



Justin Chinake lives in northern Zimbabwe, near Mozambique. He has seen starving Mozambicans crawl into Zimbabwe. Newsday/Osler Muhammad

The Struggle to Survive

Drought afflicts 21 countries; millions despair of food

By Josh Friedman
Newsday Staff Correspondent

Nothing that happened to Job in the Bible matches what is happening to the more than 400 million Africans who live south of the Sahara desert.

For one dazzling moment in the past two decades, they had known hope as one after another their countries became independent. But hope was dashed, first by man-made calamities — and now by nature, itself.

The world's economy veered crazily from inflation to recession. African countries and their wealthy supporters mishandled agricultural development. The prices of their cash crops plunged on the world market. Energy prices shot up with the price of oil, stalling development in all but the lucky few African countries with their own oil reserves.

Then, it stopped raining. In east Africa and in the area of west Africa called the Sahel, the fringe of countries along the base of the Sahara, normal rains have never returned since the last great drought of 1975, in which more than half a million people died. In southern Africa, a good portion of the last three years has been bone dry — converting a grain-exporting region into one dependent on international food aid.

A Newsday team of two reporters and a photographer has just completed a two-month tour of Africa to examine the cruelest side of this continent-wide drought — its impact on the people. The itinerary led from Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso in west Africa to Ethiopia and Kenya in east Africa and Zimbabwe in southern Africa. South Africa, also hard hit by drought, refused to grant Newsday visas.

The tour confirmed the fears of most officials confronting the drought: Things are getting worse.

By the end of this year, the death toll probably will have neared 1 million people in Ethiopia alone. More than 5 million people are fleeing

across the continent as refugees. Twenty-one African nations are now affected by drought, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). More than 6 million tons of food aid is needed next year to keep between 30 million and 40 million people from extreme hunger — possibly death. That amount would require donor nations to provide 40 percent more aid than they gave this year, the FAO says.

"The people in many countries in Africa are worse off now than they were at the beginning of the year and their prospects for the future are dimmer," says UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar.

"Overall the situation has deteriorated sharply," FAO director general Edouard Saouma said last week of next year's food prospects.

According to most sources, at least eight African nations are the most critically affected by drought:

- Ethiopia — Widely thought to be the worst-off in Africa, between 6 million and 8 million of its people face starvation. Most of them live at high altitudes on arid land that is overused and eroded. Twelve of Ethiopia's 14 provinces are afflicted by drought. Despite western aid, which began accelerating in October when the Marxist government finally allowed western journalists access to the countryside, the death toll is already astronomical. One British organization estimates almost 1 million will have died this year. Western governments believe the need for food aid in 1985 is as high as 1.2 million metric tons. According to U.S.

sources, 500,000 metric tons of food aid, half of it from the United States alone, are already pledged and in the pipeline — even though Ethiopian officials say food is running out.

- Sudan — The second worst-affected country in Africa, in part because refugees are pouring in from Ethiopia and Chad. More refugees have entered the Sudan than any other African country. The UN estimates 4.5 million Sudanese and 700,000 refugees face starvation if food aid is inadequate. [Yesterday, President Ronald Reagan ordered the Air Force to fly emergency supplies and food today to refugee camps in eastern Sudan, where thousands of Ethiopians have fled.]

- Mozambique — This country may finally be pulling out of a three-year bout with drought that has killed tens of thousands and led the Marxist country's economy to collapse. But a quarter of the population still needs food aid, especially before the April harvest. Hopes that guerrilla groups would pull back have faded with the collapse of a treaty that would have brought peace to the country. U.S. aid went up with Mozambique's agreement not to harbor guerrilla groups trying to depose the government of South Africa.

- Chad — Three million people, two-thirds of this Sahelian country's population, are affected by hunger, according to the UN. Many have been driven into camps by a combination of civil strife and the encroaching Sahara desert. A mutual-withdrawal agreement between France and Lib-

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This is another in a continuing series of reports on the drought and famine in Ethiopia and other nations of Africa. Tomorrow, Newsday's report will focus on Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger.

