical associations between HEA data and household level data are possible, but these have their limitations.

As a final point, it should be noted that information systems already exist which try and assess poverty levels under existing PRSP processes. NVACs should try and link with these – not duplicate them, and this means that a sober assessment needs to be made of the “value added” of VAC information to existing poverty assessment systems. As a first step, a good stakeholder analysis of existing providers and consumers of poverty data and analysis needs to be undertaken. On the basis of this, relevant linkages between the NVACs and other players can be developed. It would appear that a considerable amount of work on these issues has been done under the VAC stakeholder consultation process organised by the RVAC.

#### LEARNING POINTS

- **There are a number of potential information objectives for the NVACs. Meeting these will be influenced by the institutional placement of the VAC vis a vis analytical and decision making structures of government.**
- **Tying NVACs to national early warning systems would help achieve one important information objective and is in line with SADC’s thinking. It may, however, be difficult to forge strong links into monitoring of non-food vulnerabilities, poverty monitoring and development policy decision making from an early warning niche.**
- **NVACs need to think about methodological mix. Relying on HEA as the only methodology would restrict the links between the NVACs and poverty and social sector monitoring. Additional tools are likely to be useful at times for specific purposes. A “HEA only” route could however be less complicated to implement and manage than a “hybrid” (HEA and other methodologies) route.**
- **Placing the NVAC in central government planning organs and or an institution that has top level executive power (e.g. the President’s office) would help achieve a stronger link with poverty analysis.**
- **Experience in Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland suggests that placement of a dedicated livelihood advisor on the NVAC can bring major benefits in terms of catalysing institutionalization processes.**
- **A stronger poverty focus for the NVACs has potential implications for the location, chairmanship and membership of the RVAC. If poverty links are strengthened and NVACs are housed away from Ministries of Agriculture and Disaster Management Authorities, it may be difficult for the RVAC to provide future leadership whilst it is chaired by the REWU and clustered around the Food and Natural Resources Directorate of SADC.**

<sup>36</sup> There are exceptions to this, however, e.g. in urban assessments, and in recently piloted “Individual Household Approach” (IHA) studies by Save the Children examining the impacts of HIV/AIDS and of changing world coffee prices.

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## **APPENDICES**

1. The RVAC Conceptual Framework (Draft) (Dated: 2001)
2. HEA versus a household questionnaire in the “Rolling-Assessments”
3. Recommendations from the Kariba Consultation (Sept. 2000)
4. Zimbabwe Questionnaire from the first round of Rolling Assessments
5. Comparing the three rounds of the Rolling Assessments
6. HIV/AIDS and the VACs

## APPENDIX 1: THE RVAC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



DRAFT



FANR VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE  
Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Sector Development Unit

### FOOD SECURITY AND VULNERABILITY TO SHOCKS: THE SADC FANR VAC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### I. SOME BASIC CONCEPTS

##### WHAT IS FOOD SECURITY?

Food security exists when all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FIVIMS: 2000). The concept of food security can be applied at various levels of aggregation from the global level to the individual level. Household food security means secure access to food at the level of the household as a unit. This is the level at which this conceptual framework is focussed.

##### WHAT IS VULNERABILITY?

**VULNERABILITY = EXPOSURE TO RISK + ABILITY TO COPE**

Vulnerability refers to the degree of exposure to factors that threaten well-being and the extent to which individuals, households and other social groups can cope with these factors. Vulnerability thus has two sides: an external side (exposure to shocks and stresses) and an internal side (ability to cope). The concept of vulnerability can be applied to a wide range of issues under the general heading of “well-being”. In the context of household food security, vulnerability refers to the degree of exposure to factors that threaten household food security and the extent to which people can cope with these factors.

When thinking about vulnerability, it is useful to distinguish between vulnerability to slowly changing trends and vulnerability to shocks. Slowly changing trends would include such factors as gradual demographic changes, gradual rural – urban migration, gradual land degradation, and the gradually debilitating effects of chronic disease. Shocks can be further disaggregated into slow-onset and rapid-onset. An example of a slow onset shock would be crop failure following poor rains, and an example of a rapid onset shock would be un-announced currency devaluation.

##### HOW DOES VULNERABILITY RELATE TO FOOD INSECURITY? THE CONCEPTS OF RESILIENCE AND ENTITLEMENTS.

Household food insecurity may be transitory, cyclical or chronic. Cyclical food insecurity is common in many rural areas in the SADC region, where many families go hungry on a seasonal basis during the months leading up to harvest. In addition to this, families may be exposed to particular shocks in the context of general trends. A household which is exposed to an adverse trend or shock may, as a result of this, experience food insecurity for a period of time (transitory food insecurity) before recovering to regain food secure status. In contrast, another food secure household, faced with exactly the same external vulnerability profile may fail to cope to the level required to recover full food security. In this case, the household will become chronically food insecure. Relative to the first household, this second household may be said to be less resilient (i.e. it has higher internal

vulnerability). Finally, a third food secure household, when faced with the same shocks and stresses as the first two may be able to cope with the external environment so well that it never experiences food insecurity. Such a household may be said to be relatively very resilient.

The degree of internal vulnerability of a social unit (e.g. household) can be viewed as being a function of the *entitlement status* of that unit. Entitlements are a set of social and economic conditions which grant people the right to (or expectation of) nutritional satisfaction. This might be achieved through their being endowed with assets for direct production of food, or it might be achieved through exchange opportunities e.g. using labour power for wage earning, undertaking petty trade, growing cash crops and buying food with the income from sales, or renting out land and buying food with the rent income.

## II. VULNERABILITY TO SHOCKS: THE SADC FANR VAC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

SADC FANR VAC has a particular conceptual framework for vulnerability assessment. This framework is derived from the work of Save the Children Fund (UK), and is influenced by developments of this by other agencies including FEWS-net, FAO and WFP. **It should be pointed out that the conceptual framework focuses on slow and rapid onset shocks. In its current format it does not focus on slow changing trends. This will be the subject of a further paper which will focus more specifically on the relationship between vulnerability, poverty and livelihoods.**

People's livelihood systems are affected by both internal and external factors. Vulnerability assessment attempts to provide an understanding of how and to what extent the combination of external and internal vulnerability affects the livelihoods of people. Linking this information together in a dynamic way provides valuable information and analyses to decision-makers to predict the likely impact of shocks on given population groups, leading to more effective emergency and development response planning. Vulnerability assessment has proven itself to be a useful and practical tool to understand and predict the likely impact of drought and other shocks on crop production amongst the rural poor. It is increasingly being used to

understand the impact of other shocks such as floods (Mozambique), HIV/AIDS (Zambia), and is increasingly being used in non-rural settings (Zimbabwe, Angola). Outside of the SADC region, vulnerability assessment has been successfully used to understand the impact of policy changes such as devaluations, sharp price increases, changes in income, conflict.

Because it takes a holistic view of how people live, the threats they face, and the extent to which they can deal with these threats, vulnerability assessment can lay the foundation for the design of a broad spectrum of interventions. These may be emergency and short-term livelihood protection (such as identifying food aid requirements); pre-emptive livelihood protection (such as establishing grain

### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Sometimes, confusion arises because different agencies working on vulnerability assessment in the SADC region use slightly different terminology, even when they mean almost the same thing. What the VAC has decided to call "*vulnerability assessment (VA)*" is conceptually comparable to the SC (UK) Household Economy Approach (HEA), and the FEWS-Net Food Economy Approach (FEA), which themselves share many more similarities than differences.

Some agencies or groups use the term "*vulnerability analysis*", while others prefer "*vulnerability assessment*", even when they may define parallel processes.

