



# RVAA

Regional Vulnerability Assessment  
& Analysis Programme

*Informing resilient livelihoods*

## **Joint Evaluation of the SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (RVAA) Programme (2017-2022)**

Decentralized Evaluation Final Report

Southern African Development Community, Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Landell Mills and the World Food Programme



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## Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the evaluation team, and do not necessarily reflect those of the commissioning consortium of partners (i.e., the Southern Africa Development Community Secretariat, Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Landell Mills and the United Nations World Food Programme). Responsibility for the opinions expressed in this report rests solely with the authors. Publication of this document does not imply endorsement by the commissioning consortium of partners of the opinions expressed.

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# Executive Summary

## INTRODUCTION

1. This report presents findings on the joint final evaluation of Phase 3 of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis programme (2017–2022). The evaluation was conducted between May and November 2021. Review of programme documents and observations of some programme activities commenced in May and continued until 13 August when data-collection ended. Fieldwork was conducted from 12 July to 13 August 2021. Data analysis, report-writing and clarification of information ended in February 2022. The evaluation was jointly commissioned by a consortium of partners comprising the SADC Secretariat, Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Landell Mills and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP). The evaluation determines the programme’s achievements and the likelihood of results being achieved by March 2022, when the programme ends. The evaluation serves a summative accountability function by presenting the progress made towards attaining planned programme results, and a formative learning function to inform strategic and operational decision-making about future programming. The funding for the current phase is from the SDC and FCDO.

## EVALUATION FEATURES<sup>1</sup>

2. The goal of the Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (RVAA) programme is to support resilient and sustainable rural and urban livelihoods, environments and institutions in reducing poverty and enhancing well-being in the SADC region. The evaluation builds on the comprehensive RVAA mid-term review conducted in 2019. It assesses all three components of the RVAA programme, which are:

- Institutionalization
- Technical capacity
- Communication and advocacy.

3. It also assesses:

- The extent to which the programme led (or was likely to lead) to the intermediate outcomes of increased legitimacy and credibility
- The influence of the vulnerability assessments and analysis (VAA) system
- The final outcome of “institutionalized and sustainable VAA systems that enhance emergency and developmental responses at national and regional levels” across the 16 SADC [Member States](#).

4. The primary users of this evaluation are the SADC Secretariat, Member States, FCDO, SDC, WFP, Landell Mills, and international cooperating partners, including the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), African Risk Capacity, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), OXFAM, World Vision, and the Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWSNET).

## CONTEXT

5. The RVAA programme is implemented in SADC through Member States who annually undertake vulnerability assessment and analysis studies. The assessments are guided by the relevant policies, strategies and programmes in line with the SADC Regional Integration Agenda and strategic priorities. Participating Member States in the RVAA covered by the evaluation are Angola, Botswana, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

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<sup>1</sup> The detailed outline and procedures followed in conducting the evaluation are described in detail in annexures 1-17 provided as a separate document to avoid the document becoming too voluminous (NB: annexures are 135 pages).

6. The SADC region continues to be afflicted by natural hazards and, in some cases, conflict that adversely affects food and nutrition security, vulnerability and livelihoods. Since 2015, the number of food-insecure people in the SADC region has remained above 25 million. It has been gradually increasing; in 2021, 10 SADC Member States (that submitted data) registered an estimated 65.52 million people as food insecure.

## **STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS**

7. The RVAA has 12 categories of stakeholders:

- Eight at the RVAA regional level (i.e., Steering Committee, SADC Secretariat, Regional Vulnerability and Assessment Committee, RVAA Programme Management Committee, regional international cooperating partners [ICPs], service providers [WFP and Landell Mills], and donors)
- Four at Member State level (i.e., National Vulnerability Assessment Committees [NVAC], SADC Member States' policymakers, users of NVAC products and international cooperating partners).

## **EVALUATION METHODOLOGY, LIMITATIONS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

8. The evaluation was guided by a systems theory, and utilization-focused evaluation approaches. Data was collected through four approaches:

- Key informant interviews
- Administration of an online survey
- Observations of VAA processes
- Review of programme documents as indicated below.

9. A Qualitative Impact Assessment Protocol (QUIP) adapted tool was used among key informants to collect data from all the 16 SADC Member States through virtual interviews, as the evaluation team could not travel due to Covid-19 restrictions. Ninety-seven key informant interviews, out of a targeted 102, were successfully conducted. Of these respondents, 52.5 percent were females, and 47.5 percent were males, which indicates a majority representation of female views. These were considered enough for qualitative analysis and to allow for objective evaluation conclusions. The key informant interviews were conducted with representatives from the 12 categories of stakeholders indicated above (paragraph 4).

10. Quantitative data was collected using a quantitative survey completed by NVAC members and selected NVAC product users, including policymakers within Member States. The response rate for the online questionnaire was poor (6 percent), with only 27 out of the planned 402 people responding due to officials' busy schedules. Data from the quantitative tool was therefore analysed qualitatively to supplement the day from the key informants. Observations of different RVAA processes, such as validation and dissemination and data analysis forums in the Member States were also done.

11. Two evaluation team members observed the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee validation and dissemination process from 31 May–4 June 2021. One member of the evaluation team observed Malawi data analysis on 31 July 2021. All team members virtually observed the RVAA dissemination on 6–10 July 2021 where:

- Member States made presentations
- The RVAA team gave updates
- The Technical Working Group made presentations
- RVAA Online Atlas, an interactive web platform and document repository designed to store, access, share and visualize RVAA data and other related information products from 16 SADC Member States, was launched.

12. Programme documents from 2017–2021 were reviewed up to the conclusion of the desk review. These included:

- The RVAA monitoring & evaluation logframe
- Programme data from the Member States
- RVAA functionality scorecards
- RVAA Institutionalization Index and annual programme performance progress reports.

13. They also included several studies that have been conducted that formed an important information source for the evaluation, including the:

- Evaluability Assessment (2018)
- VAA Opportunity Mapping (2020)
- Annual Review (2020)
- RVAA Strategic Plan (2017–2021)
- RVAA Mid-Term Review (2019)
- Institutionalization Report (2021)
- Communication and Advocacy Strategy (2021–2025)
- Harmonized vulnerability assessments (2020/2021)
- Covid-19 Study (2020).

14. Other documents reviewed include:

- SADC RVAA 2017–2022 Strategy
- WFP Funding Proposal and Landell Mills proposal
- RVAA revised Theory of Change (ToC) and logframe (approved in February 2020)
- Annual vulnerability assessments
- Regional synthesis reports
- Information and communication documents.

15. Seven criteria were used for the evaluation. Six were drawn from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD):<sup>2</sup>

- Relevance
- Coherence
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Impact
- Sustainability.

16. The seventh criterion – value for money – was drawn from FCDO approach to this.

## **FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION**

17. The findings have been presented in accordance with the evaluation criteria and the main evaluation questions.

### **Relevance**

#### **Evaluation Question 1: Is the RVAA Programme relevant to the needs, priorities and policies of the Member States and SADC across the region?**

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<sup>2</sup> OECD. *Evaluation of Development Programmes*, <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation>



18. The RVAA programme is responding to Member States' needs, policies and priorities. The needs and priorities focus on two areas:

- Strengthening the technical capacity of Vulnerability Assessment Committees to be able to effectively broaden and integrate complex and emerging issues into the VAA, including chronic vulnerability, poverty and resilience, as well as increase VAA technical rigour and improve the quality of information produced by the VAA
- Contributing to the institutionalization of the RVAC and NVAC system resources, and to the capacity to integrate various VAA tools and approaches for national planning processes and programme responses.

19. The programme has remained relevant to the needs, priorities and policies of Member States and of SADC across the region through:

- Learning from previous RVAA phases, programmes
- Remaining focused on SADC RVAA Strategic Plan 2017–2021 guide and implementation framework including other policy-guiding documents
- Ongoing contextual mapping and reflection that is evidence through annual synthesis reports
- Assessments of the capacity of Member States, which informed interventions to improve this, and interventions in response to Member States' demands, supported by a regional programme management unit.

20. At a policy level, the programme is in step with regional policies including the:

- Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP)
- Regional Agricultural Policy
- SADC Food and Nutrition Security Strategy (FNSS) 2015–2025
- Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (2020–2030)
- SADC Gender-Responsive Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Strategic Plan and Action Plan – February 2020
- Regional Integration agenda of SADC.

21. The aspirations of these policies, among other things, are to ensure poverty reduction, promote sustainable and equitable economic growth and socioeconomic development, support the socially disadvantaged people, and promote the self-sustaining development of Member States through reliable and credible information. Thus, RVAA provides this critical information.

**Evaluation Question 2: To what extent is the design of the programme, its components and expected results as outlined in the ToC relevant to the achievement of the stated final outcome?**

22. The programme has remained relevant through adapting to changes and emerging needs and priorities. This is seen in the revised ToC and fresh development of the institutionalization index that assesses Member States' progress towards an "institutionalized and sustainable VAA system". Adjustments in RVAA programme activities and schedules were also made in response to Covid-19; studies were conducted on an ongoing basis to keep an understanding of the operational context, and the programme prioritized the sustainability of the VAA system and the phasing out of donors' support as the programme moves towards the end of Phase 3, in March 2022. The three workstreams of institutionalization, technical capacity-building and communication and advocacy are relevant for realizing the programme goal and are interrelated. The RVAA strategy that informed the programme design was developed consultatively, drawing from previous experience.

23. Phase 3 was developed to adapt and respond to priorities and needs through building on the experience and achievements (or lack of them) of the previous phase. The programme successfully integrated lessons from the previous phases despite the challenges associated with such a complex programme, involving many stakeholders. This challenge was compounded by the programme design, which focused on consolidating gains from the previous phase, and also the provision of several options for Member States, plus a shift in the RVAA to perform a more developmental role. Thus, the continuing

adaptation of the ToC, which resulted in programme outputs and deliverables constantly changing is understandable. The ToC had to be flexible to accommodate several intervention options. While the need to develop a robust RVAA ToC was highlighted in 2016 at the end of Phase 2, in Phase 3 the ToC had to be revised twice to accommodate the lessons being learned. The final revision of the ToC was recommended by the mid-term review, which led to the final ToC, which was approved in 2020. However, these changes did not alter the main elements of the ToC or the programme but were necessary as a 'programme adaptive learning process'.

### **Evaluation Question 3: Has the RVAA Programme been able to adapt and respond to emerging needs and changing contexts?**

24. The programme has been sensitive and responsive to the SADC Regional context, policies and specific Member State issues. This has enabled the RVAA to address effectively emerging issues during the entire implementation period. The programme's adaptability is evident in the three implementation stages:

- Transitional phase from Phase 2 to Phase 3 (period of programme set up in 2017)
- During the implementation where numerous adaptive activities were conducted (after set-up to full implementation where most activities are conducted)
- Towards programme closure 2021/2022 where the focus is on phasing out and close – out.

25. At each stage, emerging needs were identified, and responsive actions were taken to address the situation.

26. The RVAA programme transitioned from Phase 2 (2012–2016), where the focus was on chronic vulnerability and climate-resilient livelihoods information, to Phase 3 (2017–2021), where the focus is on consolidating the gains of the previous phase and broadening, as well as deepening, the scope of the programme. The Phase 3 interventions are clustered under:

- Deepening institutionalization and capacity development
- Deepening approaches and tools to conduct assessments effectively
- Addressing emerging issues and strengthening advocacy and leadership development to raise the profile of VAA activities.

27. During implementation, numerous activities were conducted to ensure adaptability and relevance, including capacity assessments to inform the development of the Technical Capacity-Building Framework (2018) and numerous implementation studies such as Evaluability Assessment (2018), the MTR (2019), VAA Opportunity Mapping Study (2020), and others that resulted in informing programme adjustments such as ToC and logframe revisions. At the outbreak of Covid-19, the programme implementation methods had to be adjusted to respond to the disruptions, as evidenced through the two commissioned studies and other activities. The adaptations to Covid-19 included the introduction of general guidelines based on the "Do No Harm" principle in conducting assessments in the Covid-19 context. In addition to the commissioned studies, a regional lesson-learning workshop was conducted to facilitate a collective reflection and the sharing of experiences and key lessons on conducting assessments in the context of Covid-19. Towards the closure of 2021/2022, the programme focuses on phasing out and closure, emphasizing sustainability.

28. Despite this flexibility, Covid-19 weakened the programme resulting in some unmet targets. For instance, the programme was scored a B in the 2021 FCDO Annual Review, which indicates that it moderately did not meet expectations, a lower score compared than the previous three years (2017/2018, 2018/2019 and 2019/2020) where the programme was rated A.

29. Notably, the Covid-19 response adaptations provided critical positive and negative lessons. Member States welcomed and embraced the technologically driven data gathering methods and virtual meetings despite others having initially been slow to adapt, but later embracing the technology. The reasons cited for this reluctance included the:

- Cost of data
- Impersonal nature of virtual meetings
- Poorer quality of regional consultations and discussions.

30. Another challenge was the difficulty of securing interviews with government key informants due to the limited availability of laptops and data for officials when away from their offices during lockdowns.

## Coherence

### Evaluation Question 4: To what extent is the SADC RVAA programme aligned with relevant SADC programmes?

31. The RVAA programme is well aligned with relevant SADC programmes and aspirations as spelled out in relevant policies, including the:

- SADC RVAA Strategic Plan (2017–2021)
- SADC Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2015–2020
- SADC 2013 Regional Agricultural Policy
- SADC Region FNSS 2015–2025
- SADC Regional Resilience Framework
- Other sectoral policies and strategies on gender and development, health, and disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM).

32. Heads of state in the African Union, in their Malabo Declaration of June 2014, recommitted to the principles and values of the CAADP process:

- Ending hunger by 2025
- Enhancing the resilience of livelihoods and production systems to climate variability and other shocks
- Ensuring that, by 2025, at least 30 percent of farm/pastoral households are resilient to shocks.

33. These African policy frameworks are aligned to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- Goal 1: ending poverty
- Goal 2: ending hunger
- Goal 3: ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all ages
- Goal 5: achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls
- Goal 13: take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

34. Thus, the programme's vision of "Community, household, and individual development and resilience throughout the SADC Member States" and the goal "to support resilient and sustainable rural and urban livelihoods, environments and institutions in reducing poverty and enhancing well-being in the SADC region" are aligned to the vision and aspirations for SADC, African Union and the SDGs. This vision is realized through Member States participating in relevant processes through institutionalized and sustainable VAA systems at national and regional levels. The RVAA is the primary body of knowledge that informs SADC regional policy and decision-making on food and nutrition security at the highest level, which is the SADC Summit.

35. However, the RVAA programme contribution to the African Union and global policy indicators, as stated in the frameworks, cannot be ascertained with clarity. Nonetheless, it is notable that the information generated from assessments should influence RVAA programme outcomes, and consequently inform CAADP processes. The programme has carried out episode studies to identify and map RVAA influence pathways at the national level. This should be extended to the regional level to identify ways and opportunities to demonstrate influence at regional and continental level.

### Evaluation Question 5: Are there contradictions with national policies that have constrained implementation and achievement of results?

36. The RVAA programme is implemented within a framework of different policies which address the various vulnerabilities affecting food and nutrition security and well-being within Member States and the

region (see Question 4 above). This minimizes contradictions that would otherwise derail the programme. The VAA system would add more value to regional and national integration and development by not just generating information, but by contributing to better preparedness for emergencies and disasters and by strengthening the promotion of interventions on gender equality, and those sensitive to the needs of children and people with disabilities.

#### **Evaluation Question 6: Is there complementarity with the actions of different actors, and is there sufficient coordination?**

37. The RVAA is housed in a SADC Disaster and Risk Management (DRR) Unit, responsible for coordinating disaster risk reduction, vulnerability assessment and resilience interventions. This fosters complementarity among the DRR mandate on emergency preparedness and mitigation responses, and the RVAA focuses on informing areas where food insecurity necessitates disaster and emergency responses at national and regional levels. The positioning of the RVAA programme within the DRR unit also ensures effective coordination of broader disasters and emergencies with those relating to food and nutrition insecurity in SADC. In addition, the RVAA focuses on developmental indicators, including gender (as an example), and helps to portray a holistic picture of the specific impact of emergencies and disasters across population groups that will improve targeted planning and service delivery.

#### **Effectiveness**

#### **Evaluation Question 7: To what extent has the programme achieved the planned outputs, and have these led to, or are likely to lead to, achievement of outcomes of the RVAA Programme?**

38. The programme had been on course to achieve outputs in the areas of:

- Training
- Developing communication and advocacy tools
- Documenting good practices for sharing and facilitating the exchange of learning
- Providing technical support towards programme phase-out and sustainability
- Using the institutionalization index.

39. However, in 2020 Covid-19 hampered this at national and regional levels. Section 2.3.1 describes the activities conducted between 2017 and 2021 as well as those still outstanding, or in progress, at the time of completing the data-collection in 2021. There have been efforts to catch up with the scheduled activities using virtual methods, but these have had limitations at national level, where capacity is limited, and more learning is required to improve on Member States' participation during virtual consultations and meetings. At regional level, the Regional Technical Support Team is implementing 11 activities which were either in progress or yet to be started. These are listed in the section on effectiveness.

#### **Evaluation Question 8: Has VAA capacity been strengthened and institutionalized?**

40. Fifteen VACs have been institutionalized but are at different levels of functionality. Out of the 10 countries ranked for VAA functionality (a measure of the NVAC performance on the seven indices of the Institutionalization Index),<sup>3</sup> six had a score of 55 or below, and four scored between 65 and 75. Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and South Africa ranked lowest on functionality while Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania and Malawi scored higher. Capacity was strengthened through training to enhance knowledge and to improve tools in many areas of the VAA system and the conducting of VAAs. This included taking the context of Covid-19 into account, through the use of technology-driven and virtual data-collection methods and also to convene meetings. The Atlas web platform designed to store, access, share and visualize RVAA data and other related information products from 16 SADC Member States (Atlas) was also developed to provide easy access to good-quality VAA data to inform evidence-based policymaking and programming. In line with adapting programme management to Covid-19 pandemic protocols, an e-Learning Advocacy Toolkit for enhancing technical knowledge on VAA Communication Policy and Resource Advocacy was developed to complement other training approaches. This has significant, continuing, value

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<sup>3</sup> Landell Mills.2019. *SADC RVAA Programme Institutionalisation Support Component Institutionalisation Index Manual Draft 0.3.*

for the VAA processes. More needs to be done to ensure that there are dedicated personnel for VAA at the SADC Secretariat and to ensure greater alignment of the VAA with DRR at national and regional levels.

### **Evaluation Question 9: Is there evidence of increased legitimacy, credibility, and influence of the RVAA programme at national and regional levels?**

41. Legitimacy has improved, particularly in increased local resource mobilization efforts among Member States. The number of mandated NVACs with supportive policy / legislative frameworks increased from 14 to 15 with the addition of Mauritius by 2021. NVACs are housed in ministries or institutions considered powerful enough to wield some multisectoral influence in the Member States, including the Presidents' and Prime Ministers' offices. Detailed technical capacity assessment reports generated by the programme should continue to be used to address specific areas. Programme phase-out and sustainability plans should be developed ahead of the current programme phase in March 2022.

42. Improved credibility is notable in terms of improvement in conducting VAAs, including using combined methods, conducting urban assessments, reaching out to more expansive geographical areas at national level, and reaching out to more vulnerable populations. Emerging issues such as gender, chronic poverty, and climate change have begun to be integrated into VAAs, albeit at different levels across the Member States. Countries such as Lesotho, Madagascar, Namibia and Zimbabwe have integrated gender into VAAs. More effort should be made to provide follow-up training and mentorship of Member States to transition from regional capacity-building outputs to immediate outcomes such as improved knowledge, skills and competencies for domestication and implementation of regional commitments, and towards achieving intermediate regional and national outcomes and impact.

43. Influence has also improved, particularly in the use of VAA information by governments and partners in formulating policies and decision-making.

- The RVAA made important contributions in enabling access, to VAA products for emergency response; developmental programming, policy and strategy formulation by decision makers (government and partners) in the region.
- The programme supported the SADC Secretariat and the regional programme in coordinating Communication, Policy and Resource Advocacy (CPRA) activities, and in improving the skills of NVACs in developing and implementing CPRA strategies, and produced several CPRA products, in response to the RVAA 2017-2021 Strategic Plan, plus the needs of NVACs and other stakeholders in communication and advocacy.
- The bimonthly newsletter, press releases, digital news and social media messages are some of the ways NVACs and key stakeholders receive information, share knowledge, increase awareness and raise awareness of the programme and VAA products.
- The programme conducted a webinar with the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre to improve regional media coverage of VAA activities. The programme also organized a workshop to give NVACs the skills to develop and implement CPRA strategies; and a regional policy workshop to improve the ability of Member States to carry out vulnerability assessments and use them to inform policy formulation, development programmes and emergency interventions.
- A WhatsApp group was created to serve as a regional TWG to exchange ideas, best practices and help improve the stakeholders' engagement and coordination. This group has more than 50 participants from 14 Member States, SADC and ICPS, who regularly exchange their knowledge and experience. More structured engagements occur at regional workshops. The regional support teams have enabled Eswatini, Namibia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe to set up relevant TWGs with communications and advocacy focal points.
- The RVAA programme and its products were mentioned among the accomplishments of the Executive Secretary at the 41<sup>st</sup> Ordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the SADC held in Lilongwe, Malawi, in August 2021.

44. More stakeholders are participating in NVACs across the Member States at varying degrees. The Member States welcomed the RVAA web platform, Atlas, noted as a huge programme achievement. Prior to the introduction of the Atlas, data and information produced by Member States was stored insecurely This

data is one of the programme's most valuable assets and the programme introduced Atlas not only to protect data but also to enable stakeholders, not just in southern Africa to easily access RVAA products.

45. In many Member States, the VAA was primarily used to inform emergency responses rather than development. However, the evaluation team noted that the increased diversification of VAA meant it was used to inform broader national development issues in countries such as Malawi, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Phase 3 significantly contributed to the promotion of VAAs to reach more people, including the vulnerable, and other population subgroups.