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ya has fundered and French troops may return to Chad. Food aid is complicated by Nigeria's reluctance to allow donors to use its ports. Only 8,000 tons a month can come to Chad through Cameroon but up to 25,000 tons could come through Nigeria's more ample port facilities. Nigeria reportedly harbors resentments stemming from past military clashes.

● **Niger** — Nearly half of the country's population, or 2.4 million people, are affected by drought. Niger, also, has only limited use of Nigerian ports. Until this year, Niger's military dictatorship had managed to avoid famine by organizing relief efficiently. But persistent drought overcame the government this year. Niger needs nearly half a million metric tons of food aid in 1985, according to the UN.

● **Mali** — The Marxist government has repaired relations with the West by relaxing control over the grain market. But food distribution is hampered by a slim network of roads in this sprawling country, which is about the size of Texas and California combined. The UN estimates that 2.5 million people, a third of the population, face hunger. Many are migrating southward.

● **Burkina Faso** — The situation is deteriorating in this country, formerly called Upper Volta, where 1.3 million people, 20 percent of the population, are now affected by drought. The country, which is led by an outspoken former young army officer, Thomas Sankara, needs 165 thousand metric tons of food aid, worth \$33 million.

● **Mauritania** — This country is being covered by

sand. Fifteen years ago, only 15 percent of its population lived in towns. The rest were nomads, whose herds lived off the land. But rapid desertification has covered the pasture, virtually reversing that ratio. More than two-thirds of the country's 1.7 million people need food aid, according to the UN.

In addition, the impact of the drought on Kenya, one of the most sophisticated countries in Africa and one of the closest to the United States, is not fully known. Fears of a severe food shortage abated recently when the so-called short rains came in October and November. Kenyan farmers planted crops, which may cut down the country's need for foreign food aid, which the UN estimates at 425,000 metric tons. The country already has pledges of 150,000 tons of U.S. food aid for 1985.

And in South Africa, the government has kept the effects of drought secret from the rest of the world. But this former food-exporting country has faced tough times agriculturally for the past three years. This may be ending with an improvement in rainfall. In the meantime, an unknown number of rural residents, most of them black, have died of starvation and tens of thousands face malnutrition, according to the head of one volunteer relief organization active in the country.

While meteorological experts have been scrutinizing Africa's weather, no one has come up with a definitive cause of the drought. Some say the lack of rain is connected to a worldwide change in weather produced by abnormal temperatures in the Pacific.

The combination of bad breaks has exacerbated the results of human error.

"Today the average African is poorer than in 1970. By 1995 he is likely to be poorer than at independence," says Ernest Stern, senior vice president of the World Bank. "The neglect of agriculture is the primary cause of this trend."

Most estimates say that agricultural production has dropped 1 to 1.5 percent a year in Africa since 1970.

Why is a far more complicated question. Stern criticizes both African nations and wealthy western countries for botching development possibilities. He blames poor local management and a poor choice of development projects.

Africa's crisis also includes an explosive population growth, which forces hungry people to stretch their scarce food stocks even further. Population growth in Africa has accelerated from 2.3 percent a year in 1960 to 3.1 percent this year, according to the World Bank. Almost half the people in Africa are under 15. Within 35 years, the sub-Saharan population is expected to triple, to 1.2 billion, if present trends continue.

In addition, the ravages of the drought are made worse by civil strife. Some people in the most hungry countries in Africa — Ethiopia, Mozambique, Chad, Angola — cannot receive aid because of active rebellion against central governments.

At the same time, aid from wealthy countries to Africa has actually started to go down, if inflation is factored in. And the continent's balance of payments is deteriorating — soon to be made even worse with the expiration of loans that had helped

confront the problems of the past few years. Many African countries are broke.

Western nations, the Soviet bloc and African nations often blame each other for the problem.

According to some African officials, wealthy countries neglect development investment and show up with emergency food aid when it is too late. An early alert foreshadowing the current disaster was issued in the fall of 1982, and was largely ignored. In the spring of 1983, the FAO initiated an emergency telegram campaign to 27 countries, but it was not until this year that the international donor community fully responded. And it was not until a month and a half ago that the rest of the world began to see the dimensions of the disaster.

