



## **Summary on the drought and vulnerability situation in Botswana**

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**Rural Development Secretariat  
Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development**



## **Introductory Background**

On annual bases Botswana undertakes two assessments to determine the levels of Vulnerability in order to inform decision making for interventions to address food and nutrition insecurities. The last completed assessment was undertaken in October/ November 2023. However, we note that the 2023/24 season assessment was undertaken in April May 2024 and the findings should be finalised by end of June 2024. On the basis of that the presentation will provide conclusions of the November 2023. It is worth noting that given the season's poor rainfall and high temperatures the situation is most likely to be worse than the previous year.

The annual Drought and Household Food Security Vulnerability Assessment specifically, sought to:

- Ascertain whether or not the year 2022/23 is a drought or non-drought year.
- Assess nutritional status of the under five children using information generated from the nutritional surveillance system. (Drought diminishes dietary diversity and reduces overall food consumption, and this may lead to micro nutrient deficiencies);
- Assess emerging trends in the number and distribution of destitute persons;
- Evaluate progress on implementation of the on-going school and vulnerable people feeding initiative, poverty eradication projects and Ipelegeng programme;
- Determine the need or otherwise for continued Government intervention, including the modification of form, magnitude, and scope of such interventions, particularly taking into account the identified manifestations of the prevailing situation; and
- Develop recommendations for policy advice

The salient issues of the 2022/23 (November) assessment are as follows;

### **a. Rainfall Situation**

The month of October marks the start of the rainfall season in Botswana. Indications are that, for the first half of the season that is, October to December (OND) 2023, rainfall over the north and

western parts of the country (Ngamiland, Chobe, Ghanzi and Kgalagadi) is predicted to be normal to below normal. Rainfall over the eastern parts of the country (Northeast, Central, Southeast, Kgatleng, Kweneng and Southern Districts) is predicted to be below normal. Temperatures over the whole country are forecast to be above normal.

During the months of January to March (JFM) 2024 rainfall over most parts of the country (Ngamiland, N/Central, Chobe, Ghanzi, Kgalagadi, Southern, Southeast, Kgatleng and Kweneng) is predicted to be normal to below normal. Rainfall over the extreme eastern parts of the country (Northeast, S/Central) is predicted to be below normal. Temperatures over the whole country are forecast to be above normal. **Therefore, the season classified as a meteorological drought year.**

## **b. Human Water Supply**

Major water supply projects which were implemented across the country have enabled a substantive number of villages to emerge from inadequate water supply to a stable water supply situation. Villages with acute water shortages were Metsimantsho, New Xanagas, Mahotshwane, Makobo, Jamakata, Natale, Makopong, Kokotsha, Grootlaagte, Draaihoek, Xhumo, Dimajwe, Itholoke, Ngwatle, Zutshwa, Dibete, Tewane, Toromoja, Betesankwe and Good Hope.

Most of the Dams are in a healthy state, thus should be able to meet their demand nodes for more than a year without inflows. However, Lotsane Dam is at 37% which translates into 16 months of supply without inflows. Given the current rainfall patterns, wellfields in Tswapong North will be resuscitated to supply water in the area should the need arise.

Water levels in major rivers are currently at their lowest levels and continue to decrease at both Mohembo in the Okavango River system and the Chobe River. Boro and Thamalakane rivers are also drying up. Water levels at the abstraction points of Shakawe, Sepopa, Maun (Borolong) and Chobe treatment plants are not satisfactory hence compromising water supply in Maun village. **A**

**hydrological drought is therefore anticipated in some areas if the rainfall structure does not improve.**

#### **c. Arable Agriculture**

The 2022/23 cropping season was characterized by low and highly variable rains coupled with prolonged dry spells. Total production stands at 125 184 tons which is also lower than 206 572 tons for 2021/22. Cereal production stands at 67 530 tons, representing **23%** of the national requirement. As a result of the late onset, most farmers have not started the plough/planting activities. **Rural households are therefore at risk of being food insecure.**