#### **Evaluation Question 10: To what extent has the programme been responsive to changing operational contexts, including disruption and unexpected shocks? (Conflicts, Covid-19 pandemic etc.)**

46. The programme responded very well to developing and training Member States on guidelines and standards for conducting VAAs during Covid-19, which assisted most Member States to continue conducting VAAs despite restrictive measures. The programme has created a heightened sense of urgency for the region to integrate climate change and other thematic areas in VAAs. Programme coordination and management methods were adapted for virtual meetings and workshops. The VAA processes were also adapted to enable remote data-collection, the promotion of hotspot analysis, increased use of secondary data, and the provision of virtual technical support for VAA analysis and VAA training. Covid-19 was incorporated as one of the shocks analysed and reported on in VAA, with special thematic studies focused on better understanding of the impacts on Covid-19.

#### **Evaluation Question 11: To what extent did the programme integrate gender in assessments?**

47. Integration of gender as an emerging issue was identified as a priority for the RVAA programme Phase 3 alongside integration of resilience to climate change, HIV/AIDS, urban and markets, poverty and chronic analysis. The regional VAA harmonized framework developed with close consultation with technical NVAC members reinforced the need for collecting gender disaggregated analysis for VAA. Implementation and monitoring of the harmonized framework have been facilitated through the annual pre-assessment workshops and the Annual Dissemination Forums. Annual monitoring by the programme shows that in the 2021 assessment cycle, the level of integration of emerging issues including gender was given due attention. Awareness on integrating gender, children and people with disability had increased, leading some Member States to take their own initiatives through multisectoral collaboration at a national level to incorporate gender and persons with disability in VAAs without much regional support. These commendable efforts in integrating gender in the programme needs to be further supported at a regional level to provide ongoing follow-up support at national levels, share experiences and lessons among the Member States.

### **Efficiency**

#### **Evaluation Question 12: What are the key achievements and challenges of the technical assistance offered by the WFP and Landell Mills?**

48. The programme has an M&E evaluation framework based on the programme logframe and theory of change. The framework provides a structure, processes, and tools for tracking programme progress at regional and national levels, and assessing and evaluating overall programme outputs, outcomes and impacts. The tracking tools include the:

- NVAC scorecard
- NVAC activity and budget tracker
- NVAC Institutionalization Index
- Progress reports twice a year
- Annual reviews, the mid-term review and the final evaluation.

49. There are also weekly programme meetings, reviews of action taken, and reflections on what lessons have been learned after workshops and major programme meetings, monthly management meetings, the annual regional lesson-learning workshop, Annual Organization Meeting and RVAC meetings.



50. Consequently, the programme significantly improved NVAA processes and the credibility and influence of VAA information and products. For instance:

- The RVAA grants given to the Member States helped them to galvanize local resources for VAAs.
- The service providers responded promptly in providing technical support to the Member States to cope with the impact of Covid-19.
- VAA tools and methodologies were improved, and multiple VAA methods were adopted.
- The Member States were trained on incorporating emerging issues in VAAs.

51. Good governance of the RVAA programme and the decentralization of VAAs at subnational levels; digitalization and use of technology, especially virtual communication; improved sharing of lessons learned; and increased stakeholder participation - all contributed to enhancing the VAA efficacy. The Institutionalization Index was introduced as a self-assessment tool and guide, providing the requisite indices to support institutionalized and sustainable VAAs.

### **Evaluation Question 13: What internal and external factors enabled or constrained the achievement of programme results?**

52. The major external challenge that slowed programme implementation was Covid-19, due to the need to adapt and moderated approaches. Internally, the revision of the Theory of Change and Logframe within two years, including revisions to address challenges<sup>4</sup> identified by the mid-term review,<sup>5</sup> would have affected the guiding of the programme. However, this threat was averted as the refinement of the ToC was highly consultative, which improved clarity on the programme results framework, particularly among the programme's service providers. This consequently aided collaboration and maximized synergies in programme implementation. In response to the mid-term review, the service providers began to meet every month.

53. The major strong point of the programme is that there was a robust consultation in Phase 2 in preparation for Phase 3. The consultations continued in Phase 3, which helped to clarify possible challenges that could have arisen during implementation. For instance, budgetary support limitations were explained during consultations and agreed by Member States.

54. Human resources and the challenge of technical capacity also posed a significant threat to the VAA system in some Member States. The studies conducted by the programme seemed to demand great deal of officials' time, which created apathy. A key strategy that helped Member States to continue viewing and benefiting from the programme, was a demand-driven technical assistance approach. For a programme of RVAA's complexity, activity-driven monitoring and evaluation practice was a prudent way of tracking different outputs and reporting on programme progress.

### **Value for Money**

#### **Evaluation Question 14: Has RVAA delivered value for money? Elements to consider include economy, efficiency, cost-effectiveness and equity. What has been achieved at what cost?**

55. As noted under effectiveness, the RVAA programme is on course to achieve most of the outputs by 2022, when Phase 3 ends, with some challenges such as Member States providing local funds for VAA activities. The NVACs, as a result of their increasing legitimacy and credibility and that of their information products, have demonstrated the ability to replace direct programme funding for vulnerability assessments, which was deliberately scaled down as part of the strategy to phase out the programme. The gap created by this reduced funding is filled by funds raised by Member States themselves and international cooperating partners. However, ensuring predictable funding for the assessments and the attendant NVAC capacity-building remains a challenge.

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<sup>4</sup> A summary of the key challenges has been set out under 2.4.2, specifically the summary on efficiency, just before 2.5. Value for money

<sup>5</sup> UKAID, Landell Mills, WFP, SDC. 2019. *Mid-Term Review of the SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Programme (RVAA) 2017–2021. Final Report Covering May 2017–May 2019.*

56. The utilization of WFP platforms such as WFP country offices was of considerable value, due to the readily available support for NVACs. The reliance of Member States on VAA data for decision-making and humanitarian or emergence response indicates the great worth of the RVAA programme.

57. The development of the Atlas, a repository of RVAA information and a medium for sharing, accessing and visualizing regional VAA information. This service, previously non-existent, expands the possibilities of use and therefore value of the RVAA data and information, thus enhancing its cost-effectiveness.

58. The decentralization of the data-collection process in some Member States like Botswana Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe improved the efficiency of data-collection resulting in high cost-savings on travel, hotel accommodation and per diems. The sustained and expanded move from use of paper to electronic questionnaires combined data-collection and data entry in household surveys and saved both time and money. Opportunities for data-collection errors were also greatly reduced.

59. Achieving value for money in the institutionalization of the VAA systems is still in progress, considering that this process is not fully achieved. VAA funding is a crucial variable for demonstrating VAA institutionalization in Member State governments.<sup>6</sup> Current VAA funding has a blend of donor and national government funding and in-kind contributions. Most Member States have made significant progress in generating local resources to fund all VAA activities. Those such as Botswana and South Africa have received 100 percent government funding for the VAA system.

60. Value for money is also notable through efforts by Member States to fund the NVAC activities as the programme comes to an end. The total annual budgets for all NVACs averaged US\$ 15 million between 2018 and 2021. Member States contributed at least 53 percent (in 2020/2021) and a maximum of 57 percent (in 2018/2019) towards the NVACs budgets. International cooperating partners' contributions average about 18 percent of annual NVACs budgets for the same period. The RVAA Programme's direct contributions to NVACs' total budget gradually reduced (as part of the programme phase-out strategy) from 11 percent in 2018/2019 to 4 percent in 2021/2022.

61. NVACs provides common platforms for governments and their cooperating partners to bring together their (technical and financial) resources to produce a situation analysis that is shared and agreed upon. This enables collaboration on implementing interventions that would otherwise would have been compromised by arguments about the nature and magnitude of the problem(s) to be addressed.

## Impact

### Evaluation Question 15: What are the positive and/or negative, intended and unintended effects of the RVAA programme?

62. There is sufficient evidence of NVACs and VAA systems' strengthening government administrative structures as well as policies through reliable, promptly produced information. This information is used widely including as a basis for financial decisions in some Member States. For instance, during the July 2021 looting that broke out in South Africa, RVAA information was used in deciding how to address some aspects of the situation.

63. Some Member States are innovating and expanding the scope of VAA in countries such as Zimbabwe to include broader issues deemed necessary to inform policy and development. Although this expansion indicates the important role played by NVACs, it may also cause NVACs to be viewed as displacing Member States own ways of generating information. The continued expansion of the scope of the NVAC indicates a positive step but could also risk weakening the focus on the VAA information. NVACs need to be alert to the need to balance the expansion of VAA scope and the focus of VAA information on emergency response and building resilient and sustainable livelihoods.

64. There is evidence that data collected by the VAA system influences Member State emergency responses in most Member States and, to a lesser extent, national development programmes and interventions in some countries such as Eswatini, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The positioning of the NVACs in top political institutions in several countries shows the value attached to the VAA system and the

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<sup>6</sup> SADC RVAA Programme. 2021. *Institutionalisation Service Provision Regional Institutionalisation Shared Learning Event Report March 2021*.



data and information that it generates, and its subsequent influence on national and regional planning and development.

65. From recognizing the need to address vulnerability through a regional approach, the RVAA has had the added benefit of enabling Member States to share learning, benchmarking and the adoption of best practices. This has resulted in joint efforts to address common challenges, such as through regionally coordinated emergency assistance appeals. However, it should be noted that it is not just about responding to emergency humanitarian situations but also building resilient and sustainable livelihoods, which Zimbabwe has well embraced.

66. The impact of the programme is also noted in the way it has assisted SADC Member States to support the RVAA system and programme. For instance, at the beginning of Phase 3, training was conducted on VAA tools and assessment methods, but this was given a lukewarm response by Member States, except Zimbabwe. However, as implementation progressed, other Member States began to appreciate the advantages of this training, resulting in increased engagement with the programme strategy and the activities. This strengthened Member States to build a clear shared regional VAA vision, which in turn strengthened regional resolve and commitment to the programme. At the same time, the early programme interventions adopted by Zimbabwe and the late engagement by other Member States provided critical lessons for the future management of SADC regional programme management. These lessons include the importance of patience, consultation, wisdom, building consensus, and fostering a common vision in implementing a complex programme like the RVAA, where stakeholders and key participants have diverse interests.

67. As noted earlier in the section on value for money, the programme has had a positive effect in spurring local mobilization of resources and the potential for sustainable impact beyond the programme phase (although this impact varies with some Member States more advanced than others. Continued technical and coordination support will be required post Phase 3 to move all Member States towards a fully integrated and sustainable VAA system on areas where Member States have low scores on the Institutionalization Index. This will assist in contributing effectively to the SADC goal of sustainable development and well-being.

68. Some notable good practices emerging from the programme include innovative efforts to mobilize local resources for sustainability. For instance, the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZIMVAC) has been able to convince local partners, different government departments (including the treasury), United Nations agencies and NGOs, to contribute financially and materially towards annual VAAs in ways that have a high potential for sustainability. This success has hinged on its credibility, arising from its high level of technical expertise, timely, comprehensive and high-quality annual VAAs, plus an inclusive multisectoral and multi-stakeholder approach. The consistent generation of good quality data has enabled ZIMVAC to extend the application of its data to analyse resilience and other specific client-oriented areas, thus encouraging partner participation and financial contribution.

69. The Botswana Vulnerability Assessment Committee (BVAC) has also managed to mobilize local fiscal resources by drawing mainly on the legitimacy of the VAA system. The BVAC function and VAAs have been integrated into routine, continuing government operations, priorities and processes in the context of disaster risk reduction and management. This has resulted in VAA being considered an integral part of government annual budget allocations. These examples present opportunities for the other Member States to learn from in order to enhance local financing and sustainability of VAAs.

70. NVACs are focusing on being positioned within key ministries within the Member States to enhance and strengthen resource mobilization for sustainability. For instance, the South African VAC (SAVAC) is planning to place its NVAC in the Deputy President's Office where all government departments are coordinated.

#### **Evaluation Question 16: Has the RVAA Programme influenced emergency and developmental policy and programming?**

71. NVACs activities have involved multisector partnerships with key stakeholders, including INGOs and other non-state actors, to achieve RVAA programme outcomes and cohesion. In addition to planning, VAA products have increasingly been used in monitoring risks and vulnerability threats while aiding decision-making and formulating plans for disaster mitigation appeal action, including climate emergencies.

72. The increased complexity and demand for information on food and nutrition insecurity within the region necessitates reliable knowledge access platforms. The RVAA programme achieved this by developing and deploying an interactive data and knowledge repository portal to integrate already available data with historical data for stakeholders. Efforts should now be focused on transforming VAAs from an information generation system, to proactively contributing to strategic planning for the prevention and better mitigation of food and nutrition and related emergencies and disasters in SADC.

## Sustainability

### Evaluation Question 17: To what extent have NVACs/VAA been integrated into national systems and processes (administrative, financial structures, planning, information systems etc.)?

73. The NVACs/VAA integration into national systems, financial structures, and planning are evident within the RVAA programme. These integrated approaches and systems help foster sustainability and include:

- Capacity strengthening
- Strengthening the engagement of Member States through adoption and incorporation of the programme by national government systems
- Intentional programme phase-out plans
- Programme financing sustainability phase-out approach
- The development of an implementable RVAA Sustainability Plan.

### Evaluation Question 18: How sustainable is the RVAA system beyond the current donor-funded cycle?

74. Some aspects of the system such as vulnerability assessments and the NVAC structure are clearly likely to continue when the programme ends, while others may stop. Sustainability depends on the integration of VAC in national government processes, but this is unpredictable, with low institutionalization in some Member States as well as inadequate VAC staff in others. There is also a perception in some Member States (although only a few) that the RVAA is a SADC (Secretariat) project linked to donor funding, which may weaken their motivation to sustain interventions when Phase 3 funding. This perception seems to arise from a lack of differentiation between RVAA as an institutionalized 'system' of producing information and a 'programme' as an initiative to enhance the system within a particular period and with resource limitations.

## CONCLUSION

75. The extent to which the programme has and/is likely to achieve its intended results vary slightly, but all the outputs, as drawn from the activities, have been achieved. There has been intense effort to ensure, despite Covid-19, the implementation of all the activities of the three programme components of the RVAA programme:

- Institutionalization
- Technical capacity
- Communication and advocacy

76. Technical capacity and communication and advocacy were adequately delivered while institutionalization started about 18 months into the programme, which resulted in the need to catch up.

77. The programme made great strides towards achieving the intermediate outcomes of credibility and influence, while the other outcome, legitimacy, was already high among Member States at the onset of Phase 3. The extent of "institutionalized and sustainable VAAs" varied from weak to strong. Therefore, the bulk of the work on the future programme should focus on strengthening the institutionalization of the NVACs to ensure that methods, tools and approaches developed by the programme are applied effectively to enhance the functioning and sustainability of the NVACs. At the same time, achieving resilience to shocks and food and nutrition insecurity remains aspirational in most Member States. More still needs to be done

to strengthen VAAs across all Member States and to reduce variations between them towards attaining the programme goal.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### 78. A balance between a broad menu of flexible options and concise regional integration activities

The RVAA programme usefully provided Member States with a comprehensive ‘menu of options’ (a multi-country approach) while prioritizing a concise package of common regional activities that promote harmonization in attaining regional outcomes. This flexibility provides a critical lesson in balancing the individuality of a Member State within the broader community of the SADC.

### 79. Programme design and planning clarity

The programme proposal and plans were usefully informed by the broad RVAA strategy. However, the close alignment of the strategy document and the proposal seemed to diminish the need for a specific programme implementation plan. Notwithstanding the programme well-thought implementation processes including annual plans and letters of agreement (with their attendant activities concept notes) that emerged from the Annual Organizational Meeting (AOM) and are reviewed by the RVAC, and programme steering committee meetings held at least twice each year, the ToC had to be revised at least twice. More so, the logframe was considered synonymous with an implementation plan. One lesson learned is that it is critical to maintain the RVAA programme strategy as a broader guiding document while developing budgeted five-year, annual and sub annual implementation plans that are sufficiently detailed to cover the diverse aspects of the programme. These can then be systematically implemented, monitored and reported within the structures of SADC to ensure their continued relevance to an integrated regional results chain (outputs/outcomes/impact). This will require that future programmes allow ample time for planning and designing a detailed implementation plan.

### 80. Balance in implementation adjustments

The impact of Covid-19, and staff turnover, disrupted the implementation schedule for the RVAA programme at regional and national levels, but programme did well in adjusting to the changed situation. In future, in such cases, it may be more prudent for project activities to be re-examined, streamlined and prioritized, rather than to attempt to complete them all within a compressed timeframe. The adjustments made to adapt to Covid-19, for instance through virtual training, assisted significantly in maintaining the implementation of activities (although delivered virtually). This could have resulted in a loss of implementation time, which suggests that there should be a balance between maintaining planned activities, as well as consultations on programme adjustments.

### 81. Programme decentralization

The decentralization of programmes to local levels has the benefits of cost-effectiveness, ease of adaptation to disruptive emergencies such as Covid-19, enabling the transfer of knowledge, skills and technologies and to build the capacity of local staff and stakeholders. Decentralization can also foster a sense of ownership and the sustainability of programme efforts. Hence, this should be integral to the design and execution of regional and national programmes.

### 82. Consolidation from earlier implementation phases

A major strategic focus of Phase 3 was “Consolidation and Continuity: Protecting the Gains of the RVAA Programme”. Stakeholder consultations were conducted with a view to consolidate lessons and experiences from the Phase 2, and to inform the design of Phase 3. In addition, some transitional activities were undertaken at the beginning of the Phase 3 that provided resources to selected “unfinished” activities from the previous phase.

For long-term programmes where subsequent phases are meant to consolidate gains or correct inadequacies, the consolidation efforts should be clearly defined in the results framework, and cumulative progress (or lack of it) tracked. This will limit the extent to which new phase designs may abandon essential steps in achieving long-term programme goals, which could miss the benefits that are likely to accrue from ripple effect characteristic of complex long-term programmes such as the SADC RVAA.

### 83. Regional networking and learning

A key lesson reported by some NVACs was that regional networking and inter-country learning of good practices and exchange of ideas was more effective when conducted in staff exchange visits between the Member States. Regional networking opportunities can influence national thinking by allowing for peer review and reflection and exposing the Member States to new ideas and better ways of doing things. For instance, at the beginning of the programme, ZIMVAC was the first NVAC that warmly embraced initiatives aimed at strengthening methods of assessing resilience, chronic vulnerability, climate change. Zimbabwe is also considered as having the best functioning NVAC, and it may be worthwhile to establish ZIMVAC as a Centre of Excellence on resilience.

#### 84. VAA information as a resource mobilization tool

In a programme such as RVAA, multi-stakeholder participation does not only serve to provide credibility and influence of VAA. When VAA information is considered credible, multi-stakeholder participation can serve as a platform for mobilizing resources to conduct and sustain NVAAs, particularly in cases where stakeholder contributions to NVAA processes are rewarded with more privileged access to VAA data.

#### 85. SADC Secretariat ownership

The implementation of a regional programme such as the RVAA is more effective when there is greater involvement, ownership and control by the Member States and through the SADC Secretariat than when largely delegated to international partners and primarily executed through a series of consultants. In such cases, more emphasis should be placed on enabling the SADC Secretariat and the Member States to drive the programme processes, with international partners and consultants providing background technical support, all of which is seen to be facilitated and coordinated by the SADC Secretariat.

#### 86. Implementation modalities – use of existing structures improve programme efficiency

The use of existing structures at regional and member state levels increased the value for money of the programme as it brought in efficiency and cost-effectiveness through a reduction in the cost of delivery. At regional level, the use of the WFP platform for quality control of the evaluation process and the use of WFP country offices also enhanced the cost-effectiveness of the programme. In addition, huge savings on costs were made by Member States that used decentralized data-collection systems involving existing district structures.

#### 87. Programme formulation and gender issues

One of the key outcomes for Phase 3 is broadening and deepening the scope of the RVAA to include causes of chronic vulnerability, poverty reduction, resilience and climate change, including gender issues. The coverage of gender issues during VAA data-collection and analysis has not been systematic (i.e., translated from regional strategy to regional support for Member States integration and reporting of gender), with a few Member States only partially capturing the gender information. Most Member States, however, did not capture this information, despite it being emphasized as an emerging issue and the promotion of guidelines for its integration. The lesson is that key issues should be adequately covered during programme formulation, and explicitly emphasized in the results framework, to avoid gaps during implementation.

#### 88. Comprehensive programme monitoring framework

Overall, the programme is on track to successfully deliver expected outcomes by 2022. The monitoring framework consisted of tools such as the RVAA Functionality Scorecard, Budget tracker and Institutionalization Index, as well as routine reporting by Member States and service providers. However, there was limited use of the tools to consistently generate M&E information from Member States for use at regional level. Owing to the complexity of the programme, an effort was made to map the use and influence of VAA products through episode studies to get a sense of the programme contribution to intermediate outcomes and impact. To strengthen the effective monitoring and evaluation of a complex programme like the RVAA, developing NVAC M&E systems, which was lacking in the design of the programme, should be prioritized in future as key to an integrated regional VAA M&E system. It would be beneficial for the M&E to be systemic by measuring the programme at the different stakeholder levels, for example:

- SADC Secretariat (focusing on tracking progress on skills transfer and programme management)

- Regional RVAA level where the M&E aggregates Member State (NVAC) level frameworks
- NVAC level where tracking is done at Member State level.

89. Popularization of Atlas and its exposure for optimal use

The web platform Atlas provides an opportunity for improving M&E, and future rigorous meta-analysis studies that show longer-term programme impacts beyond the programme's lifecycle. The Atlas offers Member States a chance to store, share, access and visualize their data and information while fostering regional collaboration. The lesson and challenge for future RVAA is to maintain and enhance data quality across Member States to ascertain that collated data is credible, accurate and valuable. Atlas therefore needs to be promoted among Member States so that they can derive maximum benefit from it.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Relevance*

90. **Recommendation 1:** Determine core consistent Member System Interventions of the RVAA programme to be maintained post of programme Phase 3 cycle as part of processes for continuity of the VAA system. For purposes of continuity and project management best practice, the achievements, challenges, lessons learned, experiences, good/best /promising practices of the RVAA programme cycle Phase 3, and the current situation of vulnerability in the region should be well documented and considered as baseline information for future programme efforts, on the premise that the VAA system continues. In the same vein, selected core package of Member State VAA interventions should be planned to be maintained post Phase 3 as part of the processes for continuity of the VAA system. This will help to ensure a continuing basic monitoring system for the RVAA system, and to maintain momentum towards the achieving medium to long-term primary targeted results. The recently launched Atlas will provide critical information that can be accessed for future programmes.

