

Drought and Hunger Southern Africa 1994-1996 (Four Horsemen Are Gathering In The Kraal)

From the reports I see (and visual impressions in Mozambique and Tanzania) I fear a severe drought - and therefore food security - crisis is on the move. While it could be alleviated - especially in Northern Mozambique, Tanzania and Angola - by late rains, a seriously below normal output now appears to be virtually irreversible. If that is the case it is imperative early warning leads to early amber lights and preparation for a red alert with tocsin by March 15 and a global appeal meeting by April 15 (about two months ahead of the 1991-1993 schedule).

If later or fuller reports available to you demonstrate that I am overly worried or all my subsequent suggestions are already in hand then my apologies - in either case Thank God! and in the latter my congratulations on being in a position to react so rapidly.

For at least Mozambique, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Angola the implications of a severely below normal set of 1995 harvests are devastating.

Mozambique has on the order of 2-3 million people who returned home after the 1994 harvest. If their first crop fails they are in absolute need of emergency food supplies if their lives are not to be at risk and if the whole economic rehabilitation process is not to be derailed.

Tanzania had relatively poor harvests in many regions in 1993 and 1994. Its physical reserves were also drawn down by loans to UNHCR/WFP for refugees and have not, as I understood it in September, been fully replenished. In addition it has severe fiscal problems. That means it needs funding for local purchases in surplus areas and transport to supply drought afflicted ones as well as (or instead of) imported food aid.

Zimbabwe already suffers from poor animal spirits of entrepreneurs which have been battered by the 1993 GDP collapse stemming from the last drought, devaluation's impact on imported capital goods and the discovery liberalisation applied to their support mechanisms too! A major loss of rural income and thus domestic demand will have a disastrous 2 to 3 year impact on investment and general business climate - i.e. there is a special case for work for food projects as a main vehicle of food security support.

South Africa's transitional problems - and the implicit over-demands of reconciliation, plus fiscal prudence, plus stemming the 1960-1993 rise in non-directly political violence stemming from the loss of hope and denial of human dignity, plus measures in the ANC's Plan - will be compounded by any serious loss of agricultural production. True enough a drought of lesser proportions than 1991/2 may not create a physical food security problem *per se*. But exports and entitlements will be lost, posing major external balance and fiscal problems.

Angola goes into 1995 facing the certainty of serious hunger and the real danger of pockets of starvation as a result of war even if 1995 harvests are good (albeit inevitably on lower than 'normal' hectareage) and the Lusaka Accords do hold with peace breaking out. With drought major food aid requirements arise for the provincial capitals and the agricultural areas swept into the 1993-94 third Angolan war. (1961-1975, 1980-1991, 1992-1994.)

I am less well informed on the other countries. However, if southern Malawi is afflicted this is even normally an area of massive under-nutrition and absolute poverty while Zambia is in the middle of attempting to restore fiscal stability and halt disintegration of household purchasing power, so that both countries are exceptionally vulnerable to shocks which have major direct impact on household incomes, fiscal support for household survival and the balance of payments. The overall impact on Botswana, Swaziland and Lesotho is unclear. Because all are net grain importers to a substantial proportion of normal year consumption they may be less affected at macro level. However, the entitlements and, therefore, the fiscal implications of any significant grain output fall would be serious.

About the rain there is little to be done beyond recording - and praying. About the response to its full or partial absence 1991-1993 indicates there is a good deal to be done - faster, more fully and on a more coordinated basis than was possible in 1991-1993 (which itself was much more effective than, and learned from, the not very effective 1984-1985 SADCC efforts):

1. The SADC Food Security Unit (your Unit) and its national analogues should pool all present data and forecasts by January 15 and hold an emergency meeting by January 30;
2. Unless the conclusions are much more reassuring than seems probable, FAO-WFP-UN Humanitarian-UNICEF should be approached tentatively January 15/definitively February 1 for a full-scale regional evaluation mission February 15-28;
3. Governments should immediately begin to estimate how much of what (food aid, cash for local purchases; logistic support of equipment, cash and or persons; foreign NGO backup to the domestic social sector; emergency water supply enhancement) they need to present (preferably) to WFP-FAO-UN Humanitarian-UNICEF mission and at the latest to an April 15 SADC/UN Humanitarian/UN Family/SADC Member States/Bilaterals-EU Pledging and Planning Meeting. Your Unit should - if possible - stand ready to provide technical assistance to national units in preparing these working plans;
4. SATCC should dust off 1991-1993 records and begin preliminary consultation and logistical planning for a new (probably significantly smaller) peak load allocation/handling blueprint. In addition it should consult Malawi and Mozambique

on the state of Ncala-Intralagos rail reconstruction and the possibility of emergency measures to increase capacity by the last quarter of 1995;

5. Your Unit could usefully consult with Global Coalition for African Co-Chairmen about how GCA could usefully participate in (sub) Regional efforts and also with World Bank which is (vied Zimbabwe loan in 1994) well aware food import requirements and both domestic purchasing power and fiscal base shrinkages play havoc with SAPs (or any coherent macroeconomic strategy designed under initial extreme scarcity of resource constraints). You might also wish to consider pre-consulting the IMF (I would suggest via the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe) to ascertain a) what effective trigger for IMF 'food security' drawing would be; b) how long it would take to secure it from time of application, c) whether such a drawing by an ESAF eligible country could be on ESAF terms (it should be but I fear cannot be under present IMF rules but nothing lost trying to alter them - the present MD would in principle be not unsympathetic). In theory each country could do this itself but a single approach, reported to all 11 CB's who could then consider several and/or joint approaches (e.g. on ESAF terms issue) is likely to be more expeditious.
6. Among the issues countries may wish to consider are channels of distribution. Donor response outside a recipient coordination - supervision - control framework tends to be fragmentary, uncoordinated, duplicative, incomplete, conflicting and nationally both fragmenting and decapitating. UN Humanitarian, WFP and UNICEF are allies in seeking national and regional coherence and coordination with the recipient governments and regional bodies as focal points. But how much they can assist depends on how well governments and regional bodies have coherent, practicable, well argued, strategic proposals with articulated capacity to implement them ready to put on the table.