#### **d. Livestock Situation**

The grazing situation has deteriorated drastically from the last assessment and graded at poor. Veldt fires have also exacerbated the problem in areas such as Serowe, Letlhakeng, Mabutsane, Hukuntsi and Mahalapye. Livestock body condition ranges from poor to fair and lactating cows are mostly affected. Water availability remains fair to good and expected to sustain livestock until the next rain season. At the time of reporting, drought related livestock mortalities were reported at Boteti which had recorded 134 cattle mortalities and North West four (4). **As a result of the prevailing El Nino, livestock was affected thus making it necessary for farmers to continue supplementing.**

#### **e. Wildlife Situation**

Although there are some drought related mortalities, wildlife condition was recorded to be fair resulting in an increase in movement of wild animals in search of palatable vegetation. Forage condition and water sources in protected areas was also recorded to be fair. To mitigate the situation, artificial water boreholes are used to supply water for wildlife. **However, as a result of the ecological drought, wildlife was affected forcing animals to migrate to other parts of the country as a result in.**

## **f. Wildland Fire Management**

Wildland Fire outbreaks were detected in twenty six (26) districts since the beginning of the fire season and the situation worsened from August to October 2023. Extremely dry fuel load, high temperatures and windy conditions experienced during these months exacerbated the problem. A total area of 777 750.7 hectares (Ha) has been burnt by wildland fires since April 2023. Ghanzi District recorded the highest area burnt at 313661.2 Ha followed by Okavango and North West Districts with 121 273.9 and 113 109.9 respectively.

Wildland fires affected forage for livestock, Farms and Ranches in Tsabong, Banyana Farms, Serowe (Western Sandveld, Kaka, Zone 3) Boteti (Setata) North West (Hainaveld), Southern (Sekoma, Pampiri, Mahotshwane), Hukuntsi (Lokgwabe), Letlhakeng and Ghanzi (Mathoaphuduhudu, Ghanzi Free hold Farms). Some government farms affected include Ramatlabama AI Ranch, Dibete and Daukome. Majority of protected areas such as Chobe National Park, Moremi Game Reserve, Central Kalahari Game Reserve, Khama Rhino conservation farm have been heavily burnt.

## **g. Nutrition Situation**

The attendance rate continues to be below the target of 90%. Districts with attendance rate below 60% continues to be supported and verification of under-five children population projection is ongoing. Furthermore, failure to provide health services at the hard to reach areas contributed to low attendance rate. A decrease in underweight prevalence was observed between the second and third quarter of 2023 from 3.8% to 3.4% respectively. A decrease was also observed in the ration coverage, recording a decrease from 71.2% in April/June to 68.4% in July/September 2023. The Ministry of Health continues to work closely with the Department of Social Protection to salvage the situation in hotspot areas and to accelerate the implementation of special food basket at the identified hotspot areas.

## Conclusion

The on-going mitigation measures following this declaration in July 2023 include the following:

- An Insurance pay out to rain fed arable farmers who secured loans through a Government funded insurance scheme;
- 30% Livestock Feed Subsidy and vaccines for both traditional and non-traditional livestock sectors;
- 50% Subsidy for Acaricides (Pesticides) and Antibiotics for control and treatment of animals with amblyomma (bont tick) and dermatophylosis (Senkoba) in the Okavango and North West Districts;
- Grants at 100% for Solar Electrification of field fences in elephant prone areas;
- Supply of Ready-to-use Therapeutic Foods for children with acute malnutrition;
- Provision of an additional 20 000 slots for *Ipelegeng* Programme (Public Works Initiative) beneficiaries;
- Supplementary Feeding Programme at all Primary Schools (breakfast and mid-day meal) including a third meal for school going children in the remote areas;
- Provision of supplementary food commodities to under 5's and other medically selected vulnerable groups, and provision of a special food basket for underweight children (6-59 months) in all areas with total underweight prevalence of 10% or more;

Finally, we wish to indicate that managing drought is expensive and will appreciate assistance from development partners and all relevant agencies. Districts such as Letlhakeng, Hukunsi, Mabutsane, Shoshong, Boteti, Ghanzi, Okavango, North West and Molepolole can be considered for assistance.