91. **Recommendation 2:** Expedite finalization of the sustainability plan and intensify capacity-building support focusing on issues needed for sustainability including prioritization of mobilising resources, quality assurance assessments, and partnerships and network management. Ensure that there is a proper handover of benefits and ongoing processes of the RVAA at regional and national levels.

### *Effectiveness and efficiency*

92. **Recommendation 3:** Strengthen the capacity of the SADC Secretariat for regional coordination of technical support for the RVAA programme to enhance participation and ownership consistent with an emphasis on harmonization and regional integration than a multi-country or individual Member State focused perspective in RVAA technical facilitation efforts. Specific action could be encouraging the SADC Secretariat to hire a programme manager specifically for RVAA ahead of March 2022 to enable the handover of programme benefits, outstanding activities and ongoing activities for ease of follow-up.

93. **Recommendation 4:** Integrate gender, children and people with disabilities in VAAs in a manner that NVACs are guided to include it in Member State assessments. The RVAA programme should prioritize providing technical support to Member States to accelerate the integration of gender in VAAs, working jointly with the SADC gender and development programme, and other relevant programmes. It may be useful to have Member States such as Lesotho, Madagascar, Namibia and Zimbabwe that have begun conducting gender analysis and using information from such analysis to be considered for sharing lessons learned and experiences for accelerated uptake of this recommendation. Gender analysis should be considered together with children and people with disabilities in view of the issues facing these vulnerable groups, whose care is largely the responsibility of women.

94. **Recommendation 5:** Improve RVAA conceptual clarity and monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) among all stakeholders. This should include:

- Designing the RVAA monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) system in adherence with frameworks for results-based management, and accountability for regional integration, obliging Member States to account for their implementation of regional and international commitments. Consideration should be given to strengthen the role of Member States in regional MER, supporting them to -reflect on their progress in implementing regional /

international commitments, and to report to national and regional/ international stakeholders, while subjecting themselves to a regional peer review mechanism.

- The MER system should extend its functions beyond tracking programme's execution of planned activities, to being an instrument for facilitating regional integration towards a SADC unitary community where possible.
- Clarify and differentiate between the RVAA as a data generation system, and as a (series of) transient endeavours of VAA improvement efforts and communicate this distinction to stakeholders and in the programme design and implementation processes. This is particularly important to enable a focused contextual tracking of the programme elements, while improving an evolving, long-term VAA.

95. **Recommendation 6:** Strengthen capacity-building of Member States in mobilizing resources and technical skills through cascading technical capacity-building broadly to provinces and districts. Attention should be given to:

- Training and supporting Member States in writing project proposals and engaging the private sector for resource mobilization.
- Adopting cascade training model on VAA for Member States to address human resource shortages and staff turnover. Trainees should be identified from across different sectors and members of NVACs /RVAC, and to include NGOs, training and research institutions.

96. **Recommendation 7:** Facilitate development of national resilient strategies within Member States. Very few Member States have national resilience strategies in place. These strategies are seen as a tool for mobilizing resources to help develop resilience among vulnerable populations who have passed the emergency stage. The SADC should take a leading role in supporting Member States who have not yet developed such a strategy.

97. **Recommendation 8:** Consolidate Communication and Advocacy Initiative to strengthen the use of the VAA in influencing policy and mobilizing resources. There is a need to promote the policy toolkit which has been developed to enhance the use and influence of VAA in policy formulation. The opportunity, value proposition studies and episode studies should be utilized to enable NVACs to position themselves as knowledge brokers and contributors in policy formulation and implementation.

98. **Recommendation 9:** Promote nimble approaches to VAA through employing the use of new technology that would have been successfully utilized in other Member States through cross learning. In addition to current practice, the programme needs to further promote and develop capacities in forecast-based approaches to VAA, which is integrated to support safety net programmes. This should be undertaken in tandem with investments in technology assets to ensure NVACs can take advantage of technology.

99. **Recommendation 10:** Ensure well planned and prepared handover of RVAA programme to SADC including ongoing processes and responsibilities. The Atlas platform is an ideal platform and space for such a handover process. The programme's management committee and RVAC, in support of the SADC Secretariat, should ensure the responsible handover of programme deliverables, ongoing processes and responsibilities. This will include:

- Implementing, as a minimum, measures to sustain the gains made by the programme. This could be a part of the handover and programme sustainability plan, bearing in mind that handover is a process not a date".
- Documenting all activities that are unlikely to be implemented, and those for which follow-up support is required, and assessing the implications for not doing this. This report will help the programme stakeholders to decide how those activities will be handled post March 2022. It would be a waste if some key activities are not properly completed and handed over to Member States and the SADC Secretariat as benefits.
- Clearly defining stakeholders' roles, responsibilities and accountability towards maintaining /sustaining the benefits, while ensuring the uninterrupted continuity of ongoing processes as well as the implementation of unfinished activities. Opportunity should be taken to support the integration of benefits and processes into government and partners' day-to-day operations



drawing on multisectorality, economies of scale and intersectoral linkages of VAA for efficiency, cost management and sustainability.

- Identify products of Phase 3 that can be transformed for wider long-term application to achieve a sustainable VAA system such as the Institutionalization Index and RVAA Online Atlas, the e-Learning Advocacy Toolkit course Covid-19 VAA guidelines, and Gender disaggregation guidelines. This will require these tools are institutionalized by transitioning them from the current project (technical partner-owned identity) to a SADC identity /ownership. This will require that they are further subjected, drawing on lessons learned and experiences on their application thus far, to SADC policy / harmonization instruments or guidelines development, approval, domestication and monitoring process with new titles, as for example The SADC Framework for Sustainable Institutionalization of VAA System, or the SADC RVAA Online Atlas, among others. The SADC Secretariat should guide this process as part of handover of products and processes of the RVAA programme Phase 3.

100. **Recommendation 11:** Promote the VAA system to play a preventive and forward planning advisory function on vulnerability beyond the supply of data. The RVAA system seems to have remained too focused on information collection and advisory services on food and nutrition security, and vulnerability. It should consider playing a more preventive and forward planning advisory role on vulnerability, building on the relationship of NVACs and DRR in most Member States. RVAA should bring together different efforts and functions in order to come up with one holistic strategy to address vulnerability. This is particularly important because disasters and emergency situations are intricately linked with food and nutrition insecurity in the SADC region.

101. **Recommendation 12:** Promote and encourage full participation of Member States in virtual RVAA programme meetings. This can be achieved through:

- Use of SADC technical subcommittees as the overall approach to technical engagement – ensuring that meetings are also technically motivated, specific results-oriented and accountable to SADC policy organs.
- Use of local expertise rather than drawing on international collaboration and fostering national /regional intersectoral collaboration as for example, applied by Zimbabwe on VAA gender analysis.
- Decentralization of VAA ensuring involvement and capacity-building of local staff and communities.
- Enabling virtual VAA to be carried out.
- Designing and facilitating virtual meetings in ways that are interactive and motivational. Adequate time would have to be allocated to agenda items, with video-linked virtual communication tools bringing a personal touch that motivates attention. Member States' delegations should be well equipped and able to participate on virtual platforms. Physical meetings should continue to complement virtual meetings where possible, although a hybrid approach could also be used where, for example members of the same organization or country operate from the same venue during national and regional virtual meetings.

102. **Recommendation 13:** Strengthen, systematize and intensify Member State to Member State learning as a peer-to-peer capacity-building approach. This may include identifying Member States performing well on certain aspects and pairing them with others which are performing poorly. Then they conduct learning exchange visits.

# 1. Introduction

1. This report presents findings on the joint final evaluation of Phase 3 of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis programme (2017 –2022). The evaluation was conducted between May and November 2021. Review of programme documents and observations of some programme activities commenced in May and continued until 13 August when data-collection ended. Fieldwork was conducted from 12 July to 13 August 2021. Data analysis, report writing and information clarificatory engagements ended in February 2022. The evaluation determines the programme's achievements and the likelihood of results being achieved by March 2022. The evaluation was jointly commissioned by a consortium of partners comprising of the SADC Secretariat, Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Landell Mills and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP).

## 1.1. EVALUATION FEATURES

2. The goal of the RVAA programme is to support resilient and sustainable rural and urban livelihoods, environments and institutions in reducing poverty and enhancing well-being in the SADC region. The evaluation builds on the comprehensive RVAA mid-term review conducted in 2019. It assesses, across the 16 Member States, all three components of the RVAA programme, which are:

- Technical capacity
- Institutionalization
- Communication and advocacy

3. The evaluation focused on determining the outcomes achieved by the programme including an examination of how and why the programme contributed to observed changes.

4. Phase 3 of the SADC RVAA programme is in its final year and findings from the evaluation are intended to inform strategic and operational decision-making about future programming, implementation methods, strategic orientations, partnerships and sustainability. The evaluation provides an independent assessment of the performance of the RVAA programme, paying attention to its results measured against its objectives. The specific objectives of the evaluation are to:

- Provide an objective/impartial assessment of whether planned outputs have been delivered and whether the outputs have led and/or contributed to the achievement of the anticipated outcomes
- Understand the processes/mechanisms by which the programme led to or contributed to outcomes
- Examine programme achievements, identify why they have or have not been made, identify any broader consequences, positive or negative, intended or unintended, which have occurred as a result of the programme
- Determine the extent to which the programme implemented the recommendations from the mid-term review
- Examine progress in terms of sustainability of the RVAA system beyond the current donor funding; and
- Provide recommendations on future programming, implementation methods, strategic orientations and partnerships. This will include recommendations about how gender equality and empowerment considerations can be mainstreamed in future programming.

5. Thus, the joint evaluation serves with equal weight, the dual and mutually reinforcing objectives of accountability and learning.

6. **Accountability** – The evaluation assessed the performance and results of the SADC RVAA programme.



7. **Learning** – The evaluation determined the reasons why certain activities achieved particular results, to draw lessons, derive good practices and pointers for further learning. It provides evidence-based findings to inform operational and strategic decision-making about the future programming and design of the RVAA system. Findings will be published, and lessons will be incorporated into relevant knowledge management systems at regional level and in Member States.

8. This evaluation report is informed by the terms of reference as laid out in the inception report (see Annex 1 for the Summary ToR). The team, comprising five independent evaluators carried out fieldwork between 12 July 2021 and 13 August 2021 (see Annexes 2 and 3 for the detailed evaluation schedule and fieldwork schedule respectively).

9. Oversight for this joint final evaluation was provided by the Joint Evaluation Management Group, comprising representatives from the commissioning entities, with the lead management role delegated to the WFP.

10. The report was shaped by a desk review, interviews and discussions with stakeholders, key informant interviews in 16 Member States, and observation of national and regional programme activities. These included:

- 2021 RVAA Programme Dissemination Workshop
- 2021 Launch of the RVAA Atlas
- 2021/2022 assessment validation workshop for the Zimbabwe National Vulnerability Assessment Committee.

11. The evaluation team mainstreamed gender in all its objectives such as ensuring that respondents from NVAC members included both males and females as and where applicable.

12. The results and recommendations from the evaluation will be used by the SADC Secretariat, Member States (across government sectors, civil society organizations, private sector), donors, and key programme stakeholders, including service providers (WFP and Landel Mills), to improve and strengthen future SADC RVAA programming.

## 1.2. CONTEXT

13. Climate change and extreme weather conditions have unfavourably affected the SADC region for the past 15 years and the situation is forecast to worsen for some few decades. The southern African region has frequently been hit by natural disasters. During the rainfall season of 2018–2019, Member States such as Angola, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe experienced a severe drought, having received their lowest levels of rain since 1981. Unpredictable rainfall affected crop production, prompting Angola, Botswana and Namibia to declare drought emergencies. Extreme weather events also brought about flooding in several SADC countries, while tropical storms and cyclones – Idai and Kenneth in 2019, Chalane in 2020 and Eloise in 2021 – and the lasting effects of the El Niño phenomenon, exacerbated the situation in Comoros, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

14. Climate change risks for the SADC region are serious and exacerbate other multiple factors affecting vulnerability. SADC countries are especially vulnerable to climate change because of their dependency on subsistence agriculture, with over 95 percent of regional agriculture being rain-fed. Food and nutrition insecurity and vulnerability is further compounded by the prevalence of HIV and AIDS in all southern African countries and the conflict that affects some of the countries. According to the SADC Synthesis Report 2021, data from 10 SADC Member States that submitted data indicate an estimated “47.6 million people are food-insecure, a 5.5 percent increase from the previous year and a 34.3 percent above the 5-year average”.<sup>7</sup> The DRC registered a 25 percent increase in the number of people in Phase 3 of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) in 2021, an increase in absolute terms from “21.8 million to 27.3 million people”.<sup>8</sup> In Madagascar, food insecurity situation is not good either, having risen by “136 percent compared to 2020, with 1.31 million people”<sup>9</sup> in Phase 3 and above, of the IPC classification. Child

<sup>7</sup> SADC. 2021. *Synthesis Report on the state of food and nutrition security and vulnerability in Southern Africa 2021*.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

malnutrition is also a great concern in the SADC Regions, with about 19 million stunted children (one in every three). The World Health Organization classifies malnutrition and stunting in SADC Member States as high or very high. Angola, DRC, Namibia, Madagascar and Mozambique experienced localized long dry periods. In many parts of the region, four of the past six-rainfall seasons have not been good, with 2021 being exceptionally better. Eswatini has been experiencing civil unrest while, in the southern part of DRC, a volcano eruption displaced a community, further aggravating food insecurity. Other factors also come into play. African migratory locust outbreaks are still a serious occurrence, with sightings reported in Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, official statistics indicated that, by July 2021, SADC had recorded about “2.5 million cases and 72,000 deaths;”<sup>10</sup> although it is thought that the actual number of deaths is much higher. Unfortunately, the epidemiological situation of Covid-19 continues to be uncertain, due to new variants emerging, such as the Delta variant that killed more people than the original strain. Under these conditions, safety continues to be the priority, requiring access to affordable vaccines. This has led to further containments, with lockdowns diverting resources to strengthen local health systems, and limiting the ability of Member States to further support food and nutrition insecurity.

15. The onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic and the impact of lockdowns will further exacerbate poverty and the high levels of food and nutrition insecurity in the region. The pandemic also affected some of the progress made towards meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

16. The Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020–2030<sup>11</sup> of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), has established a durable strategy to emerging threats, using early warning and mitigation systems.

17. Anchored in SADC’s Vision 2050, which envisages “a peaceful, inclusive, competitive, middle- to high-income industrialized region, where all citizens enjoy sustainable economic well-being, justice, and freedom”; and, on the SADC’s mission statement, RISDP structure includes various pillars. Under the Peace, Security and Good Governance Foundational Pillar, within which the RVAA falls, RISDP 2020–2030 aims to enhance conflict prevention, management and resolution mechanisms with an effective early warning system capable of tracking and monitoring political, security and socioeconomic threats. Social inclusion (SDG Goals 1–7) and Environmental sustainability (SDG Goals 12–15).

18. Social inclusion underscores the need for SADC programmes addressing this pillar to be geared towards:

- Improved monitoring and analysis of poverty trends in the region
- Increased access to good quality and relevant education and skills
- Increased access to good quality health and HIV/AIDS services
- Reduced social vulnerability in the context of food and nutrition security
- Enhanced gender equality and equity
- Enhanced youth development and empowerment.

19. Environmental responsibility underscores the need for SADC programmes addressing this pillar to be geared towards enhanced sustainable management and conservation of natural resources, the environment and plant and animal genetic resources. To address these critical concerns, RISDP includes a cross-cutting dimension.

20. Cross-cutting issues in RISDP 2020–2030 are gender, youth, environment and climate change and disaster risk management. These issues are central to ensuring that the formulation, deliberation, adoption and implementation of regional protocols, strategies, policies and programmes are carried out in an inclusive manner. In this regard, the focus is on intensified gender equality, empowerment and development through the accelerated equal participation of women, men and especially youth in regional development, socioeconomic, and political processes at both national and regional levels. Climate change

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> SADC, 2003. *Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2020–2030*, [https://www.sadc.int/documents-publications/show/Regional\\_Indicative\\_Strategic\\_Development\\_Plan.pdf](https://www.sadc.int/documents-publications/show/Regional_Indicative_Strategic_Development_Plan.pdf)

resilience and the scaling-up of climate mitigation measures is also emphasized as a cross-cutting issue in the RISDP. It is expected that disaster risk management investments will be scaled up to ensure increased resilience. RISDP disaster risk management also includes prevention and control strategies of common disease such as malaria, tuberculosis (TB), HIV/AIDS, and non-communicable diseases.

21. Addressing poverty is at the core of the RISDP and the RVVA. While efforts are noted towards poverty reduction in Africa, at current trends, the continent remains off track in meeting the target of eradicating extreme poverty by 2030. The extreme poverty rate (weighted by population) is projected to fall from “33.4 percent in 2018 to only 24.7 percent in 2030”<sup>12</sup> – still far above the SDG target of 3 percent.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, the challenge of poverty within the SADC region tends to be amplified and more severe among women, children and young people, the elderly and people with disabilities, suggesting an age and gendered perspective to vulnerability. This is particularly evident in areas with obvious food insecurity including agriculture, health, gender-based violence and environmental shocks due to the general poor economic position of women, and those who have no say, such as children and young people, and people with disabilities.

22. According to the SADC Synthesis Report July 2021, 47.6 million people in both urban and rural areas of southern Africa are food-insecure, which is an increase from the 2020 figure of 44.8 million.<sup>14</sup> The number of food and nutrition insecure people in the SADC region has remained high since 2015, and has been gradually increasing.<sup>15</sup> The SADC Synthesis Report 2021 further indicated that timely and credible vulnerability information has made it easy to plan, design and implement adequate strategies to address vulnerability, food and nutrition insecurity. In order to assess this growing problem, it has been necessary to adopt the:

- SADC Regional Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP)
- Regional Agricultural Investment Plan
- Regional Food and Nutrition Security Strategy (FNSS)
- Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (RVAA) programme.

23. The SADC has been implementing the RVAA Programme since 2004 to counteract the lack of timely and credible vulnerability data, and to meet the ever-increasing information needs of governments and partners for developmental programming and emergency response in all its Member States. Given the cyclical nature of food and nutrition insecurity in southern Africa, the RVAA champions the integration of information on poverty, nutrition, gender, diseases, climate change and other dimensions into vulnerability assessment and analysis (VAA). The structure of the RVAA Programme includes:

- A regional Secretariat
- National Vulnerability Assessment Committees (NVACs) in each of the participating Member States
- International cooperating partners
- Technical Working Groups (see Section 2.1.1 and Figure 2 for detailed discussion).

24. According to SADC RVAA Synthesis Report 2020, food and nutrition in southern Africa is directly associated with gender inequality. In the SADC region, women contribute more than 60 percent<sup>16</sup> of the labour to total food production. In addition, women take the burden of household chores. They are responsible for rearing children, providing and preparing food for their families and, when employed, have unfavourable wages. At the same time, they are subjected to gender violence, both at the workplace and home. Gender equality is a critical aspect in building food security in sub-Saharan Africa, as it is in the SADC region.

<sup>12</sup> SADC. *Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2020–2030*, [https://www.sadc.int/files/4716/1434/6113/RISDP\\_2020-2030\\_F.pdf](https://www.sadc.int/files/4716/1434/6113/RISDP_2020-2030_F.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> SADC. *Synthesis Report 2021*

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> SADC *Synthesis Report 2020*.

### 1.3. SUBJECT BEING EVALUATED

25. The region's vulnerability assessment and analysis system is built on the NVACs of the SADC Member States, which are key sources of information for emergency response and development programming by both governments and partners, as well as in informing policies on food and nutrition security. Within the RVAA, international cooperating partners play an important role as members of Technical Working Groups that have been set up to support capacity-strengthening efforts in targeted thematic areas, while a dissemination forum offers a platform for NVACs and partners to share their collective analysis of regional vulnerabilities.

26. Participating Member States in the RVAA are Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. A summary of the key features of each Member State is presented in Annex 4.

27. The RVAA system was established in 1999 and NVACs have been established in all 16 SADC Member States, except Comoros. The RVAA Programme Unit was established by the SADC Secretariat in 2006 to support SADC Member States to undertake and utilize vulnerability assessments in response to climate shocks, climate stressors and economic shocks. The programme works with multiple and multisectoral stakeholders who collect and analyse data at national and regional levels for use to inform decision-making, policy, programming and emergency interventions.

28. The first phase of the RVAA programme was implemented from 2006–2011, Phase 2 from 2012–2016 and Phase 3 from 2017–2022. This evaluation focuses on Phase 3. The programme is coordinated by the SADC Secretariat's Disaster Risk Reduction Unit in the Office of the Executive Secretary, through the Deputy Executive Secretary for Regional Integration. Funding for the current phase is from the SDC and FCDO.

29. The key outcome for Phase 3 is "institutionalized and sustainable VAA systems that enhance emergency and developmental responses at national and regional levels". The current RVAA Strategic Plan 2017–2021 focuses on:

- Consolidating and protecting the gains made by the programme since 1999. Among these gains to be consolidated would have been the guidelines for integrating nutrition, HIV and gender, developed in 2015.
- Broadening and deepening the scope of the RVAA to include chronic vulnerability, poverty reduction, resilience and climate change.
- Strengthening the existing vulnerability assessment and analysis process.
- Contributing to the institutionalization of these processes in national systems (including full funding and ownership) within the SADC region.

30. The RVAA Programme has three governance forums that provide oversight and direction for strategic, management, technical and operational plans. The Steercom is the highest-level governance body, providing strategic guidance and policy direction to all VAA work in the region. It is constituted by Permanent Secretaries from the Member State institutions that host NVACs; with SADC Secretariat as facilitator; FCDO, SDC, WFP RTST and Landell Mills (Regional Institutionalization Support Team) as observers. The Steercom convenes at least twice a year: in July following the dissemination forum when it reviews and endorses the regional VAA Synthesis Report for submission to the SADC Council of Ministers and Heads of State Summit; and around the start of the new financial year, following the RVAA Programme's Annual Organization Meeting (AOM) when it considers the annual regional workplan and RVAA budget and directs RVAA activities for the year ahead.