Optimally most assistance would go to government emergency bodies and be channelled (not necessarily handled) by them. Other foreign official support could best be channelled via WFP and UNICEF who are sensitive to, and convinced of the value of, coordinating with governments and using domestic capacities to the maximum extent possible.

NGO's pose special problems. Optimally foreign NGO's should be required to support and to be accountable to domestic social sector bodies (e.g. Christian, Islamic, national Red Cross/Crescent) or local government. Realistically this cannot be a hard and fast line, but it can be reiterated as a desired route. Christian Aid, CAFOD, Action Aid, International Red Cross etc. do practice this approach. The burden of proof should be on those who choose not to do so.

Further governments should produced lists of preferred international NGO's. (Lists of unacceptable would probably be imprudent at this time.) Only too clearly at least three major foreign NGO's are inherently hostile to building government and/or domestic social sector capacity. If at all possible this drought should not be made an

opportunity for them to renew, consolidate, or advance their already far too widespread presence.

7. Water should be an integral part of SADC and Member State response/preplanning in 1995. In 1993 more people were driven from their homes by lack of water than of food - notably so in Mozambique. Two metropolises (Bulawayo and Beira) were on the verge of needing to be evacuated by the time 1993 rains restored supplies. If analysis is done in January-February something can be done to avert massive forced movements of people and livestock and to limit losses of livestock.
 - a. restoration of deteriorated protected springs and, especially, medium and deep wells;
 - b. management of reservoir releases on dammed rivers (a special South African-Swaziland-Mozambique coordination may now be practicable and useful);
 - c. emergency bringing forward of borehole drilling in severely at risk areas (e.g. much of Southern Mozambique and parts of central and western Tanzania);
 - d. emergency enhancement of capacity and identification of backup facilities for cities (especially Bulawayo and Beira) known to be at risk (e.g. annually at or beyond system capacity during the dry season even in normal years).
8. Work for food (wages for public works financed by aid food programmes sales into the commercial network) programmes need to be planned - and logistics put in hand now if they are to be substantial channels for making emergency food aid market friendly (for the rural commercial and transport sectors and for those producers with surpluses) and supportive of infrastructure rehabilitation, reconstruction and enhancement. Botswana does this moderately efficiently as did Zimbabwe in 1983 and 1984 but not 1992.
9. The issue of incentives (presumably in food but alternatively in cash) to low income workers who handle, transport, guard and distribute food aid needs to be faced squarely. Very low wage workers confronted with rising market food prices and hungry families will 'preempt' some food. It is both more efficient and more humane to identify by country (e.g. Tanzania, Mozambique, probably Angola, perhaps Zambia and Malawi) where such incentives are needed and to provide for recipient or donor finance in advance rather than to rant about 'leakages' after the event which is (at least in the first two countries cited) rather like complaining that water carried in a sieve in large part leaks away before it has been carried very far.
10. Yes - the scale of preparations proposed does entail expense - especially in respect to scarce analytical, logistic and programme preparation personnel time. And - at least on that scale - it may be over-preparation if late rains (as late as March-May in Northern Tanzania) are good. But the cost (in lives and national product) of not

preparing if there is (as seems 2 or 3 to 1 probable as of now) a severe food production shortfall is much higher. Insurance policies always cost; this one is no exception. The problem is time lag - in 1992 serious warnings began in late January, FAO/WFP came in April (pressured forward from June), the pledging conference was in June (and some pledges rather earlier), actual deliveries to consumers in Zimbabwe and Mozambique became significant over late August to late September which was just on time to avert mass starvation as Zimbabwe's capacity to import commercially and Mozambique's physical stocks were virtually extinct by then. I truly hope I am wrong on the situation but I doubt it. I also hope I am not being presumptuous by suggesting things you already have in hand or have better substitute measures in train. (Or perhaps I should hope I am since then regionally and nationally capacity is in good working order.) But I fear we are all still on a learning curve in dealing with the limitation of drought impact and the management of drought impact alleviation resources so that some of my ideas may be of use to you or some of the copied-to recipients. I am copying to a number of those with whom I was in contact in 1992 because the more key people have heard of the impending disaster and present risk the better for hungry Southern Africans. And if they hear from you and from me at about the same time, no harm is done, *au contraire* parallel messages from different sources are often mutually reinforcing.

The brutal reality is that Southern Africa will have to compete to secure adequate food aid. Demand is up (especially as a result of economic and political events in ex-USSR and ex-Yugoslavia) and supply is down (more because of fiscal and policy choices than actual physical unavailability). Therefore, the earlier, the more convincing and the better presented the Southern African case the better. That 1991-1993 is viewed in aid circles as a notable success and some credit is given to country and SADC initiatives is a plus point to build upon.

My concerns, as you know, are first that Southern Africans are fed and collateral human and economic costs of drought minimised; second that this be done in ways which increase African (government and social sector) capacity to design, to operate and to build as well as utilise domestic resources; and third is done in a regionally coordinated way as a significant aspect of achieving the second objective.