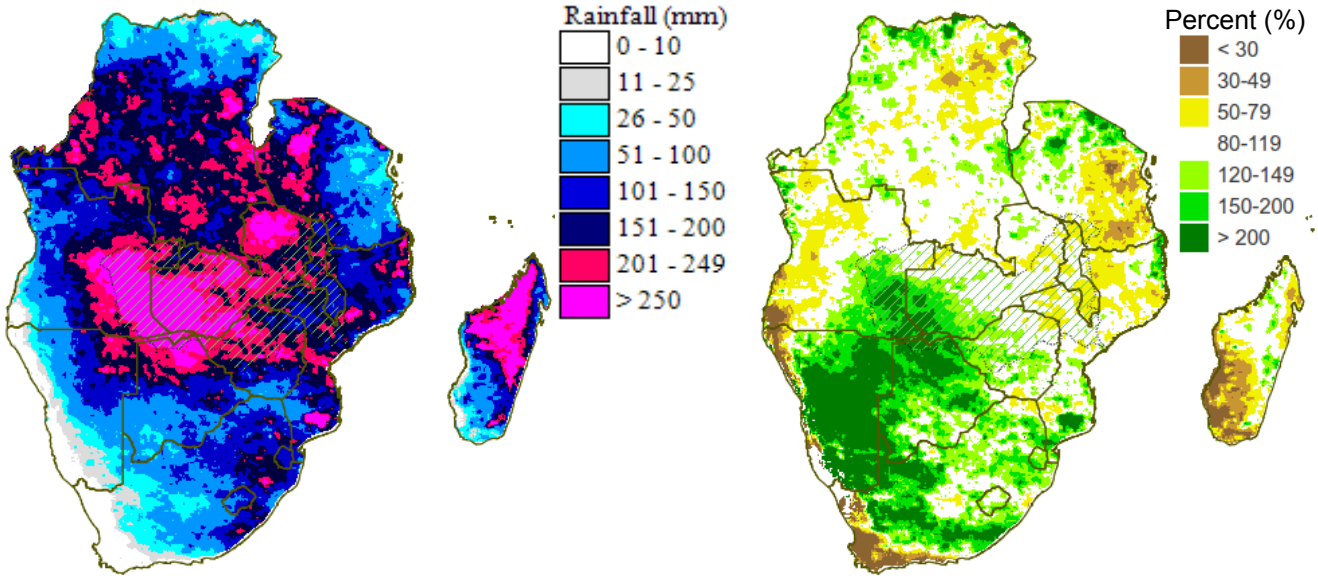
Regional DRR Update
Volume 2 – January 10, 2014

Highlights

- Rainfall performance improved significantly in December 2013
- Sowing rains received in all major grain producing areas by end of December
- Improvement in vegetation conditions observed in many parts of the region
- Food situation likely to get worse in Zimbabwe as authorities battle to address food shortages
- River levels rise in the Zambezi basin, but remain below alert levels
- Cholera outbreak in Northern Namibia
- Diarrhoeal diseases claim dozens of lives in Zimbabwe

Rainfall Performance

Rainfall performance improved significantly in December 2013



December 2013 rainfall
Source: USGS/FEWSNET

December 2013 rainfall compared with average; Source: USGS/FEWSNET

Figure 1 – Rainfall Performance Maps

Rainfall estimates suggest that most parts of the region witnessed good rainfall showers in the month of December, which helped alleviate the moisture deficits that had been observed in some central parts of the region. The highest rainfall amounts were received in the central parts of the region, particularly the Zambezi river basin, where river levels had reportedly risen significantly. Areas which received substantial amounts of rains include Zambia, western Tanzania, eastern Angola, DR Congo, northern half of Zimbabwe, northern Namibia, Mozambique, northern Botswana, Madagascar and central parts of South Africa. Comparison with average shows that the rains received in western Zambia, northern Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, and parts of Zimbabwe and Tanzania were substantially above average. There were reports of flash flooding and water-logging associated with these rains in some parts of the region. Below average monthly rains were observed in eastern Tanzania, Malawi, eastern Zambia, western half of Angola, and parts of central Mozambique.

Cumulative rains since start of the season are below average for Malawi, eastern Zambia, central Mozambique, western Madagascar, and eastern Tanzania. This has compromised agricultural activities during the start of the season and has also led to poor water supply, and poor pasture conditions in some of the affected areas. Reports from Tanzania indicate poor crop conditions for maize and beans in the north-eastern highlands and the northern

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coast due to soil moisture stress experienced during December.
The erratic rainfall performance in those parts of Tanzania, given the rainfall forecasts suggesting normal to below normal rains, will negatively impact *Vuli* crop production.

Good rains continued into the first ten days of January for the central parts of the regions, particularly in the Zambezi River basin. Heavy rain showers were observed in the north eastern parts of Mozambique, the Mozambique Channel and western Madagascar as a result of a tropical depression in the Mozambique Channel. These rains will relieve areas affected by moisture stress in western Madagascar but could also cause some localised flooding and damage in some of the affected areas.

Sowing rains received in all major grain producing areas by end of December
Water balance models indicated that all of the major grain producing regions had received enough rains to allow sowing, with the exception of western parts of South Africa's Free State province, where rains have been erratic. Parts of the region have had significant delays to the start of the season and this could have a negative impact on crop production. These include eastern Zambia, southern Malawi, and parts of central Mozambique – where it was late by up to one month. There are fears that in some of the areas where there has been an erratic onset of the rains, extended mid-season dry spells, which normally occur in January or February, will likely result in reduced 2013/14 harvests because the crops may fail to reach maturity.