31. The RVAC serves as the forum for technical coordination of all VAA in the region, including technical reviews, approval of capacity-building initiatives and programme plans for endorsement by the steering Committee, and the formation of Technical Working Groups to drive the integration of emerging issues. The RVAC provides an oversight role to both technical and institutionalization service provision. The committee is constituted by NVAC Chairs, chaired by a Member State, facilitated by the SADC Secretariat, and attended by the RTST, RIST, FCDO, SADC and other international cooperating partners.

32. The Management Committee of the programme provides direction for operational and programme management issues as it relates to the RVAA workplan and programme output. It is chaired by SADC and constituted by FCDO, SDC, RTST and RIST. It reviews the performance of the programme implementation teams by monitoring the programme status and risks. The Management Committee meets monthly.

33. In 2017, WFP was appointed as the Technical Assistance Service Provider, with a 5-year budget allocation of US\$ 11.6 million for the period August 2017- March 2022, and it is responsible for facilitating and providing RVAA support to the SADC Secretariat and the Member States through the RVAA Technical Support Team that has been deployed within the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Unit. The RTST plans and prioritizes technical support activities to ensure that all Member States are supported as per the steering Committee approved workplan. WFP is responsible for managing the financial contributions for the technical assistance scope of work. The targeted results were:

- Regional VAC structures strengthened and incorporated into SADC and Member States administrative and financial structures
- VAA approaches, and methods strengthened, harmonized and integrated
- RVAA information products visible, accessible and influential to regional and national policies, strategies and programmes
- Enhanced regional and national learning, innovation and resilience-building.

34. See also sections 2.4.1; 2.4.2 and the logframe on WFP mandate and results in Annex 6.

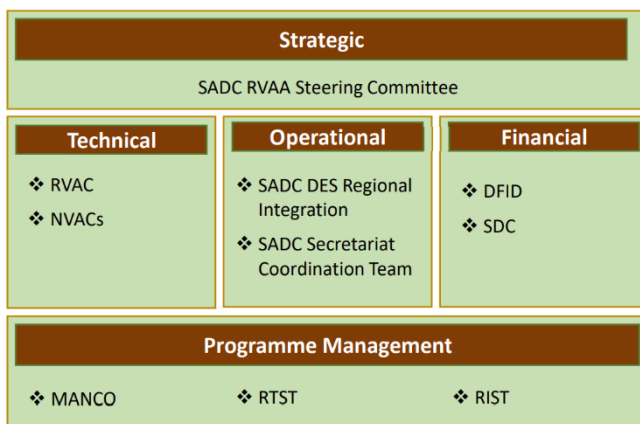
35. In 2018, the regional institutionalization support team, Landell Mills, was appointed to support the institutionalization component of the RVAA programme over a period of 3 years from June 2018–June 2021 with a budget of US\$ 1,305,000 towards the following results:

- Institutional Assessments: Support all 14 Member States that had NVACs and the SADC Secretariat to assess their current institutional status in terms of operational support for the VAA process.
- Institutional support processes: Provide intensive, hands-on support to five pilot Member States [Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe].

36. Landell Mills is responsible for supporting the SADC Secretariat and Member States in identifying strategies to strengthen the integration of NVACs within government financial and administrative structures. See also section 2.1 paragraphs 90; section 2.4.1 paragraph 273; section 2.5.1 paragraph 308 and the logframe on LM mandate and results in Annex 6.

37. Figure 1 indicates the RVAA programme governance and management structure. The original project timeframes for the two service providers were different with the end dates of March 2022 (WFP) and June 2021 (LM) despite the overlaps and interrelatedness of their mandates as illustrated under Figure 6.

**Figure 1: Programme governance and management structure**



38. To understand the RVAA programme developments in the current cycle, the 2017–2022 programme can be divided into two parts. The first part, between 2017–2019, was before the mid-term review in 2019, where particular recommendations were made to improve and strengthen the programme. The review's recommendations entailed revising the RVAA theory of change (ToC) and logframe developed in 2017 which was consequently developed and approved in 2020. Other effects of the MTR Included:

- RIST would continue to be the main support to NVACs in developing institutionalization strategies and conducting operational planning.
- The RTST would, from April 2020, institute a “Communications, Policy and Resource Advocacy” work stream towards increasing the use and influence of VAA in decision-making
- RIST and the RTST would jointly support the SADC Secretariat to develop an institutionalization strategy and a regional technical phase-out-plan, as a roadmap for handing over of the programme.
- A position paper on maximizing cost-effectiveness of assessments post-2022 would be undertaken by the RTST, which would explore, promote and support alternatives for light, nimble and frequent data-collection strategies (such as hotspot mapping).

39. The 2017, the Theory of Change and logframe, as articulated in the SADC RVAA Strategic Plan 2017-2021, guided the technical support work provided by WFP and Landell Mills. The technical support was directed at:

- Enhancing the quality of vulnerability assessments
- Broadening the relevance of VAA in the light of climate change, poverty reduction and resilience-building.

40. This was to be achieved through the provision of financial resources in the short-term to enable Member States to carry out assessments, plus the provision of technical support and capacity-building, advocacy and communication. To that end, the 2017 theory of change described the pathways needed to achieve the ultimate goal of resilient and sustainable livelihoods in southern Africa region. The ToC was summarized as follows:

- A strong VAA system produces timely and relevant information for decision-making on short-term and long-term development programmes.
- Through regular monitoring, VAA increases the situational awareness helping to establish critical decision point for early action and response to mitigate against adverse decline in livelihood conditions and in the long-run generates information and knowledge used to map existing capacities for resilience-building and sustained livelihood improvements.
- Ultimately, having a VAA system producing regular and timely manner becomes a predictable source of information on livelihoods, structural versus acute issues affecting livelihoods. This is used in policy dialogue and advocacy, national planning processes and programme responses.
- The goal in this programme is to ensure that VAA become a reliable source of information for advocating and designing targeted, efficient and timely response to acute and long-term developmental needs.<sup>17</sup>

41. The RVAA implemented two interventions to achieve the above; the first supporting VAA processes and development in Member State VACs with the second enhancing VAA processes as well as development of SADC regional leadership.

42. The activities were clustered into three broad categories:

- VAA funding provided
- Technical support and capacity-building in planning VAA and policy/programme

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<sup>17</sup> WFP. 2017. *Proposal for Technical Assistance to the SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (RVAA) Programme*, submitted by the World Food Programme Southern Africa Regional Bureau.



- Regional SADC VAA leadership and coordination.

43. Grants were disbursed for VAAs to NVACs by the RVAA programme, for the first activity, while the second and third activities were performed by the technical service providers. The outputs were:

- Strengthened VAC structures (national and regional)
- Strengthened, harmonized and integrated VAA approaches
- Visible, accessible, and influential VAA products (national and regional products).

44. The three outcomes were:

- Institutional and sustainable VAA capacity at national and regional level
- Enhanced emergency response to shocks at national and regional level (faster, targeted, and appropriate)
- Enhanced developmental responses at national and regional level.

45. WFP provided technical support, while SADC has been the managing authority for the RVAA programme providing leadership and oversight in implementing the programme through the SADC RVAA coordination. Thus, both service providers WFP and LM were responsible for developing instruments and tools needed by SADC to implement the RVAA programme.

46. After the 2019 mid-term review,<sup>18</sup> specific recommendations were made regarding the need to revise the Theory of Change to identify, among other things, high impact priority areas, (see scope of the evaluation section at 2.2 for the review's recommendations). The mid-term review also noted that:

- In Botswana the Household Economy Approach (HEA) approach was found to be lacking in terms of capturing emerging issues (HIV/AIDS, nutrition, gender).
- Lesotho VAC has managed to correlate HEA outcomes with HIV, gender and nutrition outcomes.
- Over reliance on external consultants makes sustainability questionable.
- The RVAA Nutrition, HIV/AIDS and Gender Technical Working Group started its work in 2013–2014 and has been spearheading the integration of nutrition, HIV/AIDS and gender into the VAAs.
- The annual vulnerability assessment reports remain the core information products for the VACs, but the content seems to have remained similar over the years.
- While reporting on more indicators (nutrition, gender, HIV/AIDS), has gained traction, this is not generally reflected in the reports in terms of causal analysis through deepened integrated analysis, e.g., correlations, multivariate, time series analysis etc.<sup>19</sup>

47. The revised ToC<sup>20</sup> (Annex 5) and logframe (Annex 6) were approved in February 2020. The programme results are clustered into three categories:

- Institutionalization
- Technical assistance and support
- Communications, policy and resource advocacy.

48. These interventions are underpinned by regional coordination and leadership.

49. The outputs of institutionalization interventions are:

- NVAC/VAA organizational development supported
- Increased dedicated human and financial resources for RVAA programme
- Strengthened mobilization of resources at national and regional levels

<sup>18</sup> UKAID, Landell Mills, WFP, SDC. 2019. *Mid-Term Review*, pp. 39–41.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> See Annex 14 for a generalized ToC.

- Approved VAA Strategies.
50. These outputs should result in the following immediate outcomes:
- NVACs/VAA are incorporated into government administrative and financial structure
  - Mandate, institutional arrangements and coordination for VAA at regional and national levels are defined.
51. These immediate outcomes should result in the intermediate outcome of increased legitimacy of the VAA system.
52. The outputs of technical assistance and support are:
- NVAC VAA approaches and methods are strengthened, harmonized and integrated
  - RVAA strategic partnerships are strengthened
  - The relevant technical capacity for the NVAC and SADC Secretariat is supported
  - VAA cost-effectiveness and decentralization is supported.
53. The assistance and support should result in the following immediate outcomes:
- Predictable, timely and high-quality targeted VAA information products
  - Relevant multisectoral and multi-agency stakeholder participation.
54. These immediate outcomes should result in the intermediate outcome of the increased credibility of the VAA system.
55. The outputs of communications, policy and resource advocacy are:
- Development of a data, information and knowledge management system
  - Strengthening of NVAC capacity for policy analysis and advocacy.
56. The immediate outcomes are:
- NVACs can lobby for inclusion of key FNS indicators in sectoral and/or national development policies and programmes
  - NVAC have an improved ability to create, recognize and respond to policy windows, Visible VAA products
  - Accessible VAA products
  - Integration of VAA into planning and M&E systems
  - Increased political will in support of VAA.
57. These immediate outcomes will result in the intermediate outcome of increased influence of the VAA system.<sup>21</sup>

## **1.4 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY, LIMITATIONS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **1.4.1 Evaluation questions**

58. This theory-based evaluation aimed to answer the following key questions which were grouped under seven criteria.

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<sup>21</sup> For detailed presentation of the programme targets, outputs, outcome and expected impact, see the revised ToC and Logframe in 2020, after 2019 Mid-Term Review (Annexes 12 and 13).



**Table 1: Criteria and Evaluation Questions**

| Criteria        | Evaluation Questions   |
|-----------------|--|
| Relevance       | 1. Is the RVAA programme relevant to the needs, priorities and policies of Member States and of SADC across the region?  |
|                 | 2. To what extent is the design of the programme, its components and expected results as outlined in the ToC relevant to the achievement of the stated final outcome”? |
|                 | 3. Has the RVAA programme been able to adapt and be responsive to emerging needs and changing contexts?  |
| Coherence       | 4. To what extent is the SADC RVAA programme aligned with relevant SADC programmes?  |
|                 | 5. Are there contradictions with national policies that have constrained implementation and achievement of results?  |
|                 | 6. Is there complementarity with the actions of different actors and is there sufficient coordination?   |
| Effectiveness   | 7. To what extent has the programme achieved the planned outputs and have these led to or likely to lead to achievement of the outcomes of the RVAA Programme?         |
|                 | 8. Has VAA capacity been strengthened and institutionalized?   |
|                 | 9. Is there evidence of increased legitimacy, credibility and influence of the RVAA programme at national and regional levels?   |
|                 | 10. To what extent has the programme been responsive to changing operational context including disruption and unexpected shocks? (Conflicts, Covid-19 pandemic etc.)   |
|                 | 11. To what extent did the programme integrate gender in assessments?  |
| Efficiency      | 12. What internal and external factors enabled or constrained the achievement of programme results?  |
|                 | 13. What are the key achievements and challenges of the technical assistance offered by WFP and Landel Mills?  |
| Value for Money | 14. Has RVAA delivered VfM? Elements to consider include economy, efficiency, cost-effectiveness and equity. What has been achieved at what cost?                      |
| Impact          | 15. What are the positive and/or negative, intended and unintended effects of the RVAA programme?  |
|                 | 16. Has the RVAA programme influenced emergency and developmental policy and programming?  |
| Sustainability  | 17. To what extent have NVACs/VAA been integrated into national systems and processes (administrative, financial structures, planning, information systems etc.)?      |
|                 | 18. How sustainable is the RVAA system beyond the current donor-funded cycle?  |

59. The six evaluation criteria employed – relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability were drawn from OECD<sup>22</sup> while the seventh criterion – value for money was drawn from FCDO<sup>23</sup> approach.<sup>24</sup>

60. According to the OECD,<sup>25</sup> relevance relates to whether the intervention is doing the right things while coherence is concerned with how well the interventions fit. Effectiveness focuses on whether the interventions are achieving the intended objectives, while efficiency addresses the question of how well the resources are being used. Impact establishes the difference that the intervention has made while sustainability determines the extent to which the benefits will last. FCDO, formerly the Department for International Development (DFID),<sup>26</sup> uses a 3E framework – economy, efficiency and effectiveness – to track value for money through its results chain (from inputs to outputs, outcomes, and impact). Increasingly, it adds equity as a fourth E, in line with its commitment to ensuring that women and marginalized groups are not left behind.

#### 1.4.2 Methodological approach

61. The evaluation employed a mixed method approach involving collecting, analysing, and integrating quantitative and qualitative research concurrently with the same stakeholder groups, and allowing for the triangulation of data. See the detailed methodology in Annex 7 (including data-collection tools - Annexes 11 and 12) and evaluation matrix in Annex 8.

#### 1.4.3 Sampling

62. A qualitative respondents' sample of the RVAA programme was drawn based on the individual's knowledge, experience and participation in the programme. This ensured that the respondents provided relevant, useful and insightful responses to the evaluation questions. The methodology deliberately included a gender perspective by ensuring that women formed 50 percent of the respondents. An evaluation question related to gender was included under effectiveness (i.e., To what extent did the programme integrate gender in assessments?) A sample of 97 key informant interviews was carried out; to ensure gender inclusivity, 51.5 percent were females and 47.5 were males.

63. The interviews were conducted with representatives from:

- Eleven (11) categories of stakeholders at regional and Member State levels
- Seven stakeholder categories at RVAA regional level (Steering Committee (STEERCOM), SADC Secretariat, RVAC, RVAA Programme Management Committee, regional international cooperating partners [ICPs], Service Providers [WFP and Landell Mills], and donors)
- Four stakeholder categories (i.e., National Vulnerability Assessment Committees, SADC Member States policy makers, users of NVAC products and international cooperating partners in Member States).

64. The quantitative sample was drawn from the NVAC members and some users of the VAA information. The NVAC members who were not part of the interviews were asked to complete a quantitative survey.

65. To ensure the comprehensive collection and analysis of evaluation data, a tool that is adapted to Qualitative Impact Protocol (QuIP)<sup>27</sup> was used together with other tools. The hybrid administration of the tools entailed that the QuIP tool was used as the interview guide in three countries that were selected for

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<sup>22</sup> OECD, *Evaluation Criteria*

<sup>23</sup> On 2 September 2020, the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office became the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) of the UK Government.

<sup>24</sup> Independent Commission for Aid Impact. 2018. DFID's approach to value for money in programme and portfolio management Available at: <https://icai.independent.gov.uk/html-version/dfids-approach-to-value-for-money-in-programme-and-portfolio-management/>

<sup>25</sup> OECD *Evaluation Criteria*.

<sup>26</sup> ICAI. Undated. *DFID's approach to value for money*

<sup>27</sup> University of Bath. In press. *Evaluating social and development interventions using the Qualitative Impact Protocol (QuIP)*. Available at, <https://www.bath.ac.uk/projects/evaluating-social-and-development-interventions-using-the-qualitative-impact-protocol-quip/>

QuIP focused data-collection (Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe) while the other tools were used in the other 13 countries. To varying degrees, all the interview questions integrated a QuIP approach of explicitly assessing causal links, drawing on beneficiary narrative reports analysed in relation to project theory and context (obtained mainly from project staff).<sup>28</sup>

#### 1.4.4 Data-collection

66. Data was collected from all the 16 Member States. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the evaluation team collected primary data virtually. Ninety-seven key informants (KIs) were interviewed out of the 102 originally planned, representing 97 percent (see Annex 10 for list of interviewees). Observations of different RVAA processes were also carried out (see Annexes 2 and 3 for fieldwork schedule and list of observations).

67. Quantitative data was collected using a quantitative survey that was completed by NVAC members and selected NVAC product users including policy makers within the Member States. The response rate for the online questionnaire was poor (6 percent) with only 27 out of the planned 402 people responding, due to officials' busy schedules. This low survey response rate limited trend mapping across the Member States. However, this limitation was mitigated through rich information from the interviews and the desk review that provided sufficient information for triangulation and addressing evaluation objectives.

68. Secondary data from documents were drawn from the RVAA Monitoring and Evaluation Logframe, programme data from Member States, RVAA Activity Trackers, RVAA Functionality Scorecards, RVAA Institutionalization Index and annual programme performance reports. Several studies have also been conducted that formed important sources for the evaluation, including the:

- Evaluability Assessment (2018)
- VAA Opportunity Mapping (2020)
- Annual Review (2020)
- RVAA Strategic Plan (2017–2021)
- RVAA MTR (2019)
- Institutionalization Report (2021)
- Communication and Advocacy Strategy (2021–2025)
- Harmonized vulnerability assessments (2020–2021)
- Covid-19 Study (2020).

69. Other documents reviewed include SADC RVAA 2017-2022 Strategy, WFP Funding Proposal, RVAA revised ToC and logframe (approved in February 2020), Annual vulnerability assessments, regional synthesis reports, and information and communication documents. See Annex 9 for the full list of documents reviewed.

#### 1.4.5 Data analysis

70. The collected qualitative data was coded and analysed using a thematic approach. The analysis themes were generated from the evaluation purpose, objectives and questions to be answered, which functioned as the deductive codes. Under each broad thematic category, sub-themes were developed to compile lessons learned and emerging issues, and to draw some recommendations. Meanwhile, the QuIP data was specifically used to probe the causal links between activities/interventions (technical support, institutionalization, and communication and advocacy) and the effect on legitimacy, credibility and influence to result in institutionalized and sustainable VAA systems that enhance emergency and developmental responses at national and regional levels.

71. In conducting the analysis, special attention was paid to women's perspectives during data analysis to ensure that their experiences, voices and issues were fairly represented. Value for money was analysed using the FCDO framework encompassing economical purchase of inputs; how efficiently those inputs were

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<sup>28</sup> Copestake, J. Remnant, F. & Morsink, M. 2019. "Introducing the causal attribution challenge and the QuIP", in *Attributing Development Impact*, Practical Action Publishing, Rugby, Warwickshire.

converted into outputs; how effectively those outputs achieved outcomes; and whether there were equity considerations in benefits sharing.

#### 1.4.6 Credibility, validity, reliability and ethical considerations

72. The evaluation provided an independent assessment of the performance of the RVAA programme, paying attention to its results measured against its objectives. Credibility in qualitative data analysis was ensured through the following ways:

- Triangulation of data from different sources
- Constant comparison of data from the different respondents and data-collection methods/approaches thereby making an objective decision
- Providing verbatim quotes of respondents

73. Different analytical frameworks were used in an integrated manner to ensure objectivity and credibility. For instance, logframe and theory of change analysis was done using causal link data and information from QulP interviews to gain detailed insight to derive lessons.

74. The ET employed standard ethical principles that are aligned to WFP decentralized evaluations, which conform to WFP and UNEG ethical standards and norms. This entailed conducting the evaluation in a manner that safeguards and ensures high ethical standards at all stages of the evaluation cycle. This included:

- Ensuring informed consent
- Protecting privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity of participants
- Ensuring cultural sensitivity
- Respecting the autonomy of participants
- Ensuring fair recruitment of participants (including women and socially excluded groups)
- Ensuring that the evaluation results in no harm to participants or their communities.

75. The limitations of the methodology and mitigation of their effects to the evaluation are indicated in Table 2, below.

**Table 2: Evaluation limitations and mitigation of their effects**

| Evaluation limitations  | Impact  | Mitigation  |
|---|---|---|
| Continuous implementation of RVAA programme phase 3 from previous phases (phases 1 and 2 build from earlier interventions). | The determination of programme effects for phase 3 cannot be only attributed from 2017          | QulP probing on causal links and documents review provided clarity and clear determination of phase 3 programme interventions effect.   |
| Low survey (quantitative) response rate   | Limited data gathered to map trend in some Member States where there is very low response rate. | Focus of analysis is on regional programme analysis and picture. Furthermore, rich information from KIIs and documents provide sufficient information for triangulation and addressing evaluation objectives. |

## 2. Evaluation Findings

### 2.1. RELEVANCE - IS THE PROGRAMME DOING THE RIGHT THINGS?

76. This section presents an assessment of relevance of the RVAA programme. To assess relevance, the key evaluation questions to be answered are:

- Is the RVAA programme relevant to the needs, priorities and policies of Member States and the SADC region?
- To what extent is the design of the programme, its components and expected results as outlined in the ToC relevant to the achievement of the stated outcomes?
- Has the RVAA programme been able to adapt and be responsive to emerging needs and changing contexts?

#### Evaluation Question 1 - Is the RVAA programme responding to the needs, priorities and policies of Member States and of the SADC region?

77. The RVAA Programme is governed and managed through structures that employ a participatory approach and encourage stakeholders' involvement. The programme is coordinated by the SADC Secretariat's DRR unit under the office of the Deputy Executive Secretary for Regional Integration (DES-RI). The unit has the mandate to coordinate disaster risk management activities in the region. The Unit coordinates the RVAA activities and ensures structural linkages with the Secretariat, stewarding the programme by managing and guiding strategic direction through advancing decision-making processes by Member States and supporting the implementation of activities. The DRR unit is supported by the DRR Technical Working Group where there is representation of the Secretariat Directorates namely Social and Human Development, Food and Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR), Infrastructure and Services that includes the Climate Service Centre, the Organ for Peace and Security and Units (gender, public relations, ICT) to advance sectoral linkages between development themes such as food and nutrition security, climate change and gender equality.