In essence, all of these different names encompass the same key conceptual and methodological elements, which include the following.

- A baseline livelihoods assessment
- Monitoring hazards or shocks that affect livelihoods
- Assessing risks facing different population groups

In trying to articulate a common methodological framework to promote vulnerability assessment/analysis in the SADC region, the VAC will continue to use the term "*vulnerability assessment*" to encompass the above key elements in order to harmonize its own

banks that can be utilised in times of need), or longer-term interventions promoting livelihood activities that seek to increase the resilience of particular groups to future shocks (such as introducing a goat rearing programme to increase herd sizes).

The vulnerability assessment framework rests on linking the two sets of information (on external and internal vulnerability) together in a way that allows for on-going analysis of the effects of different shocks. First: an understanding of *household livelihood systems* in the geographical area of interest, using baseline information. This can be gathered in different ways depending upon the scope of the enquiry and the time available. Livelihood information provides the crucial context, explaining which households are vulnerable to different shocks, why they are vulnerable, and how they are likely to be affected. Households are grouped into wealth categories to facilitate analysis. This information may be generated as part of the vulnerability assessment itself, by conducting a baseline study, or existing baseline studies may be used. The other essential set of information is *hazard information*, which helps identify actual or impending external shocks that may affect livelihood systems. Different types of monitoring systems can be used to provide particular shock information. Early warning systems, typically provide information on climatic changes, and crop growth, and are thus ideal for use in the context of drought (slow-onset) and also flooding (more rapid onset).

By knowing how and where vulnerable people live, the impact of a hazard on the basic needs of different groups of people can be analysed. This identifies groups at risk, as well as possible outcomes or affects on livelihood systems that may arise as a result of the shock, enabling relevant intervention strategies to be devised.

**Baseline information** refers to the ways in which people usually obtain food and cash to buy food and other basic needs such as health care and education, given the capabilities and assets at their disposal. It is thus essentially an assessment of livelihoods, based on a combination of fieldwork (both qualitative and quantitative) and secondary data (e.g. prices, climate and crop production). A typical baseline study will generate sets of data explaining the relative importance of different production options (such as crops, fish, livestock, wild food) and exchange options (labor, livestock sales, petty trade) for different population groups in a reference year. In other words, it explains the relationship between production and exchange entitlements in determining livelihood outcomes, that is to say the extent to which households can meet their basic needs. Without this understanding of how populations normally obtain food and cash, it is impossible to understand the potential affects of a hazard on livelihood systems. By understanding the effects of a hazard on people's access to food and income, appropriate responses can be designed to meet emergency needs while continuing to support longer-term food security.

**Hazard information** refers to the traditional early warning data such as weather, crop production and price and market information and other 'shock' indicators typically analyzed by early warning officers. This set of information is essential in order to understand the nature and magnitude of a shock and the specific manifestation of this shock in a geographic setting. Many types of hazard information are already being collected in SADC countries through existing government monitoring systems. In particular, National Early Warning Systems (NEWSs), which exist in all SADC member countries, typically comprise an extensive network of local officials and agencies responsible for gathering information on agricultural and socio-economic conditions. In addition to various government departments, partner agencies associated with the NEWS include UN and donor agencies, such as WFP-VAM, FAO, and FEWS-Net, as well as various national and international NGO's, all of which help gather, cross-check, analyze, and disseminate early warning information.

In contrast to hazard information, which is more or less available in a standard form across the SADC region, the availability and quality of baseline information varies greatly between, and even within countries. Even where good baseline information does exist, it is seldom used to its full potential for food security and livelihood analysis. Moreover, there is still a long way to go in combining hazard and baseline information in the region.

## VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT: SOME KEY DISTINCTIONS

For the initial assessment of vulnerability and for the subsequent monitoring, some information system methods focus on the exposure to shocks (external vulnerability), while others focus on people's ability to cope (internal vulnerability) and yet other information systems cover both aspects of vulnerability. It is this emphasis on different methodology that determines to a large degree the types of methods used. As noted above, SADC FANR VAC favours a combination of both external and internal assessment techniques for both the initial assessment and subsequent monitoring.

The following highlights the focus of the three types of information system methodologies as practiced in the SADC region.

Methodologies focusing on **external vulnerability** (also termed “**shocks**” or “**hazards**”) include: classic early warning monitoring as undertaken by the SADC NEWSs and the REWU, remote sensing and climate monitoring as undertaken by national meteorology units, and the RRSU and DMC at the regional level, and traditional FEWS monitoring, which combines the two. These rely on primary data, as well as secondary data and information (both quantitative qualitative).

Methodologies focusing on **internal vulnerability** include: the VA baseline studies conducted by SC (UK) and more recently by FEWS-Net. These rely heavily on primary data and are both quantitative and qualitative in nature.

Methods focusing on **combining internal and external assessment** include: the combination of VA baseline plus hazard information to arrive at a “problem specification”, which enables various outcome scenarios or risk to be assessed. This type of assessment is used and promoted by SC (UK), FEWS-Net, WFP/VAM, and FAO and encompasses the conceptual framework of the SADC FANR Vulnerability Assessment Committee.

## VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT: ENHANCING DECISION-MAKING

The analytical framework adopted by the SADC FANR VAC provides a direct link between vulnerability baseline information and hazard (shock) information. The ability to use this link to model food security and livelihood outcomes is crucial for predicting areas and populations vulnerable to acute or chronic food shortages and other threats to livelihoods, and for programming appropriate responses.

**More appropriate food aid planning.** Vulnerability assessment baselines provide the critical context for interpreting hazard information, particularly under a potential emergency situation. For instance, using recently acquired (May 2001) baseline information from the Siavonga Valley in Zambia, it was immediately possible to determine the likely effects of recent production shortfalls on overall household access to food this year in the study area. The associated figure illustrates the effects of this year's production on household access to food for poor households in the study area. The bar on the left represents total access to food for these households for the reference year 1999/2000<sup>37</sup>, while the bar on the right shows what happens to their access given this year's projected production levels. While decision-makers may have been concerned about the possible impact of reduced production levels, particularly for maize, it is clear from this analysis that this year's projected production alone will not lead to a food deficit in the study area. However, based on a less complete analysis in March 2001, Siavonga District was put on the list of areas requiring food relief following a Disaster Management meeting (under the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit, Office of the Vice President). The prediction that the District will need assistance is based at least in part on the obvious drop in maize production (see problem specification in graphic).

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<sup>37</sup> Total access is derived by combining the relative values of both food and cash income in food equivalent terms.

Incorporating the findings of vulnerability assessments into food security analysis helps to put these production declines into perspective. This allows analysts to weigh losses in one food source against other sources of food. In this case, because maize as a percentage of total food is not very significant, even a substantive drop in maize production will not necessarily lead to a food shortfall.

**Multiple-hazards analysis.** Hazards come in many forms and often occur simultaneously. These may include natural phenomena such as droughts, floods, pests, desertification, as well as political, social and economic conditions affected by raising price, foreign exchange problems unemployment in urban areas, HIV/AIDS, etc. The example above illustrates how the baseline profiles, combined with hazard information, provide powerful tools for understanding the effects of different ‘shocks’ on household food security. The baseline profiles are extremely versatile tools for understanding a wide range of issues, beyond agricultural production problems.

**Disaster prevention and preparedness.** Being able to see the effects of one or more emerging hazards on household access to food and other basic needs helps in the design of emergency and disaster preparedness interventions. The connection itself between specific hazards and livelihood patterns (which are vulnerable to these hazards), provides guidance on how to prevent disasters through development planning, and how to plan for disaster response where necessary.