Many western officials say donor nations are being generous to a fault. This was shown vividly recently when Ethiopian relief officials criticized the United States for giving too little, too late. U.S. officials snapped back that it was a classic case of "biting the hand that feeds you."

"Africans can count on the United States," says Ambassador Alan L. Keyes, U.S. representative to the UN Economic and Social Council. "We will continue to be generous in our aid and prompt in the delivery of what is required to save lives."

The weight of the world's food debt falls on the United States, which is the granary of the world. More than half the world's food aid comes from here.

The United States has pledged or delivered more than half a billion dollars worth of food — 1.6 million metric tons of food to sub-Saharan Africa in the fiscal year that started last October. About 600,000 tons is emergency aid and could be increased as the year goes on. It seems a lot. But the FAO estimates that sub-Saharan Africa needs additional pledges of 2.4 million tons to reach the 6.1 million tons needed to avert starvation in 1985.

The other major donor to Africa is the European Economic Community, or Common Market. After that comes Canada, Australia, the UN World Food Program, UN High Commission on Refugees, UNICEF and Japan. The Soviet Union gives very little food aid but significant amounts of military aid and some investment in infrastructure.

Involvement in Africa has become *de rigueur* for non-profit agencies active in international aid. This is where the need is. But as western aid accelerates sharply, it is also where the money and action are.

For years, Catholic Relief Services was the conduit for most American food aid in Africa. But now U.S. Agency for International Development director Peter McPherson says food for Africa will also be given out through such agencies as World Vision, a non-denominational fundamentalist Christian group, and Care. Two years ago, the Reagan administration, in a political move, tried to cut off food aid to Marxist Ethiopia but Catholic Relief Services beat back the attempt by lobbying in Congress.

Relief agencies are racing to raise American donations and win contracts to distribute western aid. Movie stars and politicians have been drawn into the fray, sent with camera crews to camps where the dying is the greatest to be featured in promotional films used for fundraising on television back in the United States.

The Scope of the Famine



SOURCE: United Nations Disaster Relief Agency

The Hardest Hit Countries

Country	Food aid needed (thousand tons)	Cost to provide food, in millions	Millions of people affected	% of Population affected
Burkina Faso	165	\$33	1.3	20
Chad	125	\$25	3	64
Ethiopia	800	\$160	6.4	13
Mali	200	\$40	2.4	34
Mauritania	160	\$32	1.1	66
Mozambique	520	\$104	3	24
Niger	475	\$95	2.4	43
Sudan	650	\$130	4.5	22

SOURCE: United Nations Disaster Relief Agency

Mozambicans Take Refuge Along Zimbabwe Border

By Dennis Bell
Newsday Staff Correspondent

Marymount Mission, Rushinga, Zimbabwe — Luiza Chipisani is bored most of the time. In normal times, if she were at her home in northwestern Mozambique, she would be ploughing her five-acre field, preparing the ground for the summer planting.

Instead, she is languishing in a refugee camp in this neighboring country, where she has been for a year, ever since the drought dried up the food sources in her village and forced hundreds of thousands in her country to flee their home areas.

When Luiza, her husband and five children left their small holding in Dzimika Kraal in the province of Tete, they walked the 80 miles to the Mozambique-Zimbabwe border, and then walked

another 20 miles to arrive half-starved here at the mission camp in the Rushinga district, about 110 miles northeast of Harare, the capital.

"We are ploughing here, but we just have a small field, less than a fourth-acre," said Luiza, 40. With three older children in school; with other women to help look after two younger ones; and with plenty of time on her hands, "I just sit. I'm not pleased about that," she said, making a face to show her distaste for the forced idleness and shaking her head sadly.

Boredom and anxiety about returning to their homes appear to be the main problems of the refugees, now that the worst apparently is over.

The drought that spread to southern Africa three years ago struck heaviest in Mozambique. From

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