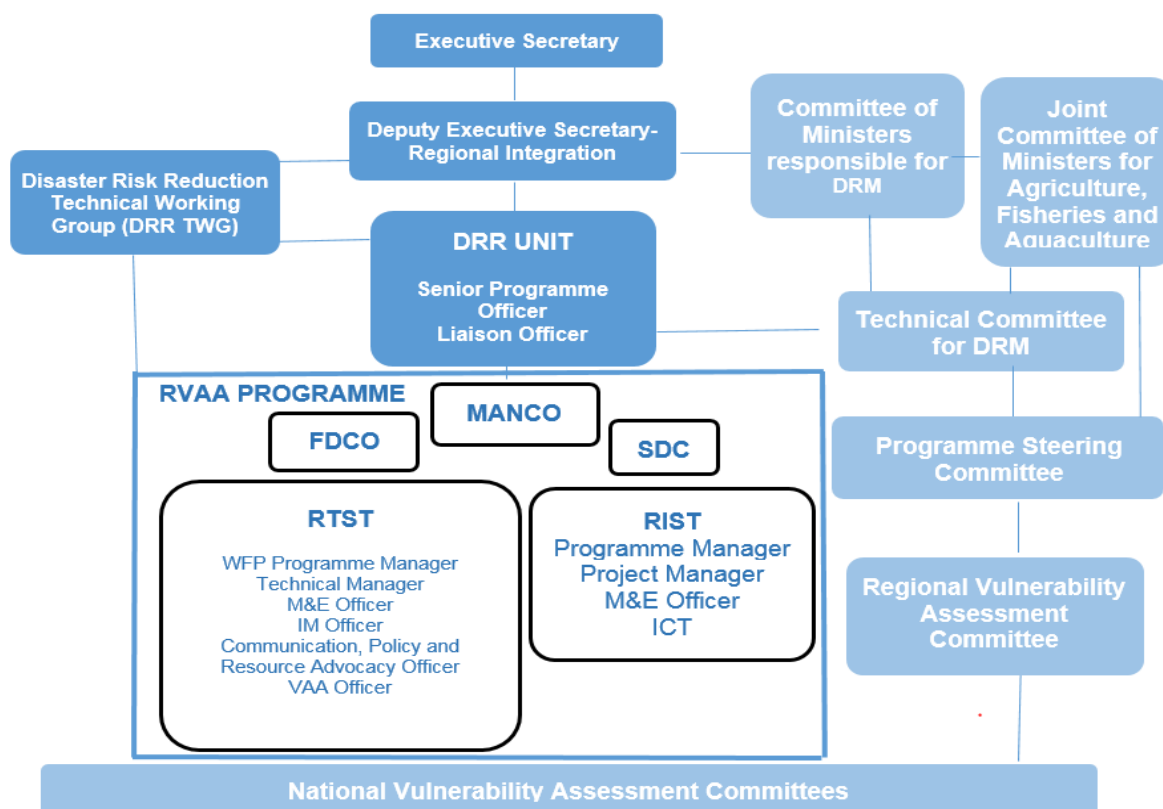
78. The programme oversight and direction for strategic, management, technical and operational plans are provided by three governance structures:

- The RVAA Programme Steering Committee (PSC)
- The Management Committee (MANCO)
- The Regional Vulnerability Assessment Committee (RVAC).

79. The PSC provides the supervisory authority for the RVAA Programme through high-level oversight, guidance and strategic direction. It is constituted by Permanent Secretaries of the ministries housing the NVACs. The RVAC is constituted by the NVAC Chairs, overseen by a Member State, in line with cooperation from the SADC chairmanship, and attended by the RTST, RIST, donors, other ICPs including WFP, FAO, IPCU, FEWSNET and OCHA. The RVAC is responsible for technical coordination of VAA programme activities and advises the PSC on technical and strategic issues. The MANCO provides direction for operational and programme management issues as it relates to the RVAA workplan and programme outputs.<sup>29</sup> The RVAA governance structure indicating the organogram is indicated in Figure 2 below.

<sup>29</sup> SADC. 2021. *RVAA Sustainability Plan*, pp. 19–20

Figure 2: RVAA Governance and leadership structure



Adopted from RVAA Sustainability Plan, 2021:21.

80. The highlighted governance and management structures provide structure and processes that facilitated effective identification and prioritization of needs, and policy alignment. It is evident that the RVAA Phase 3 (2017–2021) considered the needs and priorities of Member States in designing the programme. Further to the above structures that enabled programme iteration, stakeholder interaction and ongoing structured input by the different stakeholders, the design was informed by data on needs and priorities gathered from Member States through participatory processes as well as from experience and lessons learned during the previous RVAA phases. To design the third phase of the RVAA programme, Member States and SADC needs, priorities and capacities were determined from:

- Experience and lessons learned from previous phases
- Phase 2 Impact Study conducted in 2016 before the start of Phase 3
- Participation of Member States and consultation with them, in the development of the SADC RVAA Strategic Plan 2017–2021
- WFP and Landell Mills' proposal development processes that scanned the SADC regional context
- Member States capacity needs assessments
- SADC 2017 Synthesis Report that mapped the regional context
- Member States capacity assessments consolidation that informed the development of a responsive capacity-building intervention framework.

81. **Previous programme experiences and lessons learned:** These highlighted emerging issues and gaps from the previous phases. Based on previous programmes, the Member States acknowledge that the SADC region experiences high levels of 'chronic vulnerability and food insecurity' including 'unfavourable climatic conditions, economic shocks such as increasing prices of staples and reduced employment

opportunities and growing poverty, coupled with HIV/AIDS'.<sup>30</sup> This observation meant that, despite previous assessments, vulnerabilities, shocks and food insecurity persist in the SADC region. This suggests that the outcomes of the VAA system are not being used effectively enough to address the underlying causes of food and nutrition insecurity in the region.

82. The context of SADC Member States dictated that the information generated from the vulnerability assessments should be 'linked' with longer-term development issues, such as poverty reduction strategies, agricultural and food and nutrition security policies, and health and nutrition programmes and policies. This focus on long-term development issues indicated that regional vulnerability assessment and analysis work should inform the action plans under the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Plan and Member States development plans, by providing consistent and comprehensive programmes for longer-term economic and social interventions.<sup>31</sup> Thus, it is necessary to effectively implement interventions that link vulnerability assessments to longer-term development planning and interventions such as SADC RISDP 2020–2030, and SADC Vision 2050.

**83. Phase 2 Impact Study (2016) and SADC RVAA Strategic Plan 2017-2021 providing guide and implementation framework:** The SADC RVAA Strategic Plan 2017–2021:

- Outlines the participatory nature of strategy development processes followed where Member States were extensively consulted thereby informing the RVAA programme development.
- Provides a framework and approach to promote, sustain and manage Member State participation during the RVAA programme Phase 3.
- Describes the Phase 3 programme framework including (a) interventions focus, and (b) expected deliverables or outcomes, including activities, logframe and ToC.

84. The RVAA Strategic Plan 2017–2021 acknowledges that the RVAA 2012–2016 programme had a 'system for assessing acute vulnerability to food security', which protected SADC Member State populations from extreme food shortages and malnutrition. However, there were clear gaps in both sustaining the quality of this acute vulnerability assessment and broadening the remit of NVACs to look at the causes of chronic vulnerability, thereby enhancing their relevance and contribution to poverty reduction.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, the focus of RVAA Phase 3 (2017–2021) is twofold, namely to:

- Provide consolidation and continuity
- Broaden the scope and deepen the imprint of RVAA through greater integration and programmatic learning.<sup>33</sup>

85. Consolidation and continuity entail building on the previous RVAA phases' strengths as well as leveraging opportunities to improve the quality of the programme's outputs. This entails 'continuing with institutionalization and capacity development' to protect returns on RVAA investments in baseline analysis and acute vulnerability assessment, while providing an entry point for deeper, and more integrated analysis.

86. Broadening and deepening of RVAA scope entails coupling the already established chronic vulnerability and climate-resilient livelihoods information from 2012–2016 (RVAA Phase 2) with the next phase (Phase 3 – 2017–2021) by strengthening NVACs to provide evidence and information products to reduce poverty and vulnerability through climate-resilient livelihoods, which has been slow in the previous phase. This means having both the mandate and the capacity to contribute to Member State policies, strategies and programmes dealing with poverty and vulnerability reduction through climate-resilient livelihoods among the NVACs. The accumulated experience, capacity, information and data resources by the NVACs will be leveraged to contribute meaningfully to longer-term chronic vulnerability and poverty

<sup>30</sup> SADC. 2021. *Informing Resilient Livelihoods, Strategic Plan and Funding Proposal 2017–2021*; Frankenberg, T.R., Mock, N. & Jere, P. 2005. *Vulnerability Assessment Methodology and Natural Resources*, Regional Vulnerability Assessment Committee (SADC-FANR RVAC); SADC. Undated. *Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC)*, Induction Module.

<sup>31</sup> SADC. 2008. *Current National Vulnerability Assessment Committees (NVACs) Operational and Institutional Frameworks*: Malawi and Lesotho.

<sup>32</sup> SADC. *RVAA Strategic Plan 2017–2021*, p. iii; SADC. 2016. *RVAA Policy Impact Study, 2016*, Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Programme, 2012-2016.

<sup>33</sup> SADC. *RVAA Strategic Plan, 2017–2021*



analysis. Three sets of interventions that guide implementation of the 2017-2021 strategy under this area are (1) institutionalization and capacity development through deepening VAC institutionalization, (2) enhancing approaches and tools to be used by employing innovative approaches to effectively address emerging issues, and (3) advocacy and leadership development to raise the profile of VAA activities through a stronger advocacy role, deeper institutionalization and increased government financial contributions.

87. The implementation approach is “Member States demand-led based on a menu of options responding to individual Member State priorities supported by a regional programme Management Unit”.<sup>34</sup> This means allowing Member State demand and interest to drive selection and operationalization of VAA approaches. Under this approach, the phase 2 framework (RVAA 2012-2016) should continue to guide the programme.

88. **WFP Proposal (2017), Landell Mills (2018), and Synthesis Report 2017 contextual mapping:** The WFP (2017) and Landell Mills (2018)<sup>35</sup> developed proposals which provided:

- The SADC Regional context in detail as of 2016
- Integrated comprehensive VAA frameworks informed by contextual emerging needs
- Understanding on areas for building a bridge with previous RVAA programmes by utilizing vast available data
- Ways of utilizing and integrating information from relevant previous documents and studies.<sup>36</sup>

89. The proposals highlight the need for governments, humanitarian and development organizations to develop integrated reliable assessments, monitoring and analysis, encompassed in a robust system that integrates and harmonizes different tools. The need for such an integrated framework was particularly evident with the 2015–2016 drought caused by El Niño, which magnified the need to develop food security and vulnerability information systems that are flexible and fast to support early warning, preparedness and resilience-building. This integrated approach would assist in delivering: Continuous evidence on the seasonal food and nutrition security indicators and livelihood mechanisms, allowing for better response planning, clearer targeting and feedback on the results or programme outcomes. Ultimately, this results in a more flexible system that would allow governments and other actors (humanitarian and development) to identify and respond in an effective manner for resilience-building against climate-induced risks.<sup>37</sup>

90. Both the WFP and Landell Mills proposals took advantage of the vast amount of VAA data collected in previous years from Member States and linked it to current information to provide a solid understanding of food and nutrition security for policy and programme decision-making, guiding long-term strategies to reduce hunger and malnutrition in the region.

91. Accordingly, the RVAA programme Phase 3 objectives are to:

- Strengthen the technical capacity of VACs to broaden/integrate complex and emerging issues into the VAA (chronic vulnerability, poverty and resilience).
- Add value to VAA by increasing technical rigour, coordination, quality and comparability of the analysis.

92. The longer-term objective, i.e., by 2021, was to contribute to the institutionalization of the RVAC and NVAC system resources, and capacity to integrate various VAA tools and approaches for national planning processes and programme responses.

<sup>34</sup> SADC. *RVAA Strategic Plan, 2017–2021*, p.iv

<sup>35</sup> WFP. 2017, *Proposal for Technical Assistance to the SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (RVAA) Programme*. Proposal prepared at the invitation of DFID and SDC to provide Technical and Management Services for the implementation of SADC's RVAA programme; Landell Mills. 2018. *SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Programme*: Institutional Service Provision 2018–2021.

<sup>36</sup> Gandure S. and Drimie S. 2012. *A Capacity Review of the SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment Committee System and Recommendations on Areas that Require Strengthening*, a SADC RVAC commissioned review supported by WFP; SADC RVAA Strategy 2017–2021.

<sup>37</sup> WFP. 2017. *Proposal*, pp.4–5.



93. Furthermore, the relevance of the RVAA programme that confirms the identified SADC Regional food security challenges among Member States underscores the need and priority of the RVAA programme. This was highlighted in the SADC 2017 Synthesis Report. The report highlights that:

94. A number of (SADC) countries classified severity of the identified food insecurity using the Integrated Food Insecurity Phase Classification (IPC) protocols. These countries include the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique and Eswatini. The IPC scale facilitates comparisons of the severity of food insecurity between areas and countries. Most countries included some level of nutritional analysis in their VAA.<sup>38</sup>

95. Thus, vast amounts of existing data from previous RVAA programmes and numerous studies and documents underscore the persistence of food insecurity in the region and, hence, the need to maintain assessments while broadening to other areas.

96. **Member States capacity assessments that informed capacity-building interventions:** Further to being informed by experience and numerous documents that inform RVAA Phase 3, Member States capacity assessments were conducted between 2017 and 2018.<sup>39</sup> The assessments were conducted in 14 Member States to determine the specific gaps and interventions required. Following these assessments, a Technical Capacity-Building Plan Development Framework was developed between September – December 2018.<sup>40</sup> The capacity assessment was facilitated by RTST to develop a harmonized approach to enable the development of NVACs technical capacity building plans. Similarly, RIST also conducted institutionalization assessments including physical workshops with Member States. Furthermore, RIST conducted an online survey targeting all Member States, which informed the development of the institutionalization index. The technical capacity-building component was concerned with supporting NVACs with acquiring and applying the resources, knowledge, and skills necessary for generating good quality information for decision-making that improves the quality of lives of all people, particularly the poor and vulnerable in the region.<sup>41</sup> Specifically, the assessment focused on establishing the status and gaps in institutional and technical capacities of NVACs in gathering data, analysing and informing policies and strategies to address acute and chronic vulnerability in the context of climate change. In addition to providing a basis for Member States tailored technical capacity-building support, the capacity assessments also:

- Provided a baseline against which the SADC RVAA programme could deliver technical support and measure results
- Promoted ownership and inclusiveness in terms of assessing the capacity situation and designing successful interventions. Thus, the technical capacity-building plans informed by the Capacity Development Framework drew from and are built on the capacities possessed by Member States.

97. The ‘capacity-building component themes and scope’ identified from Member States were clustered into the following categories:

- Establishment and/ maintenance of a Core Technical team
- Training in VAA Processes and Quality Assurance
- Vulnerability Assessment Approaches/Designs
- Vulnerability Assessment Primary and Secondary Data Collection Methods
- Vulnerability Assessment Conceptual Frameworks
- Core vulnerability assessments Indicators
- Emerging issues assessment, analysis and integration into vulnerability assessments
- Special Analytical Frameworks
- Analytical Software application

<sup>38</sup> SADC. 2017. *Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Synthesis Report 2017*, State of Food Security and Vulnerability in the Southern African Development Community, p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> See capacity assessments of the 14 Member States.

<sup>40</sup> SADC. 2018. *NVACs Technical Capacity Building Plan Development Framework*.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

- Data management, storage and sharing.<sup>42</sup>

98. The mix of capacity-building methods were proposed based on the capacity-building gaps.<sup>43</sup>

99. **Alignment with policy:** At policy level, the RVAA Phase 3 is well aligned with the SADC regional policies and framework, including the:

- Regional Agricultural Policy
- SADC FNSS 2015–2025
- Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (2020–2030)
- SADC Gender-Responsive DRR Strategic Plan and Action Plan–February 2020
- Regional Integration agenda of SADC.<sup>44</sup>

100. The Regional Agricultural Policy aims to contribute to sustainable agricultural growth and socioeconomic development in SADC by enhancing sustainable agricultural production, improving trade, private and public sector engagement and reducing social and economic vulnerability in the region. The RVAA programme explicitly contributes to these objectives through assessments that inform agriculture productivity, vulnerabilities to food security and nutrition as well as shocks that affect productivity.

101. The FNSS 2015–2025 aims to reduce food and nutrition insecurity in the region by 2025 by ensuring stable and sustainable availability, access and use of food. The RISDP 2020–2030 framework outlines a 10-year development agenda for addressing social, economic, political and governance issues in the region. The framework focuses on three core pillars, namely:

- Industrial Development and Market Integration
- Infrastructure Development in Support of Regional Integration
- Social and human capital development.

102. This framework embeds cross-cutting issues that include gender, youth, environment and climate change and disaster risk management. Thus, reducing food and nutrition insecurity is the direct focus of the RVAA programme. Furthermore, the programme focuses on climate change, disaster risk management and development of social and economic development issues, which are also central to the RVAA programme.

103. The RVAA programme is aligned with the SADC Common Agenda key principles and values that guide the [Regional Integration](#) agenda (SADC Common Agenda)<sup>45</sup> for the next 10 years (2020–2030) that provide strategic direction with respect to SADC programmes, projects, activities and strategic priorities. This agenda framework includes:

- Ensuring poverty eradication in SADC
- Promotion of sustainable and equitable economic growth and socioeconomic development that will ensure poverty alleviation with the ultimate objective of its eradication, enhancing the standard and quality of life of the people of southern Africa and support the socially disadvantaged
- Promotion of self-sustaining development on the basis of collective self-reliance, and the interdependence of Member States, among other principles.

104. The RVAA, through its focus on development, addresses poverty eradication, improvement of the quality of life through ensuring food security and good nutrition as well as the promotion of development

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid, pp. 8–10

<sup>43</sup> SADC. 2018. *NVACs Technical Capacity Building Plan Development Framework*, p. 11–13

<sup>44</sup> AUDA-NEPAD. 2014. *SADC Regional Agricultural Policy*, <https://www.nepad.org/publication/sadc-regional-agricultural-policy-0>; SADC. *Food and Nutrition Security Strategy 2015–2025*, <https://www.resakss.org/sites/default/files/SADC%202014%20Food%20and%20Nutrition%20Security%20Strategy%2015%20-%202025.pdf>; SADC. *Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2020–2030*, [https://www.sadc.int/files/4716/1434/6113/RISDP\\_2020-2030\\_F.pdf](https://www.sadc.int/files/4716/1434/6113/RISDP_2020-2030_F.pdf); SADC. Undated. *SADC Common Agenda*, <https://www.sadc.int/about-sadc/overview/sadc-common-agenda/>

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

through data from assessments. This also indicates the alignment of the RVAA programme with the common agenda framework.

105. At the level of the African Union, the RVAA is informed by declarations such as Heads of State in their Malabo Declaration of June 2014 that recommitted to the principles and values of the CAADP process, ending hunger by 2025, and enhancing the resilience of livelihoods and production systems to climate variability and other shocks, and to ensuring that by 2025.

106. Further to the outlined processes about how the programme was informed by Member State needs, priorities and capacities, the interviewed respondents expressed a similar positive sentiment on the programme's relevance and sensitivity to Member State needs.

107. "Support from RVAA has been great as it addressed our needs at government and district levels. We used not to have well assessed livelihood zones but now we have opened seven (7) livelihood access zones that clearly outline vulnerability issues based on good research, which helps planning" (SAVAC NVAC member).

108. "We can now anticipate outcome crises, we reach out to our donors in the UK, we describe the situation, and we identify the needs and how to reduce negative impact for protection" (Madagascar NVAC member).

109. Overall, the following conclusions can be drawn. The RVAA Phase 3 programme considered the needs, priorities and policies of Member States and of the SADC region. These needs and priorities were determined through participatory processes where the Member States indicated their needs. These informed the development of programme interventions to effectively address those needs. These needs and priorities are aligned with policy priorities of the SADC region. Additionally, the SADC policy frameworks and focus of the RVAA on food security and nutrition are aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 17 that deal with ending poverty, hunger, health and welling, and gender equality.<sup>46</sup>

#### **Evaluation Question 2- To what extent is the design of the programme, its components and expected results as outlined in the ToC relevant to the achievement of the stated final outcome**

110. Assessment of "quality of design" considers how well Phase 3 of the RVAA programme was built to address relevant priorities and needs, and whether goals were clearly specified. It assesses if stakeholders' priorities and needs are articulated in the intervention's objectives, its underlying theory of change, theory of action and/or modus operandi. This assists in understanding gaps in programme design that may have undermined an intervention's overall relevance.

111. The design of Phase 3 (2017–2022) can be divided into two parts. The first part being the period between 2017–2019 before the 2019 mid-term review,<sup>47</sup> when recommendations were made to improve and strengthen the programme and the second part being the period post mid-term review until programme ends in 2022. The MTR recommendations entailed revising the RVAA theory of change (ToC) and logframe developed in 2017/2018 to further elaborate and refine pathways to change in line with key findings from the MTR and adaptive management of the programme.

112. Phase 3 was designed building on past experience and achievements, and on the information gained from Phase 2, namely the RVAA Strategy 2017–2021,<sup>48</sup> the Impact Study (2016)<sup>49</sup> and capacity assessments. This was in one of the interviews by a WFP Official, who said:

113. *"The programme was informed by experience from the preceding phase and the impact evaluation of Phase 2 conducted in 2016, as well as the SADC RVAA Strategy 2017–2021. This was further informed by country baseline assessments that informed the capacity-building action plans"* (KII - WFP Official).

114. As well as the baseline documents, there are several other documents containing foundational information (see Table 3 below). This assumption that the programme was informed from the previous

<sup>46</sup> United Nations, *Sustainable Development Goals*, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

phase is reasonable<sup>50</sup> since the programme was seamlessly continuing from Phase 2 to Phase 3. The seamless connection of these two phases) is indeed clear as one focus area of Phase 3 is “consolidation and continuity” through strengthening Phase 2 interventions and improving the quality of outputs, which was identified as a gap in Phase 2.<sup>51</sup> The other focus of Phase 3 is broadening the programme’s scope to strengthen NVACs’ ability to provide information to influence the reduction of poverty and vulnerability through climate-resilient livelihoods, which was slow in Phase 2.<sup>52</sup> Informed by the RVAA 2017–2021 strategy, the WFP Proposal (2017)<sup>53</sup> indicates that the design focus was on linking Phase 2 to current information, to provide a solid understanding of food and nutrition security for policy and programme decision-making and guiding long-term strategies.