**Development planning for poverty reduction and enhancing livelihoods.** Aside from facilitating a greatly enhanced understanding of food aid and emergency needs, baseline profiles provide important information for promoting livelihoods through improved development planning and programming. For instance, knowing that poor households in a particular area generate the majority of their income from labor or trade, rather than say from agricultural production, helps in the design of more appropriate longer term support mechanisms. In the above example, providing agricultural inputs may not be as appropriate as providing market support as a means of assisting the poor.

In summary, vulnerability assessments enable us to...

- Provide ongoing and solid justifications of the emergency response requirements (both food and non-food needs) for different populations groups.
- Target resources to those who would benefit from them most.
- Provide analyses and arguments for possible market-based solutions to food insecurity.
- Outline areas appropriate for development intervention that can reduce poverty in rural areas.
- Run pre-season scenario analyses for contingency planning.
- Identify links between household food security and issues such as education, health, migration, conflict, etc.
- Develop strategies for preventing and mitigating poverty and enhancing livelihoods by understanding and reducing the vulnerability of populations to particular shocks.

## APPENDIX 2: HEA VERSUS A HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE “ROLLING ASSESSMENTS”

In relation to analyzing vulnerability to household food insecurity, there were two distinct conceptual frameworks used in the assessment process. The first was that employed by the food security assessment questionnaire and the second that employed by the HEA / RiskMap methodologies. In Mozambique in Round 2 semi-structured RRA techniques were used.

The table shows where and when the different approaches were used in the rolling assessment process.

<u>Country</u>	<u>Round 1</u>		<u>Round 2</u>		<u>Round 3</u>	
	Quest.	HEA	Quest.	HEA	Quest.	HEA
Lesotho	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Malawi	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Mozambique	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Swaziland	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Zambia	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Zimbabwe	Yes	No	Yes <sup>38</sup>	No	Yes	No

When comparing the two approaches it is necessary to split the comparison into two parts:

- Comparing HEA and the questionnaire in round 1 (August 2002) and round 2 (December 2002)
- Comparing HEA and the questionnaire in round 3 (April 2003)

### **A. Comparing HEA and the Questionnaire in Rounds 1 and 2**

#### ***A.1 Conceptual Framework of Food Security Assessment Questionnaire:***

Households require a minimum amount of food every month for consumption. If we want to predict food security over any given period, we need to compare the current and future ability of the household or community to access food, and compare this with their consumption requirements over the timeframe in question. For this we use the consumption year which in Southern Africa starts after harvest (around April / May) and ends immediately pre-harvest (March /April). The first and second round assessments focused on the period August 2002 – April 2003 and December 2002 – April 2003 respectively. The right-hand portion of the diagram below illustrates this.

Current ability to access food means how much food a household has or could get from its stocks of food, cash on hand, savings and assets. It was assumed that some households may have stocks of grain remaining from the harvest in April 2002. Cash on hand and savings – such as the money earned from selling cash crops that has not yet been spent - can be converted into food by purchases. Assets, such as livestock, can be converted into food by selling for cash and then buying food, or by bartering

<sup>38</sup> At community level only; not household

directly for food. The top-left portion of the diagram shows how current ability to access food is estimated.

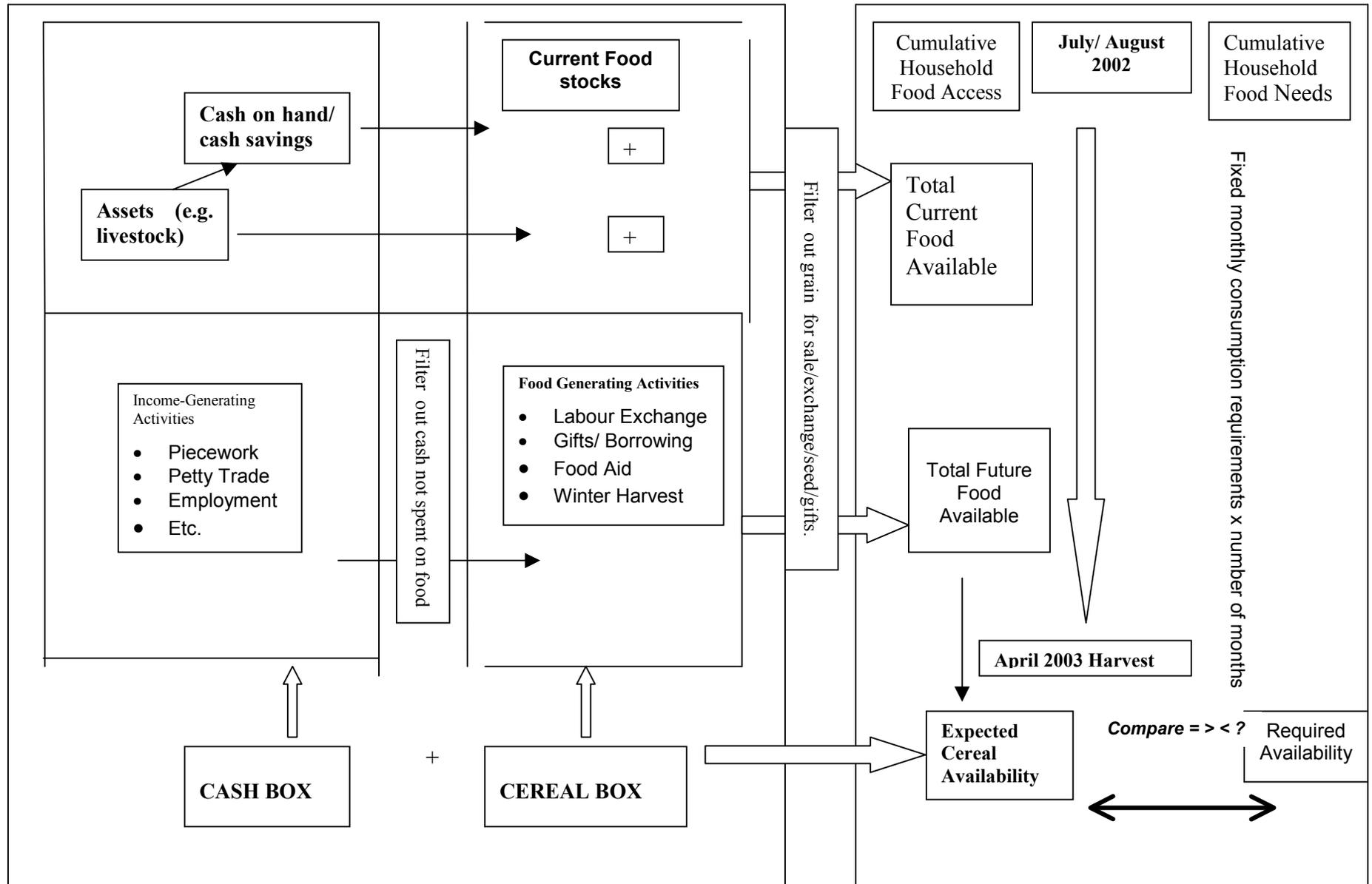
Future ability to access food depends on the ability to earn food or cash, or to be provided with these (through gifts, loans or aid). In areas where a second or winter harvest can be reaped, this is another means of accessing food. "Food-generating activities" are those through which food is accessed directly, while "income-generating activities" are those through which cash is earned, with this cash potentially being used to purchase food. The bottom-left portion of the diagram shows how the future or expected ability to access food is calculated.

