

Southern Africa

OVER 18 MILLION PEOPLE AFFECTED BY DROUGHT

The year 1992 was one of the grimmest ever faced by the people of Southern Africa. The most severe drought to affect the region this century devastated crops, reduced already scarce water availability and placed the lives of some 18 million people from the most vulnerable population groups at risk from starvation and disease.

Drought affected all the countries of the region, with the hardest hit recording maize crop failures of 70 to 90 percent. In addition to the food losses, the drought had a number of other serious effects. Water shortages threatened both lives and livelihoods in many areas. In some rural areas, people were forced to carry water for miles. Lack of access to safe drinking water resulted in increased outbreaks of diarrhoeal and infectious diseases throughout the region. Cholera epidemics were reported in a number of countries, and the drought placed further strain on fragile health systems which were unable to provide even minimal basic services.



UNHCR/M. Vanappeghem Photo

*In some region of Southern Africa transportation
is a real problem*

The drought has had a devastating effect on livestock which are not only a source of food and income but also serve as draught animals for small-scale farmers. With market prices collapsing, farmers have been forced to sell their dehydrated cattle for only a fraction of their normal value, leaving themselves without the resources required for the next planting season.

The most seriously affected of the ten countries was Mozambique, where drought, combined with conflict and insecurity, plunged the country into its worst disaster since independence. Movements of drought-affected and war-displaced people in mid-1992, in search of food and water, placed an increased burden on refugee programmes in neighbouring Malawi and Zimbabwe.

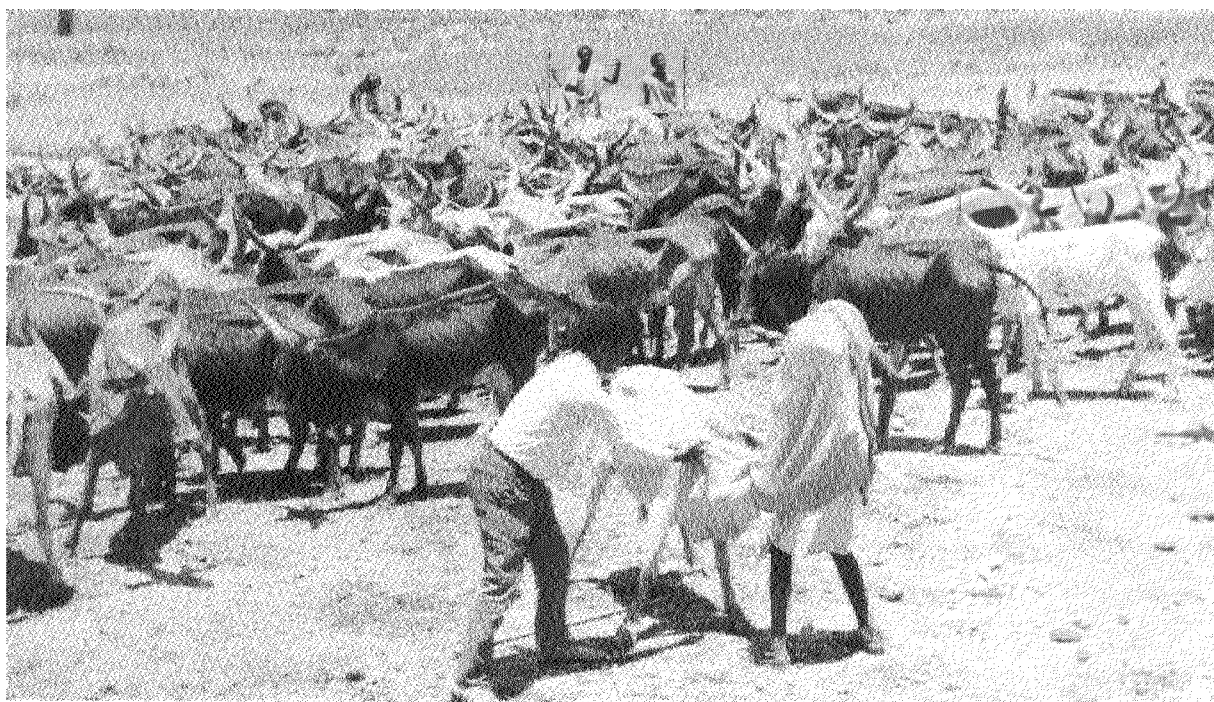
The unprecedented scale of the drought emergency throughout the region required that every effort be made to alert the international community to the need for massive amounts of food aid, as well as funding for logistics and to meet urgent non-food needs. Regional cooperation was seen as essential to an effective response to the drought, since the questions of transport and distribution were as serious as those related to the sheer volume of food required.

Six of the affected countries are land-locked and dependent on the port, road and rail systems of Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Tanzania. Four times the normal tonnage would have to be transported through these systems, and deliveries needed to be timely in

order to prevent large-scale displacements of people in search of food and other relief supplies.

In June 1992, the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) jointly launched an urgent appeal for assistance to relieve the drought emergency. The main component of the appeal was the call for the provision of emergency or targeted food aid for free distribution to people unable to secure sufficient food from their own resources. Some 1.5 million tonnes of cereals would be needed for free distribution over the following twelve months, along with some 195,000 mts of supplementary foods for vulnerable groups. The cost of this food aid, together with related logistics costs, was estimated to be US\$ 685 million. In addition to targeted food aid, around 2.5 million mts of programme food aid were also required to assist governments that were unable to import sufficient commercial supplies to feed their people.

On the non-food side, proposals for relief assistance focused on only the most essential components. These included expanded water



Cattle affected by drought