115. It was critical to compile detailed baseline information on the gaps identified in Phase 2 to ensure a responsive robust design of Phase 3. Accordingly, assessments were conducted in 2017–2018 of Member States’ capacity as part of rolling out the programme. The RVAA Strategy 2017–2021 says that NVACs should identify their own methods from a flexible ‘menu of options’ and should put VAA into practice according to local priorities, aspirations and resources. This means inputs and activities cannot be rigidly indicated on the ToC. The capacity assessments continued while the programme was working on the immediate priorities decided at the Annual Organizational Meeting, to ensure that needs of Member States are identified holistically and not just what is relevant to implementation.

116. A meeting was held between WFP and SADC RVAA officials at the start of the programme to review the baseline information in order to set, targets for Phase 3. However, the handover and transition from Phase 2 to Phase 2 was not smooth. WFP had to rely on individuals who had knowledge about the programme to effectively start the programme. This gap in management during the programme transition and poor handover could have been avoided by a proper handover and transition management process. A “project should have a clear end with a correct handover of information and responsibility.”<sup>54</sup>

117. Although existing programme information informed the basic planning process, there were notable gaps that could have been closed. First, the theory of change (ToC) had not been developed strongly enough. The impact study recommended that Phase 3 should “articulate a more explicit ToC for the 2017–2021 programme”.<sup>55</sup> The theory of change indicated in the WFP Proposal<sup>56</sup> was finalized in 2018,<sup>57</sup> however, the mid-term review<sup>58</sup> recommended changes to the ToC, which were carried out in February 2020.<sup>59</sup> These changes complicated the five-year implementation period of Phase 3 occurring halfway through the programme’s lifecycle and just before major activities such as institutionalization by Landell Mills had meaningfully begun. This adaptation suggests a weakness in the clarity of design, that could have been avoided with a more robustly designed ToC and logframes. There was also an explicit need to focus on the use and influence of VAA products in Phase 3<sup>60</sup> but the guiding policy, a priority intervention, was not finalized and adopted until 2021, the final year of the programme.<sup>61</sup>

118. However, moderations and adaptations of the theory of change should be viewed positively as an intentional ‘adaptive learning’ process. The WFP programme staff explained that, since the parameters of the programme as described by the ToC and logframe remained unchanged, the revisions should be viewed as responding to lessons learned, which indicates learning from the programme.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, being informed by lessons from implementation is critical and commendable. However, a balance should be struck between ‘locking’ the ToC to use it effectively to guide implementation and allowing continuous

<sup>50</sup> To be reasonable means to be as much as is appropriate or fair, <https://www.splashlearn.com/math-vocabulary/algebra/reasonableness>

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.iii.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p.iii.

<sup>53</sup> WFP. 2017, *Proposal for Technical Assistance*.

<sup>54</sup> International Project Management Association (IPMA)

<sup>55</sup> SADC *RVAA Policy Impact Study 2016*, p. vi

<sup>56</sup> SADC. *RVAA Monitoring & Evaluation Framework 2018*

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. Version 4, August 2018.

<sup>58</sup> UKAID, Landell Mills, WFP, SDC. 2019. *Mid-Term Review*, pp. 5–6.

<sup>59</sup> SADC. *Annual Review 2020*.

<sup>60</sup> SADC. *RVAA Strategy 2017–2021*; WFP. *Proposal 2017*.

<sup>61</sup> Communication, Policy and Resource Advocacy Strategy (CPRA), 2021–2025

<sup>62</sup> WFP M&E Manager and Technical Services Manager clarifications during validation process.

changes. While inputs and activities cannot rigidly be indicated on the ToC, broader inputs and outputs could have been indicated and included in it.

### Evaluation Question 3- Has RVAA Programme been able to adapt and be responsive to emerging needs and changing contexts?

119. Programme relevance focuses on responsiveness throughout the period of implementation. This section considers the RVAA programme's adaptability and responsiveness to emerging needs and changing contexts from 2017–2022, the implementation period. The positive programme adaptation during this time is evident, and the adaptation can be conceived in the three implementation stages:

- Transitional phase from Phase 2 to Phase 3 (period of programme set up in 2017)
- The implementation where numerous adaptive activities were conducted (after set-up to full implementation where most activities are conducted)
- Towards programme closure 2021–2022 where the focus was on phasing out and close-out.

120. At each of these stages, emerging needs were identified and responsive actions were taken to address the situation. A summary of the guiding documents informing adaptations at respective stages are indicated in Table 3, below.

**Table 3: Guiding documents informing RVAA adaptations**

| Baseline- transition and design   | During implementation   | Programme ending   |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landell Mills Proposal, 2018</li> <li>• WFP Proposal, 2017</li> <li>• SADC Synthesis Report, 2017</li> <li>• RVAA Strategic Plan, 2017–2021</li> <li>• SADC RVAA Policy Impact Study/Review, 2016</li> <li>• Frankenberg et al., 2005</li> <li>• RVAA Induction Module</li> <li>• SADC Secretariat report, 2008</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical capacity assessments of MS</li> <li>• Technical Capacity-Building Plan Development Framework, 2018</li> <li>• Mid-Term Review 2019</li> <li>• VAA Opportunity Mapping Study, 2020</li> <li>• Report on the implications of Covid-19, 2021</li> <li>• SADC RVAA Synthesis Report, 2021</li> <li>• Report on Review of Technical Working Groups, 2020</li> <li>• Evaluability Assessment Report, 2018</li> <li>• Annual Review 2017/2018</li> <li>• Annual Review Reports 2018/2019 and 2020/2021</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VAA Phase-out or Operational Plans</li> <li>• MS Phase-out guiding note, 2019</li> <li>• Annual Review Reports 2021/2022</li> <li>• Sustainability Plan, 2022–2030 (draft)</li> <li>• RVAA Citation Analysis and Ecosystems mapping Report, 2021 (Draft)</li> </ul> |

121. **Transitional phase from Phase 2 to Phase 3:** The RVAA programme transitioned from Phase 2 (2012–2016) where the focus was on chronic vulnerability and climate-resilient livelihoods information to Phase 3 (2017–2021) where the focus was on consolidating the gains of the previous phase and broadening as well as deepening the scope of the programme.<sup>63</sup> The Phase 3 interventions are clustered under:

- Deepening institutionalization and capacity development
- Deepening approaches and tools to effectively conduct assessments

<sup>63</sup> SADC. *RVAA Strategy 2017–2021*.

- Addressing emerging issues and strengthening advocacy and leadership development to raise the profile of VAA activities.

122. This stage entailed designing the programme to adapt and respond to the baseline information drawn from formative documents (see Table 1 above for relevant documents).

123. **During implementation numerous activities were conducted to ensure adaptability and relevance:** To strengthen the programme, capacity assessments were conducted in 2017–2018, which informed the development of the Technical Capacity-Building Framework (2018) that outlines the core packages of capacity-building intervention themes.<sup>64</sup> At the start of the programme's implementation, it was necessary to determine the extent to which the programme could be evaluated credibly and reliably by assessing the design of the RVAA programme. Hence, an evaluability assessment was conducted.<sup>65</sup> This used a checklist to assess the three dimensions of the programme, namely:

- Design
- Data availability and systems
- Demand for evidence from programme stakeholders.

124. The programme was considered evaluable but there were recommendations for improvement, including the need to conduct a mid-term review, which was carried out in 2019.

125. The 2019 mid-term review<sup>66</sup> recommended:

- Streamlining regional support services and revising the ToC to identify high-impact priority areas in order to focus on a small number of key lines of support in both the technical and institutionalization work streams
- Reviewing modalities by the service providers to ensure that support is tailored for each Member State and that the programme provides coherent, integrated and value adding support
- Developing phase-out plans for each Member State and maximizing the cost-effectiveness of assessments post 2021 for sustainability
- Prioritizing strategy development support in all Member States, and that the offer of backstopping to Member States should be repackaged into a coherent and tangible service offer around strategic planning and M&E systems development informed by the RIST learning agenda on effective institutionalization strategies
- RVAA communications and advocacy strategies be developed based on a coherent advocacy agenda, complemented by regional and national advocacy activities for the uptake and use of VAA findings, and the production of influencing documents about the causes and consequences of rising vulnerability levels, and the nature and urgency of the problem.

126. The MTR recommendations resulted in ToC and logframe revisions in February 2020, among other programme moderations.

127. In response to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated disruptions in 2020, the RVAA Programme commissioned two studies on Regional Food, nutrition and Livelihood Analysis,<sup>67</sup> and on the implications of Covid-19<sup>68</sup> which helped WFP and Landell Mills to reassess the way they worked with Member States, and to better understand how to adjust and adapt the programme to respond to the challenges of Covid-19. A regional workshop on lessons learned was also conducted to facilitate collective reflection and sharing of experiences and key lessons on conducting assessments in the context of the pandemic resulting in the development of general guidelines based on the “Do No Harm” principle, including:

<sup>64</sup> SADC. 2018. *Technical Capacity Building Plan Development Framework*.

<sup>65</sup> SADC. 2018. *Evaluability Assessment Report*

<sup>66</sup> UKAID, Landell Mills, WFP, SDC. 2019. *Mid-Term Review*.

<sup>67</sup> SADC. 2021. *Reflection on Implications of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (RVAA) Programme*.

<sup>68</sup> SADC. 2021. *Synthesis Report*



- Increased use of secondary data
- Use of virtual platforms
- Increased use of technology in data-collection
- Hybrid implementation methods
- Decentralization of data-collection
- Mobile vulnerability assessment and mapping
- Increased use of local consultants to deliver on outputs and milestones that would have been achieved through work done by service providers.

128. While the RVAA is being implemented, the RVAC identifies areas that require more special attention hence they form Technical Working Groups to help guide how certain issues can be adequately addressed in the programme.<sup>69</sup> The Report on Review of TWGs<sup>70</sup> indicated that:

129. The exigencies of work may require the establishment of new TWGs during the next phase of the SADC RVAA Programme. These could include the following: Communication, Advocacy and Knowledge Management; climate change and Resilience; Poverty Analysis; VAC Institutionalization; and the Food Insecurity Experience Scale.

130. The above noted areas remain recommended for attention. Thus, on an ongoing basis, the reviews give rise to TWGs, which enhances deeper focus and review of programmes and activities to ensure effective response. This ensures that emerging programme issues are adequately addressed.

131. Besides the TWG work, the SADC RVAA Programme commissioned several thematic studies in 10 Member States to address some of the emerging issues across the SADC region. These focused on climate change, adaptation/resilience, chronic poverty analysis and trend analysis of coping strategies using NVAC datasets generated over the years. The NVACs that have implemented these studies include Botswana, DRC, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

132. A VAA Opportunity Mapping Study (2020)<sup>71</sup> was conducted during implementation because of the importance of reflecting on some of the critical issues required to inform the programme. The study identified and described:

- The stakeholders and the nature of their relationship with the NVACs
- How to unlock funding for the NVACs
- Bridging the gap with in-country donors
- Capitalizing on the stakeholders' relationship with NGOs
- Mainstreaming the VAC into the agenda of United Nations agencies
- Government budget allocation for the VAC
- Addressing the cost of the VAC
- Utilization of VAA information
- NVACs and their influence on policy.

This study enabled an understanding of the key issues that underpin the programme.

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<sup>69</sup> Some of the TWGs established under the SADC RVAA programme include Urban and Markets TWG, Nutrition, HIV and Gender TWG, Data and Information TWG and the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) TWG. Most of these TWGs were established in the second phase of the RVAA programme and have been running up to Phase 3. The Nutrition, HIV and Gender TWG and the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification TWG (IPC TWG), have been more active than the others, and have been continued in Phase 3 – despite as discussed later, weaknesses of the RVAA programme in capacitating Member States on gender analysis. However, during RVAA reviews, new issues emerge resulting in the need to establish new and effective TWGs.

<sup>70</sup> SADC. 2020. *Review of SADC RVAA Technical Working Groups*

<sup>71</sup> SADC. 2020. *VAA Opportunity Mapping Study*.



133. **Furthermore**, the continuing flexibility of the programme during the implementation process was also ensured through annual reviews resulting in adaptations, revisions and moderations. For instance, in February 2018, the RVAA held a regional workshop on integrated VAA frameworks with a special focus on analysing poverty and measuring resilience. The event allowed for the transfer of technical knowledge to NVACs on diverse methods and tools to measure resilience (using for example the Resilience Context Analysis and the Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis approach) and integrate poverty analysis (such as the Poverty Probability Index (PPI)). This identified a need for a more detailed resilience and poverty analysis training, subsequently organized in September 2018.<sup>72</sup>

134. **Application** of the insights from the trainings by NVACs were implemented in the design and implementation of the 2019 annual vulnerability assessments. The programme continuously received feedback, adapted and responded to needs and changes on an ongoing basis.

135. **Towards programme closure 2021–2022:** The programme focused on phasing out and closure, which resulted in emphasizing sustainability.

136. The final year of the programme has been used as an opportunity to focus on priority technical assistance and capacity-building to support sustainability beyond donor support and gather evidence of progress against outcome and impact.<sup>73</sup> This awareness informed the development of phase-out plans.<sup>74</sup> These plans focus on four key elements of the programme: leadership and ownership; timing and stakeholder participation; funding; and monitoring and evaluation. Thus, in the final year (2021–2022), the programme capacity-building interventions focus on sustainability as identified in VAA Phase-out or Operational Plans. These interventions include resource mobilization, assessment quality assurance, data management, partnerships for analysis and advocacy, communication and policy influencing.<sup>75</sup>

137. Notably, the RVAA programme has been able to adapt and respond well to emerging needs and changing contexts. However, ongoing adaptation resulted in programme outputs and deliverables not being fixed. For instance, the SADC RVAA Policy Impact Study (2016)<sup>76</sup> report indicated that the theory of change for 2012–2016 was not explicit enough to guide the programme. It stated that Phase 3 should “articulate a more explicit theory of change for the 2017-2021 programme”,<sup>77</sup> and it was therefore, expected that this gap would be clearly addressed in the design for Phase 3. The WFP proposal (2017)<sup>78</sup> contains a ToC and logframe that guided the programme at design. However, the ToC and logframe were finalized only in August 2018.<sup>79</sup> The 2019 mid-term review recommended revisions to the ToC and logframe which were carried out in February 2020;<sup>80</sup> (MTR Management Response 2020). These changes indicate that there were changes to the ToC and logframe nearly every year, which meant the programme didn’t have fixed guiding frameworks for implementation. Advisably, programme adaptations needed to be balanced with some degree of fixed programme implementation frameworks (ToC and logframe).

138. The outbreak of Covid-19 resulted in inevitable adjustments to the programme. Restrictions on travel and on access to Member States caused delays in implementation resulting in failure to achieve some outputs. As the FCDO Annual Review Report<sup>81</sup> indicates, “Due to the challenges related to Covid-19 (travel / access restrictions), output milestones were not all achieved as expected”. Therefore, the programme was “scored a B – moderately did not meet expectations” for 2020/2021,<sup>82</sup> which is a lower

<sup>72</sup> DFID. 2021. *Annual Review 2018/2019 SADC RVAA Programme*

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> SADC. 2019. *Member State Technical Phase-out Plans: Guiding Note*.

<sup>75</sup> DFID. 2021. *Annual Review*, p.2.

<sup>76</sup> SADC. 2016. *RVAA Programme, 2012–2016 Policy Impact Study*.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. vi.

<sup>78</sup> WFP. 2017. *Proposal*.

<sup>79</sup> SADC. 2018. *RVAA Monitoring & Evaluation Framework*, Version 4.

<sup>80</sup> UKAID, Landell Mills, WFP, SDC. 2019. *Mid-Term Review*.

<sup>81</sup> SADC. 2021. *Annual Review Report 2020/2021, RVAA Programme*, p.1.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

score compared to the previous three years (2017/2018,<sup>83</sup> 2018/2019,<sup>84</sup> 2019/2020<sup>85</sup>) where the programme was rated A. See Table 4 below for the programme performance summary.

**Table 4: RVAA programme performance from 2017–2021**

| Year                 | 2018     | 2019     | 2020     | 2021     | 2022 |
|----------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------|
| Overall Output Score | A        | A        | A        | B        |      |
| Risk Rating          | Moderate | Moderate | Moderate | Moderate |      |

139. The adjustments in response to Covid-19 resulted in positive progress and results. However, some Member States opted to maintain their face-to-face approaches due to technological challenges and the shortcomings of virtual platforms in conducting assessments. For instance, as indicated above:

140. “Countries such as Botswana, DRC and Eswatini intend to use secondary data sources and remote data-collection techniques as part of their data-collection for the 2021/2022 annual assessments in line with experiences from the 2020/2021 assessments. Other countries such as Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe intend to use face-to-face household surveys in their 2021/2022 assessment cycles”.<sup>86</sup>

141. Thus, adaptation efforts in responding to Covid-19 provided critical positive and negative lessons. For instance, as the Annual Review Report (2021) highlighted:

- “Virtual meetings became acceptable and were found to be effective, reduced logistic costs and allowed broader participation. Some NVAC’s require investment in communication technology to participate fully. SADC has committed to using virtual meetings for technical level meetings in future. Remote monitoring techniques such as satellite imagery (Angola) and remote mobile monitoring (Eswatini and Mozambique), decentralized assessments, and the use of secondary data all offer the opportunity to have more frequent and real-time monitoring”.<sup>87</sup>

142. To some extent, the efforts by service providers to encourage Member States to use technological approaches resulted in some Member States feeling forced to use virtual platforms. In reality, however, many officials in Member States struggled to employ technological approaches effectively due to limited data and computers.

143. Member States’ concerns about Covid-19 adjustments in interventions to achieve programme deliverables should be understood as ‘unavoidable’. Service providers had to balance between “innovation, maintaining activities to achieve results, Member States’ diverse options and preferences, and the need for consensus [on which interventions to focus]. This ‘delicate’ dynamic balance of the RVAA programme implementation framework of “Member States options menu” stated in the RVAA strategy (2017–2021)<sup>88</sup> and the implementation ‘speed’ in the context of Covid-19 would inevitably result in some Member States feeling dissatisfied with the pressure on interventions.

144. As effort was diverted to new adaptive activities caused by Covid-19, the initially planned activities were suspended or delayed. The Annual Review Report (2021)<sup>89</sup> scored the programme with a moderate ‘B’ as it did not meet all expectations. Where changes are unavoidable such as during Covid-19, a cost-benefit analysis should be carried out. This would help determine the best balance between adjusting interventions and maintaining planned activities, as well as an approach that brings the optimum programme benefits.

<sup>83</sup> SADC. 2018. *Annual Review Report 2017/2018, RVAA Programme*.

<sup>84</sup> SADC. 2019. *Annual Review Report 2018/2019, RVAA Programme*.

<sup>85</sup> SADC. 2020. *Annual Review Report 2019/2020, RVAA Programme*.

<sup>86</sup> SADC. 2021. *Reflection on Implications of the Covid-19 Pandemic on RVAA Programme*; SADC. 2021. *RVAA Synthesis Report*.

<sup>87</sup> SADC. 2021. *Annual Review Report*, p. 2.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> SADC. 2021. *Annual Review Report*.

Such an analysis would have enriched the options of the RVAA programme, reducing rushed activities when the programme lagged.

145. As the programme sought to adapt and understand the SADC regional context issues on an ongoing basis, numerous studies<sup>90</sup> were conducted and documents developed as part of implementation. The time spent by Member States attending to programme activities resulted in some of them feeling that they were spending too much time attending RVAA related issues.

### **Being sensitive and responsive to the context – how sensitive and responsive was the RVAA to the context?**

146. This section is closely linked to programme responsiveness, considered in the previous section. Its nuanced focus is how the context of the RVAA was understood and accounted for when the intervention was designed, as well as any fluctuations in the relevance of intervention as circumstances changed. It probes if assumptions that were made in the past about RVAA intervention's relevance persist in the current context.

147. The policies of SADC and SDG focus remained substantially unchanged during the period of implementation from 2017–2022. The SADC Regional Agricultural Policy,<sup>91</sup> SADC FNSS 2015–2025,<sup>92</sup> Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (2020–2030)<sup>93</sup> and Regional Integration agenda of SADC<sup>94</sup> remain focused on aspects that include poverty reduction, strengthening food security and nutrition, as well as gender inclusion within the region. Similarly, the Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 17 that deal with ending poverty, hunger, health and well-being, and gender equality<sup>95</sup> continue to inform global focus.

148. It is noted that the programme has been sensitive and responsive to the SADC regional context including the issues of particular Member States. The SADC RVAA Synthesis Report<sup>96</sup> indicates that over 65 million people in SADC are food-insecure (see breakdown of population per country, Table 5). Major disruptive issues such as Covid-19 were responded to within programme adaptation processes<sup>97</sup> while disasters such as Cyclone Idai in Zimbabwe were nationally addressed through different means, including support from the international humanitarian organizations.<sup>98</sup> Importantly, particular RVAA programme sensitive and responsive approaches to Member States are captured in SADC dissemination meetings and synthesis reports.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>These studies and documents are illustrative not exhaustive. They include *Evaluability Assessment Report* 2018; *VAA Opportunity Mapping Study* 2020; *Implications of Covid-19*, 2021; *MTR Review* 2019, Episode Studies, A Harmonised Vulnerability Assessments and Analysis Framework 2020/2021, *RVAA Monitoring & Evaluation Framework, Version 4*, 2018.

<sup>91</sup> AUDA-NEPAD. 2014. *SADC Regional Agricultural Policy*.

<sup>92</sup> SADC. 2014. *Food and Nutrition Security Strategy 2015–2025*.

<sup>93</sup> SADC. *Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2020–2030*.

<sup>94</sup> SADC. Undated. *Common Agenda*.