In estimating amounts of cash or food that is available or can be earned by the household, two considerations need to be taken into account:

- (a) Not all cash earned is spent on grain (people spend money on other goods and services)
- (b) Not all food produced or earned is consumed (some may be given away, sold, exchanged or used for seed)

Hence there are two filters in the diagram overleaf, represented by broken lines: the first filters out non-food expenditure, and the second filters out non-consumed food.

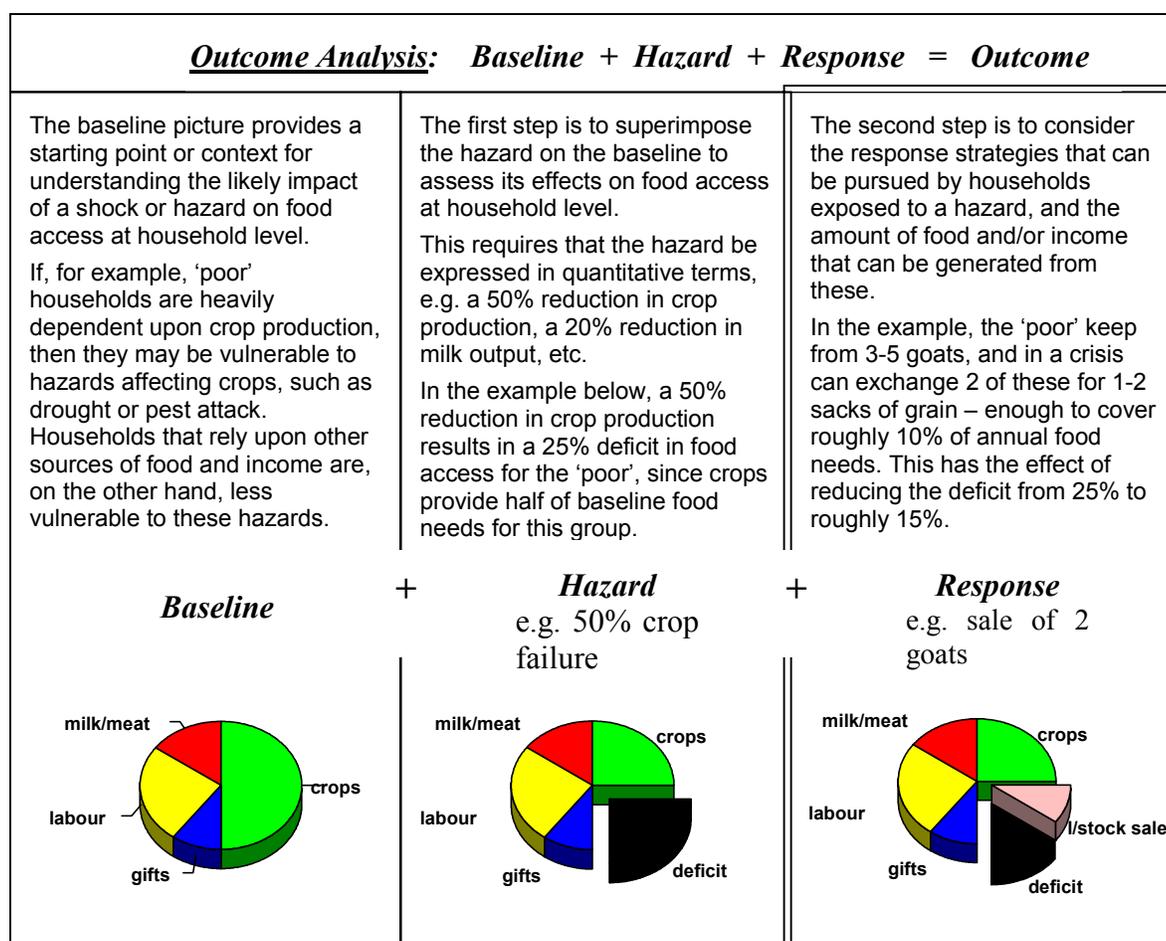
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK USED FOR HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY QUESTIONNAIRE IN AUGUST AND DECEMBER 2002



## A.2 Conceptual Framework of the Household Economy Approach

This approach was used by the Swaziland VAC in the first round of assessments (mainly to cross-check food aid estimates from the questionnaire) and also in the second round, where it was the only approach used. It was also used by the Zimbabwe VAC in the second round in four Food Economy Zones only (out of a possible total of 25?).

The approach taken was to define a “baseline year” and then model the impact of the shocks experienced in 2002-03 on to that year to derive food security outcomes for different wealth groups in the various FEZs. The degree of food insecurity was quantified in terms of caloric deficits which were then converted to maize equivalents to calculate food aid requirements. The following diagram explains the basic mechanics of the approach (interested readers can obtain an in-depth explanation of the approach from “The Household Economy Approach: A resource manual for practitioners”. Save the Children, London. (2000).



= ***Outcome***

The outcome represents the final result, expressed in terms of the food intake deficit likely to result from a particular hazard, once household-level responses have been taken into account.

In the example, the conclusion is that a 50% crop failure is likely to result in a food intake deficit of 15% for ‘poor’ households. Similar analyses undertaken for other types of household (e.g. the ‘middle’ and the ‘better-off’) will indicate their vulnerability to this particular hazard.

### **A3. Assessment of the two approaches**

*Questionnaire:* The main problem with the cross-sectional questionnaire approach is that there is no way of knowing the realism of predictions about the future (the bottom half of the first diagram). Moreover, as the technique was administered in a questionnaire format, the scope to probe and cross-check in the field is limited. This creates risks in using the approach if uncorroborated by other methods. These drawbacks would be remedied to some degree if there were panel data which reported on what actually happened in past seasons (e.g. to labour markets) against which the responses could be compared, but such data is very difficult to find. The major strength of the approach is that it is simple enough for a large number of enumerators to be trained in it quickly. It can be deployed quickly over large areas by non-specialist staff. Also, it is a relatively transparent method: the questionnaires themselves as well as the entered data can be inspected easily and re-analysed if necessary.

*HEA:* This approach has the advantage over the questionnaire approach of modeling the outcome of shocks on the past. The prediction does not depend on the responses from interviewees about what is likely in the future. The problems with the approach are as follows: (a) it is much more difficult to administer than the questionnaire approach and requires a high level of skill and experience to do well; (b) in its usual format, HEA does not disaggregate households demographically (e.g. into female-headed households, elderly-headed, child headed) as it stratifies households by wealth group only; (c) although the approach is called *Household Economy*, in fact the analysis is done at the level of the wealth group and not the individual household itself. This makes it difficult to cross tabulate HEA information with other types of socio-economic information (e.g. existing poverty, health, education, child protection data) which *is* collected at the household level. Geographical associations between HEA data and household level data are possible, but these have their limitations, and; (d) very often it is not possible to revisit the data generated by HEA to do further analysis or check for veracity. Data could be stored on spreadsheets and made available to interested parties, but often isn't due to time constraints.

Overall, HEA used against a good baseline is more trustworthy than a questionnaire approach without a baseline in terms of generating food aid needs. This is because it does not rely on respondents subjective opinions of the future. In HEA, certain assumptions *are* made about the future, but these are modeling assumptions to do with hazards (e.g. the likelihood of sudden price increases) which in any case apply also to the questionnaire approach.