Vegetation Performance

Improvement in vegetation conditions observed in many parts of the region
Due to the significant improvement in rainfall performance experienced in most parts of the region in December, vegetation conditions had improved by the beginning of January 2014. Vegetation conditions compared with average (Figure 2) shows that most areas had above average vegetation conditions, including areas where vegetation stress had been observed by end of November 2013. This has positive implications for pasture conditions and development of crops. few Parts of the region had below average vegetation conditions and indications of stressed vegetation. These include parts of north-eastern Tanzania and south-western Madagascar.

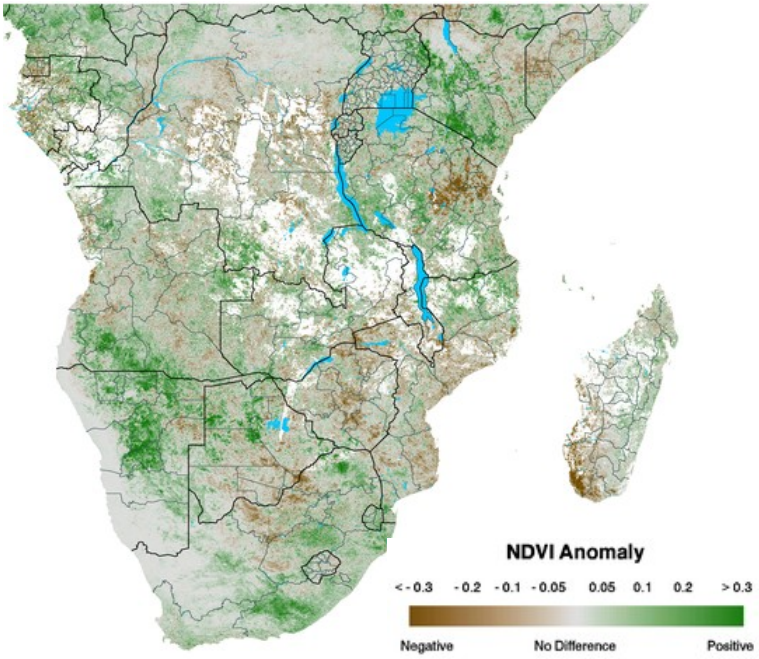

Figure 2 – Vegetation conditions compared with average; Source: USGS/EROS

Food Insecurity

Food situation likely to get worse in Zimbabwe as authorities battle to address food shortages
Reports from Zimbabwe have indicated that the World Food Programme (WFP) is struggling to raise money required to purchase grain to feed millions of food insecure people in the country. The WFP is one of the major actors assisting the government of Zimbabwe in dealing with the food shortages which were created mainly by a poor harvest in 2013. The government of Zimbabwe has been importing grain from neighbouring countries to address the deficit but these efforts have been hampered by a cash crisis in the country, and the country has had to rely on assistance from the WFP and other partner entities to source and distribute food to millions of people who

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need assistance. The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee estimated that around 2.2 million people would not be able to meet their food requirements in the 2013-2014 'hunger season'. Food price increases have contributed to the increase in the number of people needing assistance to meet their requirements.

Water

River levels rise in the Zambezi basin, but remain below alert levels

Hydrological Reports received from Namibia and Mozambique indicated that river levels rose significantly in some parts of the Zambezi river basin, but so far all rivers are below alert levels. The levels rose primarily due to the significant rains received in the Zambezi basin in the month of December. No alarm has yet been raised by hydrological authorities but it is important to note that there have been isolated reports of damage from flash floods and water-logging as a result of the heavy rainfall witnessed in some areas. No flows yet observed in the Cuvelai *iishana* in northern Namibia, where perennial floods have claimed lives in recent years.

Reports from Zimbabwe also indicated rising river and dam levels, in some cases above normal flows and that there are high chances of flooding in flood-prone areas of the country, including Muzarabani, Gokwe, Middle Sabi, Tsholotsho and Chikwalakwala during this period. Lake Kariba levels are reportedly well above the expected levels at this time of the year and this will likely lead to an early opening of the spill gates, and event that elevates flood risk for downstream communities in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique. Necessary precautions were advised for people living in the affected areas.

Health

Cholera outbreak reported in Northern Namibia

Media reports indicate that a cholera outbreak has been confirmed in Opuwa constituency in Kunene Region, northern Namibia. It is suspected that the outbreak started in November 2013, with a total of 7 deaths recorded in connection with the outbreak. Health authorities have estimated 89 suspected cholera chases in the period November 16th 2013 to first week of January 2014 in the Kunene region. Numbers are expected to rise with an estimated average of 5 new cases being registered per day in the Opuwa constituency. Reports indicate that experts from the Namibian Ministry of Health and Social Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), WHO, UNICEF, the Namibian Red Cross Society and regional health staff have deployed to the affected area. The Kunene region borders on Angola, where authorities have reportedly been notified of the cholera outbreak. Angolan authorities have also been attending to a cholera outbreak in the southern Cunene region.

Diarrhoeal diseases claim dozens of lives in Zimbabwe

Health authorities in Zimbabwe are battling with an increase in diarrhoeal diseases and typhoid fever. Dozens of people reportedly died countrywide due to diarrhoeal diseases in December 2013, while 28 cases of typhoid were recorded in the eastern parts of the country. Diarrhoeal diseases and typhoid are both preventable and treatable but the diseases continue to affect many people and claim lives due to lack of adequate safe water and poor sanitary conditions in many parts of the country. Health authorities have noted that the increase in rainfall observed in the month has led to more bodies of stagnant water and movement of ground water which is contributing to water contamination. The Government has reportedly stepped up efforts in addressing the issue of typhoid, cholera and dysentery to contain outbreaks similar to the 2008 cholera epidemic, which claimed more than 4000 lives.

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