<sup>95</sup> United Nations, *Sustainable Development Goals*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>97</sup> See discussion above on RVAA programme adaptation over time; *Reflection on Implications of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (RVAA) Programme, June 2021*; SADC. 2021. *RVAA Synthesis Report*

<sup>98</sup> Chatiza, K, 2019, *Cyclone Idai in Zimbabwe, An analysis of policy implications for post-disaster institutional development to strengthen disaster risk management*, <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620892/bp-impact-response-cyclone-idai-zimbabwe-071119-en.pdf>

<sup>99</sup> SADC. *RVAA Synthesis Reports* 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021.

**Table 5: Population of food-insecure countries in SADC**

| Country      | Population food insecure |                   |                            |                       |                                 |
|--------------|--------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
|              | 2021/2022                | 2020/2021         | 5yr average<br>(2015-2020) | % Change<br>2020/2021 | % Change<br>from 5yr<br>average |
| Botswana     | 36 171                   | 35 237            | 34 726                     | 2.7                   | 4.2                             |
| DRC          | 27 300 000               | 21 800 000        | 10 034 351                 | 25.2                  | 172.1                           |
| Eswatini     | 318 000                  | 366 261           | 306 504                    | -13.2                 | 3.8                             |
| Lesotho      | 470 000                  | 582 169           | 453 757                    | -19.3                 | 3.5                             |
| Madagascar   | 1 310 000                | 554 000           | 1 087 887                  | 136.5                 | 20.4                            |
| Mozambique   | 1 652 303                | 2 358 927         | 1 259 055                  | -30.0                 | 31.2                            |
| South Africa | 29 300 000               | 13 600 000        | 13 938 207                 | 115,4                 | 110.2                           |
| Tanzania     | 488 661                  | 488 661           | 404 855                    | 0.0                   | 20.7                            |
| Zambia       | 1 700 000                | 1 976 351         | 1 185 359                  | -14.0                 | 43.4                            |
| Zimbabwe     | 2 942 897                | 5 454 270         | 3 560 035                  | -46.0                 | -17.3                           |
| <b>SADC</b>  | <b>65 518 032</b>        | <b>45 015 876</b> | <b>31 851 473</b>          | <b>45.5</b>           | <b>105.7</b>                    |

*Source:* SADC.2021. *RVAA Synthesis Report*, p. 9

149. Therefore, considering the prevailing SADC context, strengthening the technical capacity of VACs to broaden/integrate complex and emerging issues into the VAA (chronic vulnerability, poverty and resilience); and increasing the value of VAA through technical rigour in assessments, coordination, quality and comparability of the analysis remained important. Member States' ownership and support of the RVAA is critical to ensure sustainability. Hence, institutionalization of the RVAC and NVAC system resources, and capacity to integrate various VAA tools and approaches for national planning processes and programme responses remained a key focus area. While the RVAA system is good at highlighting food security issues, not much is being done regarding food and nutrition equity, as well as advising on prevention and forward planning to minimize the impact of disasters; this is particularly important in SADC where disasters recur.

## **2.2. COHERENCE - HOW WELL DOES THE INTERVENTION FIT?**

150. Assessment of coherence seeks to answer the evaluation question: how well does the intervention fit?<sup>100</sup> In our case, this entails assessing the compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in the SADC region. Assessment of coherence considers internal and external coherence. Internal coherence considers two factors: the alignment with the wider policy frameworks of the institutions; and the alignment with other interventions implemented by the institution including those of other departments responsible for implementing development interventions or interventions which may affect the same operating context. External coherence has two main considerations: alignment with external policy commitments; and coherence with interventions implemented by other actors in a specific context.

<sup>100</sup> OECD. 2021. *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/543e84ed-en>.

151. For this evaluation, assessment of coherence sought to answer the question: how well is the RVAA programme compatible with other programmes in SADC Member States and the region? Three assessment questions were asked to delineate the stated main coherence assessment question:

- To what extent is the SADC RVAA programme aligned with relevant SADC programmes?
- Are there contradictions with national policies that have constrained implementation and achievement of results?
- Is there complementarity with the actions of different actors and is there sufficient coordination?

**Evaluation question 4: To what extent is the SADC RVAA programme aligned with relevant SADC programmes?**

152. The RVAA programme design is fully aligned with relevant SADC policies and other programmes as articulated in the service providers' documents,<sup>101,102</sup> and the programme theory of change and logframe.<sup>103</sup> This alignment is evident on the vertical policy integration presented here. The design documents, as also presented, are informed by, and aligned with the SADC RVAA Strategic Plan (2017–2021)<sup>104</sup> which is the RVAA programme guiding framework. The SADC RVAA Strategic Plan (2017–2021) is also informed and aligned to the SADC, African Union and international policy frameworks. As described, at SADC level, the programme is informed by the SADC Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2015–2020, SADC 2013 Regional Agricultural Policy (SRAP), SADC Region Food and Nutritional Security Strategy (RFNSS) 2015–2025, and SADC Regional Resilience Framework while at the level of the African Union, Heads of State in their Malabo Declaration of June 2014, recommitted to the principles and values of the CAADP process, ending hunger by 2025, and enhancing the resilience of livelihoods and production systems to climate variability and other shocks, and to ensuring that by 2025, at least 30 percent of farm/pastoral households are resilient to shocks. These African policy frameworks are aligned to the global SDGs framework:

- Goal 1: ending poverty
- Goal 2: ending hunger
- Goal 3: ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all ages
- Goal 5: achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls
- Goal 13: take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

153. Thus, the programme's vision of "Community, household, and individual development and resilience throughout SADC Member States"; and the goal "to support resilient and sustainable rural and urban livelihoods, environments and institutions in reducing poverty and enhancing well-being in the SADC region")<sup>105</sup> is aligned to the vision and aspirations of the SADC, Africa and the SDGs. This vision is realized through MS participating in relevant processes through Institutionalized and sustainable VAA systems at national and regional levels".<sup>106</sup>

154. However, the RVAA programme's attribution to the African Union and global policy indicators as stated in the frameworks cannot be ascertained with clarity. Nonetheless, it is notable that the information generated from assessments undoubtedly informs CAADP processes, which contribute to ending hunger. To that end, information on the resilience of livelihoods and production systems to climate variability and other shocks is the bedrock of planning and responsive development interventions. These development responsive interventions will contribute to the SDGs.

<sup>101</sup> WFP. 2017. *Proposal for Technical Assistance*, pp 13-14.

<sup>102</sup> Landell Mills. 2018, *SADC RVAA Programme: Institutional Service Provision 2018–2021*, p. 4.

<sup>103</sup> See RVAA programme ToC and logframe finalized in 2018 in RVAA monitoring framework and revised February 2020 in response to MTR 2019.

<sup>104</sup> SADC. *RVAA Strategy 2017–2021*, Strategic Plan and Funding Document, pp. 5–7.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

155. To contribute to African Union and global levels, the SADC RVAA programme compiles synthesis reports<sup>107</sup> that provide an overview of “vulnerability across the SADC region as it relates to food and nutrition security”.<sup>108</sup> Central to its analysis is the primary data collected by respective NVACs, as well as secondary data provided by other government entities and humanitarian and developmental partners.

#### **Evaluation question 5: Are there contradictions with national policies that have constrained implementation and achievement of results?**

156. The RVAA programme is implemented within a framework where different policies are integrated and mainstreamed to address the different dimensions of vulnerabilities affecting food security and well-being within Member States and the region. The programme strengthens NVACs to work with different ministries or government departments to interpret vulnerability, risk and impact information and mainstream it into policies and strategies, including the identification of relevant indicators with appropriate targets. The process ensures that Member States conduct assessments that continuously feed into Member States’ decision-making processes to inform national poverty reduction strategies. Because NVAC members are drawn from different government departments, ICPs and NGOs, contradictions and differences are resolved by collaboration during data gathering, analysis and dissemination. Thus, as indicated above, at regional level the policy and guiding framework is clear while, at Member State level, the information produced informs decision-making in different bodies. Accordingly, the programme has facilitated unique participation and contribution to the programme by Member States through customized approaches from the ‘menu of options’ approach recommended by the RVAA strategy 2017–2021.

#### **Evaluation question 6: Is there complementarity with the actions of different actors and is there sufficient coordination?**

157. The SADC RVAA is a regional programme housed in the DRR unit reporting to the Deputy Executive Secretary (Regional Integration). This was done to “consolidate all related functions including disaster risk reduction, vulnerability assessment, and resilience-building into one unit at the Secretariat”.<sup>109</sup> Therefore, the programme is considered together with other programmes to ensure synergies and integration of activities. To give impetus and ensure the programme is always given due recognition within the different SADC programmes, the RVAA is a standing agenda for SADC Ministerial meetings.

158. As indicated above on policy alignment, the information generated from RVAA informs other SADC interventions both implicitly and explicitly. The synthesis reports compiled by Member States provide a detailed understanding among them of the programmes related to RVAA.

159. At Member State level, there is considerable complementarity with the actions of different actors. For instance, in Malawi, WFP has resilience projects implemented in communities identified by MVAC data, USAID, as the main actor in social cash transfers, and resilience programme; uses MVAC data to identify beneficiaries. Save the Children implements projects on resilience while Care Malawi provides technical support on food security and resilience-building. The Department of Disaster Management Affairs, which is in the Office of the President and Cabinet is responsible for the implementation and coordination of humanitarian responses and uses MVAC data to plan its responses. In South Africa, during the July 2021 unrest that resulted in destruction of businesses, “SAVAC data was used by the presidency to understand and inform responses” (SAVAC Key Informant). Detailed examples of complementarity can be drawn from the different episode studies.

### **2.3. EFFECTIVENESS - IS THE RVAA PROGRAMME INTERVENTION ACHIEVING ITS OBJECTIVES?**

160. Evaluation of effectiveness<sup>110</sup> measures the extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve its objectives, and its results, i.e., outputs, outcomes and impacts. It is concerned with the most

<sup>107</sup> See SADC *Synthesis Reports* 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021

<sup>108</sup> SADC. 2021. *RVAA Synthesis Report*, p. 3.

<sup>109</sup> SADC. 2017. *Joint Extraordinary Meeting of SADC Ministers Responsible for Agriculture and Food Security and Fisheries and Aquaculture*, 17 May, Swaziland. p. 6

<sup>110</sup> OECD. 2021. *Understanding the six criteria: Definitions, elements for analysis and key challenges, Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully*.



closely attributable results. The evaluation here is guided by the objectives of the RVAA Strategic Plan 2017–2021, focusing on:

- Consolidating and protecting the gains made by the Programme since 1999
- Broadening and deepening the scope of the RVAA to include chronic vulnerability, poverty reduction, resilience and climate change
- Strengthening the existing vulnerability assessment and analysis process and contributing to the institutionalization of these processes in national systems (including full funding and ownership) within the SADC region.

161. The evaluation is more specifically guided by the SADC RVAA Final Revised logframe and theory of change approved in February 2020. The evaluation of effectiveness was guided by these five questions:

- Evaluation Question 4: To what extent has the programme achieved the planned outputs and have these led to or likely to lead to achievement of the outcomes of the RVAA Programme?
- Evaluation Question 5: Has VAA capacity been strengthened and institutionalized?
- Evaluation Question 6: Is there evidence of increased legitimacy, credibility and influence of the RVAA Programme at national and regional level?
- Evaluation Question 7: To what extent has the programme been responsive to changing operational context including disruption and unexpected shocks (conflicts, Covid-19 pandemic etc.)?
- Evaluation Question 8: To what extent did the programme integrate gender in assessments?

### 2.3.1 Understanding the programme results framework

162. The programme results framework, guided by the logical framework (logframe) and the theory of change (ToC), is informed by several criteria. The expected ultimate impact was “Resilient and sustainable rural and urban livelihoods, environments and institutions reducing poverty and enhancing well-being in the SADC region”. The expected final outcome was “Institutionalized and sustainable VAA systems that enhance emergency and developmental responses at national and regional levels”. The **three** intermediate outcomes were:

- Increased legitimacy of the VAA system
- Increased credibility of the VAA system
- Increased influence of the VAA system.

163. In terms of clarifying the results logic, the Theory of Change (unlike the logframe, which is the operational and monitoring tool) places emphasis on the link between the immediate outcomes and the intermediate outcomes towards the final outcome and impact, while the logframe connects immediate outcomes directly to the final outcome and impact without showing the link to the intermediate outcome. To address this gap and for ease of clarity, the presentation combines the logframe and the ToC in assessing achievement of results.

164. Notably, there are differences in presentation of the results chain on immediate outcomes. The ToC presents 10 immediate outcomes contributing logically three intermediate outcomes, while the logframe presents three immediate outcomes. The three immediate outcomes of the logframe are:

- NVACs/VAA are incorporated into government administrative and financial structures (legitimacy)”
- “Integration of VAA into planning and M&E systems” (influence)
- Relevant multisectoral and multi-agency stakeholder participation and decentralization” (credibility).

165. Implicitly, the programme design integrates institutionalization as both a process (work stream and means to an end) as well as a final outcome (the end in itself). Hence, the Institutionalization Index is a function of all the three intermediate outcomes.

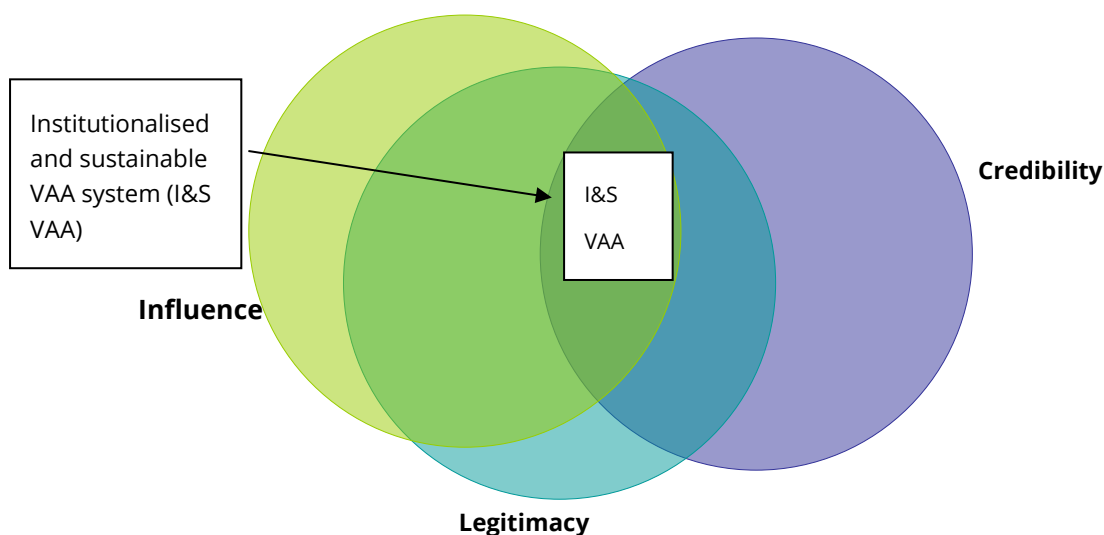
### 2.3.2 Systemic results and evaluation process



166. The three intermediate outcomes as presented in the ToC and depicted in Figure 3 below, are interrelated, interdependent and mutually reinforcing in their causal pathways. The programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation considers this relationship. The final outcome depicts interdependence of institutionalization and sustainability where one cannot exist without the other. The three immediate outcomes of the logframe, as outlined above, represent the critical pathways towards achieving the final outcome and impact.

167. The evaluation criteria and questions inherently assume this interrelationship.

**Figure 3: Nonlinear systemic interrelationships between intermediate outcomes**



**Evaluation Question 7: To what extent has the programme achieved the planned outputs and have these led to or are they likely to lead to achievement of the outcomes of the RVAA Programme? To what extent have planned outputs been delivered or not delivered?**

168. The following are the key activities conducted by the programme during 2018–2019:

- Awareness creation on climate change
- VAA reporting guidelines for integration and harmonization developed
- Technical Capacity Assessment completed for 14 NVACs
- 6 NVACs report on agreed gender disaggregated minimum dataset
- 1 Dissemination Forum held
- Synthesis reports produced and central repository created for VAA products, studies and tool.

169. As shown in Annex 15, 23 out of 26 targeted activities were achieved and 3 were in progress. Out of the US\$ 1,645,000 budgeted for Member States, 64 percent was disbursed, with 55 percent utilization rate. Domestic resources accounted for 56 percent of the cost on average. the programme was rated A during the RVAA Annual review, in terms of execution of activities, despite the 55 percent utilization rate. During 2019–2020 key activities conducted included:

- The RTST and RIST joint regional training to strengthen the capacity of NVAC M&E focal points to utilize RVAA M&E tools; and introduce the RIST's Institutionalization Index
- RTST convened a regional learning summit on gender and climate change
- Pre-Assessment Technical Meeting
- Cross-cutting learning exchange visits
- Development and finalization of Atlas
- Procurement and installation of SADC RVAA server on SADC Secretariate premises.

170. A total of US\$ 1,414,593 was budgeted for Member States, out of which 73 percent was disbursed and 68 percent utilized. See progress report for details. During 2020–2021, key activities reported included:

- Dissemination forum and synthesis which was held online due to Covid-19 control related restrictive measures
- Replacement of SADC RVAA server remained work in progress
- Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Namibia and Zimbabwe used NVAC analysis reports to declare emergencies and for appeals
- Virtual workshop, where 14 Member States shared lessons learned undertaking 2020/2021 assessments under Covid-19
- Monthly RTST monitoring meetings were held
- A virtual regional communication and advocacy training workshop where 14 countries participated
- Development of the e-Learning Advocacy Toolkit course.

171. A total of US\$ 850,000 was planned for disbursement to Member States, but only 20 percent was disbursed, and 9 percent utilized. The low budget utilization was attributed to Covid-19. Of the 11 NVAC that conducted their VAA by December 2020, only Eswatini, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe integrated gender issues into their annual assessment. See progress report 2020/2021 for details.

172. The RVAA Annual Programme Review report of September 2020 scored the programme a “B – moderately did not meet expectations”. The report further states that “due to the challenges related to Covid-19 (travel/access restrictions), output milestones were not all achieved as expected”.

173. At the time of conducting the evaluation, the key activities that were still to be completed and requiring follow-up support included:

- The development of country phase-out plans and institutionalization strategies
- Conducting round two Institutionalization Index self-assessments
- Follow-up support on ICP to countries that require it such as Namibia
- Development and follow-up implementation support to a management response to the study on RVAA in the context of Covid-19, that was recently completed
- Completion of NVAC opportunity studies and follow-up technical support
- Completion of the RVAA sustainability strategy/plan and technical support towards understanding and advocacy for its implementation among Member States
- Supporting thematic studies in Member States; nine Member States were scheduled to receive support in the areas of chronic food insecurity, climate change, coping strategies among rural households, food security and climate change nexus, VAA information and climate change programming, comparative analysis in coping strategies among male and female-headed households, food and nutrition situation, and rural households’ resilience to food insecurity,
- Completion of the VAA cost-effectiveness study and follow-up technical support towards understanding and advocacy for its implementation at regional and national levels
- Supporting mobile data-collection for higher frequency monitoring
- Integrating prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse
- Follow-up on Centres of Excellence reviews and technical support towards their kick off trainings
- Enabling the index for online independent application by Member States “is in final stages of testing instruments and guidance for self-application of the index and review of strategy will be made accessible once functionality is tested”, before handing over to the SADC Secretariat for follow-up on implementation.

174. Responses indicate that, in 2020, Covid-19 related lockdowns affected all Member States, the service providers WFP and LM, and the SADC Secretariat which disrupted implementation of their RVAA

programme/NVAC plans. As a result, some activities were not implemented, while the implementation of others was changed. According to the SADC Secretariat, “There are certain activities where you need people physically and these have not been held. Some activities have been cancelled.” The BVAC Chair reported that they “lost eight months of not doing much”. The lockdowns also delayed NVAC assessments in several Member States.<sup>111</sup> However, the impact of these delays on the programme was mitigated through programme adaptations such as use of technology in training and assessments. These adaptations should provide lessons for programme agility and adaptability.

175. The situation or status of institutionalization support provided to NVACs as presented by Landell Mills in Table 6 elaborates on the extent of activities that were still to be implemented at the time of conducting the evaluation.