### **B. Comparing HEA and the Questionnaire in round 3**

In the final round, HEA was used in Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland and Zambia. A food security questionnaire was used in Zambia and Zimbabwe, with Mozambique opting for a “multi-sectoral” questionnaire. In this round the questionnaires and the HEA approach shared a similar conceptual framework. The framework was essentially similar to that depicted above for HEA, with the difference that the ‘Baseline year’ was in fact 2002-03. The fact that the questionnaires based their projections on a retrospective analysis of the previous year removed one of the major drawbacks of the first two rounds - the over-reliance on future perceptions. The key differences between the questionnaire and HEA in the third round were as follows:

1. As in rounds 1 and 2, the questionnaires used cereals (and in the case of Zambia root crops) only to calculate calorie availability, and hence likely deficits. The HEA, on the other hand, took into account all food sources. The HEA therefore had the advantage of not having to *assume* that cereals / cereals plus root crops made up a certain proportion of caloric intake. All other things being equal, this would have resulted in a more reliable estimate of caloric deficits for 2003-04.

2. By gathering household-level data on food security and some other sectoral issues, the questionnaire approach was better able than HEA to analyse linkages between food security and other sectors.

3. The questionnaire approach was more transparent than HEA in that all of the raw data has been entered into a database and can be inspected. This is not the case with the HEA data: although it is usual to tabulate the summarised interview data in spreadsheets, the entire dataset has rarely been stored electronically. A new HEA database programme has now been developed which allows the storage of all such data, however.

4. In the case of the questionnaire, specialist expertise is required for each survey to design the “syntax” for carrying out data analysis, usually in the SPSS software. HEA can use the “off-the-shelf” RiskMap software or FEG Spreadsheet for each assessment, though their scope is more limited. There is also a debate about some of the programming assumptions used in RiskMap – indeed this is the main reason why FEWS-NET remains skeptical about the approach, however a new version of the software – RiskMap 2 – provides more flexibility.

### Appendix 3: Recommendations from the Kariba Consultation (Sept. 2000).

To enhance awareness and understanding of vulnerability assessment methods in the region, and based on recommendations from the VAC, SADC-FANR organised a High Level Vulnerability Assessment Technical Consultation in Kariba, Zimbabwe in September, 2000. The Technical Consultation, for the first time, brought together vulnerability assessment specialists and practitioners working within the SADC region, in addition to agency representatives from outside the region. It provided participants with an opportunity to inform each other of the latest developments in vulnerability assessment, including practical experiences, lessons learned, and, with the participation of country representatives, an assessment of the information needs of current and potential users of vulnerability assessment information products. Country level working groups provided an opportunity for users to identify the best approach for their respective country situation.

#### Recommendations:

- ***Institutional Structures and Coordination*** Member states should work towards developing appropriate institutional structures for coordination of vulnerability assessment related activities both, within government, and with non-governmental partners, including international agencies<sup>39</sup>.
- ***Awareness Building, Advocacy and Effective Use of Information.*** Efforts should be directed towards senior government officials, technical officers from government and other interested parties, as well as the general public in support of awareness-building towards effective and useful vulnerability assessment activities at country level and in the region.
- ***Harmonisation of Methods.*** In support of efforts at the national level, the SADC-FANR Vulnerability Assessment Committee should continue to work with key international, regional and national partners to harmonise methods and tools for effective vulnerability assessment work.
- ***Capacity Building.*** Based on a clearly identified need for training in vulnerability assessment techniques at national level, SADC-FANR in collaboration with international partners, should organise regional methodological training sessions with practical field exercises for member states
- ***Regional Information Dissemination.*** SADC-FANR should establish a vulnerability assessment information network to disseminate information of interest to the member countries, including vulnerability assessment reports and products from the countries themselves.
- ***Partnership Building and Resource Mobilisation.*** For the benefit of increased and effective vulnerability assessment work at national levels, the member states with the support of SADC-FANR should improve dialogue with and among donors and international agencies for the mobilisation of technical and financial resources.
- ***Capacity of SADC-FANR VAC.*** Given the many responsibilities assigned to the SADC-FANR Vulnerability Assessment Committee, in particular in support of in-country vulnerability assessment activities, such as training, harmonisation of methods and resource mobilisation, it is recommended that SADC-FANR carefully assesses the capacity of its Vulnerability Assessment Committee, including its ability to effectively fulfill these many and varied tasks.
- ***Harmonisation and Collaboration among International Agencies.*** International agencies and partners are encouraged to increase collaboration and harmonisation at international and national levels to achieve a more coherent and efficient support programme towards the development of vulnerability assessment activities at country level and in the SADC region as a whole.

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<sup>39</sup> The Kariba workshop gave added impetus to the formation of national VACs.

### Appendix 4: Zimbabwe Questionnaire from the first round of “rolling-assessments”

# of HH members	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Required # of 50 kg Bags: Start Aug. to End March 2003	4	5.5	7.5	9.5	11.5	13.5	15.5	17	19	21	23	25	27	29

1. Researcher #: \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Date of survey: \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Province Name \_\_\_\_\_ 4. District Code |\_|\_|

5. Village Name \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Village Code |\_|\_| 7. Household Number |\_|\_|

8. Household Code |\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_| 9. FEZ (ID): |\_|\_|

#### A. HOUSEHOLD DEMOGRAPHICS

10. Sex of Respondent (circle) *male female both* 11. Sex of Household Head: *male female*

12. Age of head \_\_\_\_\_

13. Total number of people currently living in your household for the last two months (including non-family)? \_\_\_\_\_

	0-5 yrs	6-18 yrs	19-60 yrs	>60 yrs
14. Females				
15. Males				
16. Orphans				

17. Number of school aged children currently enrolled in school (both secondary and primary) \_\_\_\_\_

18. [Researcher: Based on the total number of HH members, what is the total required number of 50 kg bags the HH will require from August through March? Place that number of pictures on the ground and explain to the respondent that you would like to discuss how their HH is going to meet these needs.] Box 1:

#### B. FOOD FROM OWN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION (CEREALS)

What two main cereals did you grow in the 2001 - 2002 season , How many 50kg bags did you harvest, What is your current cereal stock

How many bags do you expect to sell or give away? Did you plant any winter cereals? What is your actual or expected winter harvest?

- **Note: Number of bags can include partials such as half (.5), third (.33) and quarter (.25) in # bags**

	# 50 kg bags harvested	# 50 kg bags in HH stocks NOW	Expected # to sell or given away	# 50 kg bags left for HH Consumption
<b>Main Cereal Crops</b>				
19.	20.			
21.	22.			
<b>Sub-total</b>				23.
<b>Winter Cereal Crops</b>	Actual or Expected Harvest			
24.	25.			
26.	27.			

Sub-total	28.	
<b>29. TOTAL</b> (cell 23 + cell 28)		<b>Box 2</b>

[Researcher: Remove the number of bags indicated in box 1 from the pictures (place to the side) and explain to the respondent that you want to understand how they will meet the remaining amount.]

### C. FOOD FROM OTHER DIRECT SOURCES

Apart from cereals from own production did **anyone in your household** get food from any of the following Y/N Roughly speaking, how many 50 Kg bags did your household receive from each source between April 2002 and March of 2003?

Cereal source	Receive Food?	Est. amount from Apr to March 2003 (50Kg bags)
30. Casual labour for food	Y / N	31.
32. Gifts of food from friends and relatives ( <b>not</b> food aid)	Y / N	33.
34. Other (eg bartering livestock for cereals, etc.)	Y / N	35.
<b>36. TOTAL</b>		<b>Box 3 (Cell 31 + cell 33 + cell 35)</b>

[Researcher: Remove the number of bags indicated in box 2 from the pictures (place to the side) and explain to the respondent that you want to understand how they will meet the remaining amount.]

## D. HOUSEHOLD INCOME SOURCES AND MAIN EXPENDITURES

### D.1 Cash Crops (cotton, tobacco, maize, rice, wheat, peppers, sunflower, groundnuts, castor, other)

What were the three main cash crops that your household grew last year and what was their total value for the whole year (April 2002-March 2003)?

37. One \_\_\_\_\_ 38. value: \_\_\_\_\_ 39. Two: \_\_\_\_\_ 40 value: \_\_\_\_\_ 41. Three: \_\_\_\_\_ 42. value: \_\_\_\_\_

### D.2 Direct Income Sources

Did your household receive income from any of the following sources? (complete table). If you compare the money you expect to get from each of these sources with what you got last year, do you expect to get more or less this year? Roughly speaking, what is the total expected value of each of these sources from April 2002 to March 2003)?

Direct Income Source	Receive Income?	Estimated value (Zim \$) for whole year (April 2002 to March 2003)	Expect to Get More this year ('03-'04) than last?
43 Casual labour	Y / N	44.	Y / N
45 Formal labour	Y / N	46.	Y / N
47 Remittances/gifts	Y / N	48.	Y / N
49 Petty trade	Y / N	50.	Y / N
51 Livestock sales	Y / N	52.	Y / N
53 Fruits/Vegetables sales	Y / N	54.	Y / N
55 Other :	Y / N	56.	Y / N



79. Researcher: Add the total number of 20 litre tins potentially available for consumption: (#72+#74+#76+#78= \_\_\_\_\_)

80. Researcher: Convert the tubers to their 50 Kg bag of maize equivalent using the look-up table below:

**Box 5:**

<b>20 litre tins of tuber</b>	3	6	9	12	15	18	21	24	27	30	33	36	39	42	45	48
<b>50 kg bags of cereal</b>	.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5	5.5	6	6.5	7	7.5	8

**G. Overall Outstanding Food Gap**

81. Researcher: After subtracting all of the cereal sources and substitutes from the initial HH requirements, what is the total food gap for this household from August through March 2003?  
**Box 1 – Box 2 – Box 3 – Box 4a – Box 5 = Box 6**

**Box 6:**

(This figure represents the maximum gap. If negative, this means there is a surplus)

**H. CURRENT FOOD AID?**

82. Is your household currently receiving food aid? Y / N    83. If so, which month did it begin? \_\_\_\_\_ 84. How many 50 Kg bags/mo.? \_\_\_\_\_

**I. CONSUMPTION AND DIETARY DIVERSITY**

85. How many times (meals) did the adults in this household eat yesterday (number of times)?

86. How many times (meals) did the children in this household eat yesterday (number of times)?

87. I would like to ask you about all the different foods that you have eaten in the last 7 days. Could you please tell me how many days you ate the following foods in the last 7 days. If the food item was eaten more than one time in one day, it should be counted as one.

<b>Food item</b>	<b># of days food item was eaten</b>		<b>Food item</b>	<b># of days food item was eaten</b>
	<b>0 – 7 days</b>			<b>0 – 7 days</b>
Cereals			Meat	
Roots/tubers			Eggs	
Sugar or sugar products			Fish	
Pulses & nuts			Cooking oil / fats	
Vegetables			Milk or milk products	
Fruits			Bread	

**J. DISTRESS COPING STRATEGIES** (In the past 2 months has your household had to...)

DISTRESS COPING STRATEGY TYPE	YES / NO		DISTRESS COPING STRATEGY TYPE	YES / NO
<b>88. CONSUMPTION STRATEGIES</b>			<b>90. INCOME STRATEGIES</b>	
Borrow food	Yes No		Sell all poultry to get food	Yes No
Purchase food on credit	Yes No		Sell all goats to get food	Yes No
Get food from relatives or friends outside the household	Yes No		Sell breeding and draft power cattle to get food	Yes No
Regularly limit size of portions at mealtimes	Yes No		Sell land, or gave up rights to land	Yes No
Regularly reduce number of meals eaten during the day	Yes No		Sell other assets to get food	Yes No
Skip whole days without eating	Yes No		<b>91. MIGRATION STRATEGIES</b>	
<b>89. EXPENDITURE STRATEGIES</b>			Take children out of school	Yes No
Reduce expenditure on health care	Yes No		Send children away to friends or relatives	Yes No
Reduce expenditure on education	Yes No		Forced to migrate to find work or food (you or anyone in family)	Yes No
Reduce expenditure on beer and tobacco	Yes No		92. Are you or anyone in your family thinking about leaving this place entirely to get food elsewhere (permanent migration)? )	Yes No
			If so, where is the farthest one: <b>Village District Harare Botswana South Africa Mozambique Other Country</b>	

#### K. SEEDS AND INPUTS FOR THE FORTHCOMING MAIN PLANTING SEASON

93. What is the **main cereal crop** that you plan on planting this coming season? *maize sorghum millet rice other*

94. For that cereal crop, do you have enough seed? *Yes No*

95. If not, what will be the major source of the seed? *purchase borrow government don't know other*

96. How does the area you plan to grow for cereals this year compare to last year? *Same area less area more area*

97. If less, what is the reason for your answer? *not enough money not enough labour lost rights to land don't want to risk other*

98. What is the **main legume crop** that you plan on planting this coming season? *beans cow peas groundnuts other:*

99. For that legume crop, do you have enough seed? *Yes No*

100. If not, what will be the major source of the seed? *purchase borrow government don't know other*

101. What is the **main non-cereal cash crop** you plan on planting this coming season? *tobacco cotton peppers vegetables none other*

102. For that cash crop, do you have enough seed? *Yes No*
103. If not, what will be the major source the seed? *purchase borrow government don't know other*
104. How does the area you plan to grow for cash crops this year compare to last year? *Same area less area more area*
105. If less, what is the reason for your answer? *not enough money not enough labour lost rights to land don't want to risk other*
106. Will you apply **fertilizer** to your fields this year? *Yes No*
107. If yes, what will be the major source of the fertilizer? *purchase borrow government don't know other*
108. Which crop will you apply the fertilizer to (circle all that apply)? *food crop cash crop*

**L. Overall Assessment**

**109. Researcher, in your own opinion, will this household require food aid for the period from now until November? Yes No**

**110. Researcher: In your own opinion, will this household require food aid for the period from December until March? Yes No**

**Nutrition Survey**

**Household Code** |\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|\_|

**M.1 Children 6-59 months**

ID #	H/H	DOB	SEX	Wt	Ht	Diarrhoea	ARI	BF	Immu	Vit A
01	F / M		F / M			Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
02	F / M		F / M			Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
03	F / M		F / M			Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
04	F / M		F / M			Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N

**M.2 Women of Child Bearing Age (15-49 years)**

ID #	DOB	Ht	Wt	Pregnant	Breastfeeding	Vit A
01				Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
02				Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
03				Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
04				Y / N	Y / N	Y / N

## **APPENDIX 5: COMPARING THE THREE ROUNDS OF THE ROLLING ASSESSMENTS**

### **Round 1: August 2002**

Table I (next page) shows the similarities and differences between the country assessments, including the role of HEA / Risk Map. On the latter, Food Economy Zones (FEZs) established by SC(UK) in the 1990's were used as a stratification criterion in all countries apart from Zambia, where they were created especially for the assessment and then used. Socio-economic analysis was normally done using wealth groups, as in HEA, although the methods used to derive these varied. A household food security questionnaire was the central instrument in all countries with the exception of Mozambique. Here the VAC used semi-structured key informant interviews (check).

All VACs apart from Malawi made an attempt to conduct anthropometric measurements on children under 5. In Lesotho, Zambia and Zimbabwe, an attempt was made to link this with the results of the household food security questionnaire. It was only in Mozambique however that sampling was done according to the 30 x 30 cluster rule necessary for accurate estimates of prevalence of under-nutrition (check). Some useful analysis was done in the case of Lesotho, which benefited from the services of two internationally recruited nutritionists.

HIV/AIDS got some attention in the first round. Secondary data was used for the most part and some with very minor analysis carried out on the Swazi data set. There was some useful analysis of the HIV – food security links in the Zambian case. Non-HIV/AIDS health related information was covered by VACs in Zimbabwe and Mozambique only. In contrast, agricultural input needs for the next planting season were covered by all NVACs apart from Mozambique, having been included in the questionnaire at the insistence of FAO and FEWS-NET.

**Table I: Methods and Themes in the July - August 2002 Assessment Round<sup>40</sup>.**

Country	Role of food security qnnaire.	Role of HEA / Risk Map methods	Key Thematic Areas (excluding household food security)						
			Nutrition	(a) National Food Balance sheet (b) Price analysis	Food policy analysis: (a) short term to include food aid response (b) longer term	HIV	Non-HIV health	Ag. Input needs	Core results / recommendations
Lesotho	Central	Sampling done according to FEZs. Wealth ranking used	Anthro. Survey (not 30 x 30), attempt to relate anthro to food sec. qnnaire results; Dietary consumption index; Need for nutrition surveillance system highlighted.	( a)Yes (b)	(a) Yes (b)	Secondary data; minor qualitative primary data	No	Yes, from qnnaire.	Food aid tonnages by district; most recs. related to food / agriculture emergency issues;
Malawi	Central	Sampling by FEZs. Wealth index constructed from qnnaire.	Not done, secondary data used.	( a)Yes (b)	(a) Yes (b)	Secondary data	No	Yes, from qnnaire.	Food aid tonnages by district; all recs. related to food / agriculture emergency issues
Moz.	Used in "less vulnerable" districts	Sampling by FEZs. Food economy approach apparently used but no evidence of this in the analysis	Anthro. Survey (30 x30) no link to food sec qnnaire results	( a)Yes (b)	(a) Yes (b)	Secondary data	Yes, diarrhea	No	Food aid tonnages by province; ; most recs. related to food / agriculture emergency issues but there are longer term recommendations also;
Swaz.	Central	Sampling by FEZs. Wealth ranking used; Risk Map simulation run to cross check food aid estimates from Questionnaire	Anthro. Survey (not 30 x 30), no link to food sec qnnaire results	( a)Yes (b)	(a) Yes (b)	Very minor HIV/AIDS analysis done with the qnnaire data	No	Yes, from qnnaire.	Food aid tonnages by agro-ecological zone; all recs. related to food / agriculture emergency issues
Zambia	Central	FEZs created and sampling done according to FEZs. Wealth ranking used.	Anthro. Survey (not 30 x 30), attempt to relate anthro to food sec. qnnaire results; Dietary consumption index	( a)Yes (b) Yes	(a) Yes (b) Yes	Some preliminary analysis of HIV/AIDS – food security links	No	Yes, from qnnaire.	Food aid tonnages by district; all recs. related to food / agriculture emergency issues
Zim.	Central	Sampling done according to FEZs; HEA done in 4 FEZs	Anthro. Survey (not 30 x 30), attempt to relate anthro to food sec. qnnaire results; Dietary consumption index	( a)Yes (b) Yes	(a) Yes (b)	Secondary data only	Yes, ARI and diarrhea (Sec.dat a	Yes, from qnnaire.	Food aid tonnages by district; all recs. related to food / agriculture emergency issues

<sup>40</sup> A VAC assessment was also done in Namibia in August – September 2002. The Namibian assessment used the same questionnaire as the 6 countries in the table. It was a "one-off". No subsequent VAC assessments were done in Namibia, due to the fact that the country did not feature in the WFP EMOP.

**Table II: Methods and Themes in the Second Round of Assessments (Nov – Dec 2002)<sup>42</sup>**

Country	Role of food security qnaire.	Role of HEA / Risk Map methods	Key Thematic Areas (excluding household specific food security variables)						
			Nutrition	(a)National Food Balance sheet (b) Price analysis	Food policy / intervention analysis: (a) short term (inc. food aid) (b) longer term	HIV	Non-HIV health	Ag. Input needs	Core results / recommendations
Lesotho	Central	Sampling done according to FEZs. Community wealth ranking used	Not done – outdated secondary data used Dietary consumption index calculated from questionnaire; Need for nutrition surveillance system repeated.	( a)Yes (b)	(a) Yes (b)	Some analysis of HIV – food security links attempted.	Yes, sanitation and water from questionnaire; qualitative analysis; secondary data	Yes, from qnaire.	Food aid tonnages by district; most recs. related to food based emergency issues; specific section on HIV.
Malawi	Central	Sampling done according to FEZs. Wealth index constructed from qnaire.	Great deal of anthro. detail including a 30 x 30 cluster survey done by the VAC	( a)Yes (b)	(a) Yes (b)	Yes: analysis of fs – HIV links from qnaire; sec. data; AIDS policies	Yes: from qnaires: diarrhoea, ARI, Measles, mortality (all for U5 children), water, sanitation	Yes, from qnaire.	Food aid tonnages by district; an indicator approach used for vulnerability to food insecurity; short and long term recs. most food related.
Moz.	(a) Multi-sectoral questionnaire (b) RRA for food security	Not used	Anthro. Survey (30 x30) no link to food sec qnaire results; vitamin A supplementation measured; supplementary foods and breast feeding,	( a)Yes (b)	(a) Yes (b)	Secondary data	Yes, multisectoral qnaire: diarrhoea, fever, conjunctivitis, skin diseases of children; access to safe water	Recent secondary data	Food aid tonnages by province; Short and/or longer term recommendations for all elements of multi-sectoral questionnaire: nutrition, HIV, health, education.
Swaz.	Not used	Central: HEA simulation run using Risk Map	No. The report highlights the need to conduct an anthro. survey	( a)Yes (b)	(a) Yes (b)	Recent secondary data	No	Qualitative narrative only	Best and worst case scenarios for food aid by FEZ
Zambia	Central	Sampling by FEZs- same sites visited as in August. Community interviews for wealth ranking. Food sec. results presented by FEZ.	Dietary intake form questionnaires	( a)Yes (b) Yes	(a) Yes (b) Yes	Solid by limited analysis of HIV/AIDS – food security links	Yes: water and sanitation from the questionnaire.	Yes, seeds from qnaire; secondary data for rainfall.	Food aid tonnages by district and various recommendations for government and cooperating partners for improving the emergency response.
Zim.	Community focus group interviews using a questionnaire	Sampling done according to FEZs; HEA done in 4 FEZs	It was not possible to carry out a nutrition survey	( a)Yes (b) Yes	(a) Yes (b)	Secondary data only	No	Yes, from community questionnaire	No updates of Food aid tonnages by district for communal areas, additions made for retrenched farm workers; indicator approach used for analyzing vulnerability to food insecurity; recs. focus on emergency issues only.

<sup>42</sup> As for the August assessments, all the NVAC reports were entitled: “Emergency Food Security Assessment Reports”

## Comparing the Second and Third Round Assessments

In comparison to December, there was greater use of *HEA / Risk Map methods*. These were central in Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland and were used in combination with (and were of roughly equal importance as) a questionnaire in Zambia. In Mozambique, once again a multi-sectoral questionnaire was the core instrument – this time including food security sections - and HEA methods were not used at all. The same was true for Zimbabwe.

As in December, *anthropometry* was reported on in Malawi and Mozambique. The VAC was involved directly in data collection in Mozambique only. Unlike December, the Zimbabwe VAC included anthropometry and related this to food security variables in the analysis.

All VACs presented a *national cereal balance sheet*, and *price analysis* for cereals / maize, and most made suggestions on *food security indicators* to monitor in the coming months. The main focus of *food policy / intervention* analysis was short term – related to the current food situation, with more limited coverage of broader and longer term food security issues (check).

Zambia and Zimbabwe were the only VACs to attempt analysis of *HIV/AIDS related variables* and to relate cross-tabulate these with food security variables. The analysis that they carried out, particularly Zimbabwe was the most extensive thus far by the VACs. The “multi-sectoral” aspect of this round of assessments was less than in December in general. It was only in Mozambique that there was more than a cursory analysis of *non-HIV health issues*, and only in Zimbabwe where there was serious analysis of the links between *educational attendance* and food security indicators.

In relation to *core results / recommendations*, it is noticeable that there is considerably less emphasis on food aid than in December. This is to be expected in Malawi and Zambia where food security prospects for 2003 – 04 were much better than 2002 – 03. In Lesotho and Swaziland, the distinction was made between the grim prospect of continued food insecurity into 2003-04 and the provision of food as a physical commodity to meet this. These VACs presented the food security outlook in terms of food / *income* deficits. The Malawi VAC recommended that price subsidy be looked into for later in the season when prices could rise above the means of the poor in some areas. In Lesotho, Mozambique and Zambia, short and longer term recommendations are given, and in Zimbabwe, recommendations are split between emergency and rehabilitation/mitigation. It is only in Mozambique, however, that the compass of the recommendations stretches beyond food security and agriculture into the “*multi-sectoral*” realm.

**Table III: Methods and Themes in the Third Round of Assessments (May-July 2003)<sup>43</sup>**

Country	Role of food security qnnaire.	Role of HEA / Risk Map methods	Key Thematic Areas (excluding household specific food security variables)							
			Nutrition	(a)National Food Balance sheet (b) Price analysis (c ) FS monitoring suggestions	Food policy / intervention analysis: (a) short term to include food aid response (b) longer term	HIV	Non-HIV health	Other sectors (Education, child protection)	Ag. Input needs	Core results / recommendations
Lesotho	Not used	Central	Not done	(a)Yes  (b)Yes  (c ) Yes	(a) Yes  (b) Yes	No	No	No	No	Food / income deficits by FEZ: best and worst scenarios. Both short and longer term recommendations given.
Although no analysis of intersectoral linkages was done, a matrix was developed to look at linkages between food security and other sectors										
Malawi	Not used	Central	Gives results of a national anthro survey.	(a)Yes  (b) Yes  (c ) Yes	(a) Yes  (b) No	Initial qualitative research only	No	No	No	Short term recs. only. No food aid recommended. Price subsidy (if necessary) recommended.
Moz.	Multi-sectoral questionnaire, includes food sec qns.	FEZs used as one of the units of analysis	Anthro. Survey (30 x30) attempt made to link food sec qnnaire results; vitamin A supplementation measured; supplementary foods and breast feeding.	(a)Yes  (b) Yes  (c ) Yes	(a) Yes  (b) Some	Secondary data	Yes, multisectoral qnnaire: diarrhoea, fever, conjunctivitis, skin diseases of children; access to safe water		No	(a) Number of people definitely in need of food aid; short –term multi-sectoral recs. (b) Number of people “at risk”; longer term agriculture and food security recs.
Swaz.	Not used	Central: HEA simulation run using Risk Map	No.	(a)Yes  (b) Yes  (c ) Yes	(a) Yes  (b) Yes	Reported findings of recent UNAIDS / GoS survey	No	Matrix developed (as for Lesotho)	No	Food / income deficits by FEZ: Most likely scenario given (check)
Zambia	Used in concert with HEA	Used in concert with FS questionnaire	Secondary data only	(a)Yes  (b) Yes  (c ) Yes (check)	(a) Yes  (b) Yes	Good deal of analysis of HIV/AIDS – food security links	Very small section on water and using old data		Yes,	Food aid not recommended. Short and long term recommendations made: all agriculture / fs related.
Zim.	Household qnnaire plus semi-structured community qnnaire are central.	FEZ used as a sampling stratum	Relates anthro. Data collected in a national nutrition survey to food sec data from the 3 <sup>rd</sup> round VAC survey	(a)Yes  (b) Yes  (c ) ? (check)	(a) Yes  (b) ?	Useful analysis relating different proxy indicators to different aspects of HFS	No (check)	Yes: educational attendance is related to food security, illness	Yes.	Food aid tonnages by district , socio-economic group and FEZ. Recs. are split between emergency and rehabilitation / mitigation. Almost all recs. are food sec. related

<sup>43</sup> As for the August assessments, all the NVAC reports were entitled: “Emergency Food Security Assessment Reports”

## APPENDIX 6: HIV/AIDS AND THE VACS

The emphasis on HIV/AIDS as being a major factor in the crisis facing Southern Africa first came to prominence with the visit of James Morris, UN Special Envoy for Southern Africa in August 2002. It was taken up by UNICEF which commissioned Alex de Waal to write a paper on the subject. This was first presented in October 2002 at the Victoria Falls workshop organized by the RVAC<sup>44</sup>. By December 2002, UNICEF's position was that Southern African crisis should in fact be characterized as being an HIV/AIDS crisis as opposed to being a food crisis. This point of view gained further ground after a visit of the UN Special Envoy on HIV/AIDS to the region in early 2003. The consensus view amongst many international agencies and governments was that the high levels of HIV/AIDS were what made the food shortages in Southern Africa different from other regions.

It remained the case, however, that there was very little empirical evidence to support the argument that HIV/AIDS was making a difference in the extent to which rural communities were and could deal with food insecurity. In response to this in February – March 2003, the RVAC conducted a retrospective analysis of VAC surveys from Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This indicated quite strongly that HIV/AIDS was having an effect. From a methodological point of view the report was significant in that it demonstrated that despite its shortcomings, the VAC data, if properly analysed, could show important relationships which went beyond merely calculating food aid tonnage requirements. From an institutional point of view, the report was useful in that it put the RVAC on the analytical map so far as HIV and food security was concerned, ensuring representation, and influence, at subsequent UN meetings on the subject<sup>45</sup>.

The report's findings were contentious in some quarters and further analysis of VAC data by UNAIDS consultants only partially supported the RVAC's conclusions. This led to a debate about the difficulties in isolating HIV/AIDS – food security relationships which culminated in a joint paper by the RVAC and UNAIDS, presented at a UN sponsored methodological workshop on HIV/AIDS in South Africa in September 2003<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> De Waal A “New Variant Famine in Southern Africa” (presented at the VAC workshop, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, October 2002).

<sup>45</sup> Since the RVAC published its study in May 2003, others have tried to apply a similar methodology to food security data. See: C-SAFE baseline studies in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. (Get ref.)

<sup>46</sup> Mdladla P, N. Marsland, J. Van Zyl and S.Drimie “Towards identifying the vulnerability of HIV/AIDS affected households to food insecurity. The RVAC-UNAIDS experience: Challenges and Opportunities” Paper presented at the UN RIACSO Technical Consultation on Measuring Vulnerability in the Light of an HIV/AIDS Pandemic: 9 - 11 September 2003, Johannesburg, South Africa.