**Table 6: Situation of support to NVACs on institutionalization**

| Member State | Index Baseline    |                |                     |                 |                           |                                  | Index Reapplication       |                         |                      |                     |                 | Institutionalisation Strategy |                           |                   |                    |                     | Institutionalisation Operational Plan (IPOP) or |                   |                   |                          |                           |                             |  |
|--------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
|              | Support Requested | Baseline Index | RIST Process Report | MS Index Report | Index Baseline Validation | Index Baseline Validation Report | Index Improvement Roadmap | Support Requested (Y/N) | Index Re-application | RIST Process Report | MS Index Report | Index review validation       | Index Improvement Roadmap | Support Requested | Engagement Process | RIST Process Report | Draft Strategy & Report                         | Strategy Approved | Support Requested | Operational Plan Drafted | Operational Plan Reviewed | IPOP Approved by Government |  |
| SADC Sec.    |                   |                |                     |                 |                           |                                  |                           |                         |                      |                     |                 |                               |                           |                   |                    |                     |   |                   |                   |                          |                           |                             |  |
| Angola       | Requested         | In Progress    |                     | In Progress     |                           |                                  |                           |                         |                      |                     |                 |                               |                           | Requested         | In Progress        |                     |   |                   | Declined          |                          |                           |                             |  |
| Botswana     | Requested         | In Progress    |                     | In Progress     |                           | In Progress                      |                           |                         |                      |                     |                 |                               |                           | Requested         | In Progress        |                     |   |                   |                   |                          |                           |                             |  |
| DRC          | Requested         | In Progress    |                     | In Progress     |                           | In Progress                      |                           | Requested               |                      |                     |                 |                               |                           | Requested         | In Progress        |                     |   |                   | Requested         |                          |                           |                             |  |
| Eswatini     | Requested         | In Progress    |                     | In Progress     |                           | In Progress                      |                           | Requested               |                      |                     |                 |                               |                           | Requested         | In Progress        |                     |   |                   |                   |                          | In Progress               |                             |  |
| Lesotho      | Requested         | In Progress    |                     | In Progress     |                           | In Progress                      |                           | Requested               |                      |                     |                 |                               |                           | Requested         | In Progress        |                     |   |                   | Requested         |                          |                           |                             |  |
| Madagascar   | Requested         | In Progress    |                     | In Progress     |                           | In Progress                      |                           | Requested               |                      |                     |                 |                               |                           | Requested         | In Progress        |                     |   |                   | Declined          |                          |                           |                             |  |
| Malawi       | Requested         | In Progress    |                     | In Progress     |                           | In Progress                      |                           | Requested               |                      |                     |                 |                               |                           | Requested         | In Progress        |                     |   |                   | Requested         |                          |                           |                             |  |
| Mauritius    |                   |                |                     |                 |                           |                                  |                           |                         |                      |                     |                 |                               |                           | Requested         | In Progress        |                     |   |                   |                   |                          |                           |                             |  |
| Mozambique   | Requested         | In Progress    |                     |                 |                           |                                  |                           |                         |                      |                     |                 |                               |                           |                   |                    |                     |   |                   |                   |                          |                           |                             |  |
| Namibia      |                   |                |                     |                 |                           |                                  |                           |                         |                      |                     |                 |                               |                           | Requested         | In Progress        |                     |   |                   |                   |                          |                           |                             |  |
| Seychelles   |                   |                |                     |                 |                           |                                  |                           |                         |                      |                     |                 |                               |                           | Requested         | In Progress        |                     |   |                   |                   |                          |                           |                             |  |
| South Africa | Requested         | In Progress    |                     | In Progress     |                           | In Progress                      |                           | Requested               |                      |                     |                 |                               |                           | Requested         | In Progress        |                     |   |                   |                   |                          | In Progress               |                             |  |
| Tanzania     | Requested         | In Progress    |                     | In Progress     |                           | In Progress                      |                           | Requested               |                      |                     |                 |                               |                           | Requested         | In Progress        |                     |   |                   |                   |                          |                           |                             |  |
| Zambia       | Requested         | In Progress    |                     | In Progress     |                           | In Progress                      |                           | Requested               |                      |                     |                 |                               |                           | Requested         | In Progress        |                     |   |                   |                   |                          |                           |                             |  |
| Zimbabwe     | Requested         | In Progress    |                     | In Progress     |                           | In Progress                      |                           | Requested               |                      |                     |                 |                               |                           | Requested         | In Progress        |                     |   |                   | Declined          |                          |                           |                             |  |

Source: Landell Mills Report on Institutionalization

176. The programme’s adoption of virtual activities means that the RTST [believes that it] is on track to attaining programme benchmarks by the end of the programme in March 2022, with a reduced budget.<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless, ZIMVAC, BVAC and the SADC Secretariat are concerned that use of virtual communication led to ineffective meetings for VAAs because “people don’t read and they validate documents they have not read”. The virtual meetings were “designed as though they were face-to-face meetings [and were] not adjusted to ensure full participation of Member States.”

177. Although the programme governance bodies, Steercom, RVAC, and MANCO continually reflect on whether results are being achieved or not, cross validation with key informant interviews suggests that some Member States also have a backlog of RVAA related activities to implement at national level. Clearing the backlog of activities within the deadline of March 2022 will affect programme efficacy. Staff turnover compounded the effects of lockdown and was reported to have affected the timely implementation of planned activities. This was the case with the delayed development of the RVAA Communication strategy at

<sup>111</sup> SADC Secretariat. 2020. *RVAA Synthesis Report on the state of food and nutrition security and vulnerability in Southern Africa*, Gaborone.

<sup>112</sup> SADC. 2020. *RVAA Programme, Annual Review Template 2020*.

regional level, and delays to the NVAC workplans in Namibia. Respondents lamented that “with new staff came changes to implementation modalities which tended to be disruptive”. Some NVAC Chairs were already complaining of “...too much being done too late”, and “RVAA programme meetings being rushed through to tick the boxes...[because] they brought technical support on a number of issues...week long meetings and good trainings were conducted on issues like climate change, chronic poverty, resilience, data management, but there was no follow-up support... no follow-through to check if Member States were capable of implementing or applying the new skills ...we were left hanging...Member States were not effectively monitoring and reporting on progress on their implementation of emerging issues”. This was overwhelming for Member States with some reporting “poor application of the good tools” (NAMVAC Key Informant).

178. Effective completion of activities and the handover of programme results and the continuation of processes will also depend on whether the SADC Secretariat hires a programme manager for RVAA at least a couple of months before March 2022. Some NVAC Chairs and the SADC Secretariat have already expressed concern that some activities were being rushed through while they did not have adequate human resources to absorb the activities at national level. The evaluation team thinks that, in the absence of capacity at the SADC Secretariat to provide follow-up support to unfinished business post March 2022, consideration should be given to a no-cost extension to the programme to enable the completion of planned activities and the proper handover of benefits to Member States. The activities to be considered and the timeframe should be discussed jointly between the service providers, donors and Member States.

179. In situations where a number of key activities are still continuing at the programme’s end date, the Association for Project Management (APM) strongly warns against the risk of an “over the wall” handover of programme benefits, processes and recommendations. Instead, the sustainability plan could be completed early enough to allow for adequate implementation of the handover. Many activities had not been implemented a few months before end of programme funding in March 2022, so there is a risk that outcomes (both immediate, intermediate, final and impact) will not be fully realized. Most outstanding and recently completed activities would require follow-up support to Member States to ensure that they are converted into outcomes and impact; it would require more time beyond March 2022 to ensure that outputs are transformed into outcomes and impact.

### 2.3.3 Extent towards achieving outcomes and impact

180. Baseline 2017: According to the RVAC capacity review report (2017), 14 Member States had functional NVACs established and legitimate as of 2017, and “all [14] VACs have an institutional home and their work is mandated through either law, policy or strategic framework, which is commendable. All VACs have VAA procedures in place for data generation that help them execute their mandate”.

181. Progress as of 2021: By 2021, 15 VACs have been institutionalized but are at different levels of functionality (a score on the measure of extent to which NVACs meet the Institutionalization Index criteria). As shown on Figure 4, the progress tracker<sup>113</sup> indicates that, out of the 10 countries ranked for institutionalization functionality, 6 had a score of 55 or below and 4 scored between 65 and 75. Botswana, DRC and South Africa ranked lowest on functionality while Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, scored on the higher side.

182. Phase-out plans and dedicated staff: At the time of conducting the evaluation, most Member States did not have approved phase-out plans and did not have enough dedicated personnel. NVAC Chairs for example, in Namibia, reported high staff turnover “for greener pastures”, and burnout among those remaining, which significantly affected capacity to implement planned programme activities. These issues were compounded by the pandemic. Eswatini and South Africa were in the process of developing institutionalization operational plans while DRC, Lesotho and Malawi had requested support as of September 2021.

183. According to reports from LM, 10 Member States had completed Baseline Index mapping at the time of completing the empirical investigation in August 2021. However, none had completed repeat Institutionalization Index scoring to determine any progress made. A review of the Institutionalization baseline scoring (see Table 7) for VAA strategy, indicated that only two of the eight Member States for which scores were available had scored above 70 percent, and the rest scored 50 percent and below. This scoring

<sup>113</sup> Landell Mills. 2021. *RVAA Institutionalisation Support: Progress Update*. Presented at the DRR meeting 6 September.

suggests that more support is required for Member States to have VAA Strategies, which will contribute towards the improved credibility of VAAs as well as enhance harmonization of VAAs in SADC. According to the LM update report as of September 2021,<sup>114</sup> virtual support and follow-up meetings were held with Angola, Botswana, DRC, Madagascar, Mozambique and Seychelles – all of whom have committed to the index and VAA strategy review. At the time of the evaluation, there was not enough time left in the six remaining months of the project to significantly improve on the institutionalization requirement for a VAA strategy for all NVACs.

184. The Institutionalization Index<sup>115</sup> defines seven comprehensive parameters for achieving sustainability as set out in the final outcome – Institutionalized and sustainable VAA systems that enhance emergency and developmental interventions at national and regional levels...It measures or provides the status of VAA institutionalization across seven differently weighted, and yet interrelated and interdependent components necessary for sustainable institutionalization which are summarized by their weighting as:

- VAA mandate (10 percent)
- VAA strategy, operational plans and monitoring an evaluation (15 percent)
- VAA funding (15 percent)
- VAA technical capacity (20 percent)
- VAA participation (15 percent)
- VAA Decentralization (15 percent)
- VAA information use and relevance (10 percent).

The components have an aggregate weighting of 100 percent representing best case institutionalization functionality.

185. There are low levels of Institutionalization functionality<sup>116</sup> as defined by the programme during Phase 3 and articulated in the Institutionalization Index, which is worrying, given that the drive towards the institutionalization of NVACs has existed since 2000.<sup>117</sup> The first SADC RVAA programme (2006–2011) emphasized formalization of NVACs within government structures. This had been largely achieved in 14 Member States before Phase 3 began, consistent with “NVACs commonly defined institutionalization as the embedding of the VAC within existing national systems of planning and programming. It is when an NVAC is well established and recognized within a country's government systems and operations”. This is a definition also considered by the evaluation team as more appropriate towards the sustainability of VAA system, “Institutionalization is multidimensional [...] and therefore cannot be limited to NVAC legal framework or NVAC mandate alone.” In the second phase (2011–2016) emphasis was on capacity-building in VAA and its integration into government budgets. This has remained a challenge carried over into Phase 3 as demonstrated by low scores in governments’ budgeting and continued technical and human resources capacity challenges among NVACs. Some Member States may not have moved from their understanding of Institutionalization before Phase 3. For example, some NVAC Chairs argued that they were already institutionalized at the onset of Phase 3. Sensitizing Member States on the Institutionalization Index is an ongoing process, just as institutionalization itself has been described as an ongoing process.

186. During Phase 3 (2017–2021), institutionalization has been explicitly elaborated to mean: creation of dedicated core VAC units with full-time staff; full in-country funding of VAC activities; stronger leadership and VAC advocacy role at both SADC and MS levels. The SADC RVAA Programme Capacity Review Report (October 2017) however emphasized that institutionalization is not an end in itself but an ongoing process. The report highlights the following:

- Institutionalization is an ongoing process in which a set of activities become an integral and sustainable part of a formal system. It involves a sequence of events leading to new practices

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Landell Mills. 2019. *SADC RVAA Programme Institutionalisation Index Manual*, Draft 0.3.

<sup>116</sup> Functionality is a measure or score derived from self-assessment of the strength of an NVAC on each of the 7 indices, or as an aggregate score of the 7 indices of NVACs.

<sup>117</sup> SADC. 2017. *RVAA Programme Capacity Review Report*.

becoming standard. Leadership plays a vital role in institutionalization when defining the mission and roles. Institutionalization creates consistency and uniformity across an organization.<sup>118</sup>

187. However, the approach to institutionalization as an end in itself (final outcome) adopted by the RVAA programme during Phase 3 is not entirely consistent with the observations of the Capacity Review Report of 2017. Acknowledging that Institutionalization efforts began in 2000, the evaluation team argues that the process should have some defined end in a particular context. The Phase 3 plan and implementation strategy does not clarify at what point, or when, it would be expected that Institutionalization (the process) would become Institutionalization (the final outcome). The team, as shown in Figure 6, assumes that the final outcome would be attained the closer the aggregate Institutionalization Index score for an NVAC is to 100 percent – a hypothetical point of convergence for the seven components of the index. In addition, it has also been observed that achieving some and not all of the attributes of the Institutionalization Index as defined by the programme during Phase 3 is not enough for NVACs to attain the programme’s final outcome. Drawing on the institutionalization status shown in Table 6, the ET concludes that the Institutionalization final outcome as defined in Phase 3, and the efforts for this which began two decades ago, is far from being achieved for the majority of Member States. Yet 14 Member States (as at 2017) and 15 Member States (as at 2021) are considered to have had some “functional VAA system”. In the absence of a clear definition of “functional institutionalization”, and to bridge the difference in the understanding of institutionalization as a process and as a final outcome, while acknowledging progress made thus far and encouraging Member States to improve continuously, an Institutionalization Scale should be developed defining the Institutionalization continuum and stages towards “institutionalized and sustainable VAA system” building on experiences in Member States, the current Theory of Change logic, and the interrelationship between the seven components of the Institutionalization Index used during Phase 3. Figure 4 below indicates institutionalization functionality.<sup>119</sup>

**Figure 4: Institutionalization functionality (0 percent is default for data not available)**

| 2020 Baseline      | Assessment Criteria  | Relevance Weighting | Ang. | Bot. | Com  | DRC  | Esw  | Les  | Mad  | Mal  | Mau  | Moz  | Nam  | Sey  | RSA  | Tan  | Zam  | Zim  |
|--------------------|--|---------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Mandate            | The Committees have evolved differently in each of the Member States. This II component seeks to establish Status of VAA Mandate as the starting point for institutionalisation of VAA.  | 1.00                |      | 0.67 |      | 0.83 | 0.83 | 1.00 | 0.67 |      |      |      |      |      | 0.83 | 0.50 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
|                    |  | %                   | 0%   | 67%  | 0%   | 83%  | 83%  | 100% | 67%  | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 83%  | 50%  | 100% | 100% |
| Strategy           | Externalities and the uncertainty often prevent implementation of strategies and plans and, the probability of strategy and plans achieving their intended outcomes.   | 1.50                |      | 0.00 |      | 0.43 | 0.75 | 0.45 | 0.43 |      |      |      |      |      | 0.75 | 0.60 | 1.35 | 0.43 |
|                    |  | %                   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 29%  | 50%  | 30%  | 29%  | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 50%  | 40%  | 90%  | 29%  |
| Funding            | The predictability of the outputs of the VAA programme finding alternative sources of funding  | 1.50                |      | 1.00 |      | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.75 |      |      |      |      |      | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.38 | 0.88 |
|                    |  | %                   | 0%   | 67%  | 0%   | 33%  | 33%  | 33%  | 50%  | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 33%  | 33%  | 25%  | 59%  |
| Technical Capacity | The capacity to conduct credible VAAs, critically assess the information collected, analyse the information and its implications, and apply information for strategy and policy considerations.  | 2.00                |      | 0.77 |      | 0.69 | 1.47 | 1.56 | 0.92 |      |      |      |      |      | 0.20 | 1.38 | 1.80 | 1.54 |
|                    |  | %                   | 0%   | 39%  | 0%   | 35%  | 74%  | 78%  | 46%  | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 10%  | 69%  | 90%  | 77%  |
| Participation      | VAA is a multi-sectoral process best delivered with multi-stakeholder functional inclusion. The integration of HIV/AIDS, gender, nutrition, urban vulnerability assessment, climate change and markets among other emerging issues demands that VAA be a multi-stakeholder driven process. | 1.50                |      | 0.38 |      | 1.13 | 0.94 | 0.60 | 1.31 |      |      |      |      |      | 0.75 | 0.90 | 0.60 | 1.50 |
|                    |  | %                   | 0%   | 25%  | 0%   | 75%  | 63%  | 40%  | 87%  | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 50%  | 60%  | 40%  | 100% |
| De-Centralisation  | Decentralising the VACs and VAA system by generating information, conducting analyses, strategy and response planning at the most effective levels is a good indicator of institutionalisation.  | 1.50                |      | 1.13 |      | 0.38 | 0.50 | 1.50 | 0.38 |      |      |      |      |      | 1.00 | 1.50 | 1.00 | 1.23 |
|                    |  | %                   | 0%   | 75%  | 0%   | 25%  | 33%  | 100% | 25%  | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 67%  | 100% | 67%  | 82%  |
| Use & Relevance    | The information and data analysis generated through the VAA should be used and relevant to those who demand it. This component seeks to understand who is using what and for what purpose.   | 1.00                |      | 0.78 |      | 0.67 | 0.56 | 0.67 | 0.56 |      |      |      |      |      | 0.58 | 0.83 | 0.50 | 1.00 |
|                    |  | %                   | 0%   | 78%  | 0%   | 67%  | 56%  | 67%  | 56%  | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 58%  | 83%  | 50%  | 100% |
| Total Score        |  | 10.00               | 0.00 | 4.73 | 0.00 | 4.63 | 5.55 | 6.28 | 5.02 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 4.61 | 6.21 | 6.63 | 7.58 |
|                    |  | %                   | 0%   | 47%  | 0%   | 46%  | 56%  | 63%  | 50%  | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 46%  | 62%  | 66%  | 76%  |

**Evaluation Question 8: Has VAA capacity been strengthened and institutionalized?**

188. In the ToC, efforts to strengthen capacity were meant to increase the credibility of the VAA system. The outcomes and outputs leading towards credibility are:

<sup>118</sup> Capacity Review Report, October 2017

<sup>119</sup> Landell Mills. 2021. *Progress Update*.



- Relevant multisectoral and multi-agency stakeholder participation and decentralization
- Predictable, timely and high-quality targeted VAA information products
- VAA cost-effectiveness and decentralization supported
- Relevant technical capacity supported for NVAC and SADC secretariat
- VAC VAA approaches, and methods are strengthened, harmonized and integrated
- RVAA strategic partnerships strengthened.

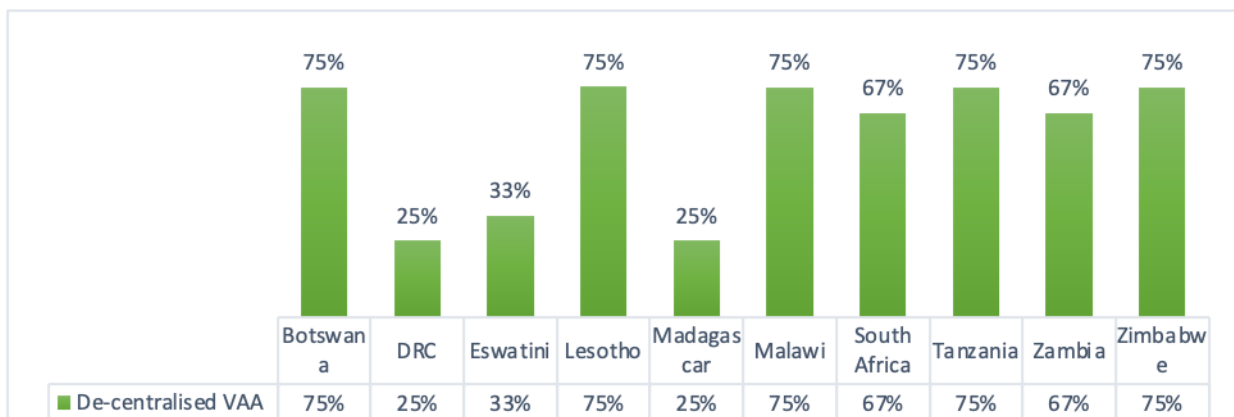
**2.3.4 VAA Participation Score (Institutionalization Index)**

189. Drawing on the institutionalization functionality baseline scores as shown in Figure 4, with regards to participation as at August 2021, five out of nine Member States for which scores were available had baseline participation scores above 50 percent. This shows that overall regional participation score was average and rather inadequate, with variations across Member States. According to the VAA Opportunity Study Report (2020), the multisectoral nature of the VAC in some Member States has been limited to the Technical Committee only, implying that multisectorality as it relates to coordinated and collaborative implementation of VAA outcomes was weak. This view is backed by concerns by civil society key informants, for example in Zimbabwe, that although stakeholder participation and consultation was high in in the NVAC, some stakeholders were not given access to the VAA database for secondary analysis on specific issues of priority to their mandates on condition that they contributed resources to VAA process. This “carrot and stick” approach further limits the capacity of the VAC to ensure the full utilization and influence of VAA information and products, especially considering that most VAC secretariat teams are small – a support function that could be provided jointly with other stakeholders. More effort should be made to encourage NGOs and other stakeholders to prioritize VAA support as a standing budget line item annually to ensure their contributions to VAAs and access to VAA information for secondary analysis. In addition, according to the Opportunity Study Report, NVACs will do well to consider: a VAC policy committee, and VAC information and communication committee.

**2.3.5 VAA Decentralization Score (Institutionalization Index)**

190. Decentralization also served as an indicator towards credibility and, as noted later, a measure of efficiency as well. For example, reports from some NVAC Chairs indicate that NVACs were now “able to conduct data-collection without going to the districts or [in the case of Namibia] regions”. Decentralization also enabled /reinforced greater participation (mutually reinforcing interlinks between the indicators) and contacts with the grassroots, skilling of local personnel and enhanced ownership of VAA processes at the local levels. The cost of data-collection and analysis was also reduced where decentralization had been effectively established. Seven Member States have progressed fairly well with decentralization as a response to Covid-19 as shown in Figure 5, pointing towards capacity strengthening of NVACs as well as towards increased credibility.

**Figure 5: Decentralization levels among SADC Member States**



**2.4.6 NVAC VAA approaches, and methods are strengthened, harmonized and integrated**



191. **Harmonized methodology:** The various assessment methods and approaches employed by NVACs are harmonized through a common conceptual framework and a set of indicators in their assessments. This progress towards harmonized assessments in the SADC region continues to yield results. Member States share lessons and experiences through exchange visits and documenting and good practices in the form of evidence pieces.

192. **Capacity for conducting VAAs:** In comparison to Phase 2, the evaluation team notes that the technical capacity for NVAAs improved significantly in Member States during Phase 3 (2017–2022), particularly in the use of data-collection methodologies, analysis and information-sharing.

193. **Technical Working Group Committees:** In 2021, the four functional RVAC technical working groups were:

- Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)
- Gender, Nutrition and HIV/AIDS (more information on the work of the gender, Nutrition and HIV/AIDS TWG is provided under the section on gender)
- Market analysis and urban assessment
- Information management, respectively supported Member States in integrated analysis.

194. The TWGs provided a platform for Member States experts to come together and agree on common issues that could help them excel in conducting and using VAAs. The Capacity Building Technical Working Group (CBTWG) does not appear in synthesis reports after 2017 until the end of Phase 3.

#### **2.4.7 Capacity-building on data-collection tools and methods**

195. As a **baseline** for technical capacity: The 2016 and 2017 synthesis reports indicate that the NVACs used a range of information collection and analysis tools to carry out the 2016 and 2017 assessments. These include qualitative and quantitative methods such as household surveys and key informant interviews, focus groups and secondary data. The majority of the NVACs used the livelihoods analytical framework as a basis of their assessments. The design of the assessment methodologies, geographical coverage and depth of analysis by the NVACs was largely dependent on the available technical capacity; access to fields, period of analysis and availability of recent data, resources and time available to carry out the assessments. The NVACs also used secondary data including information from previous years' assessment reports, population figures from National Statistics Offices, meteorological information, baseline livelihood data from NVACs, crop estimate reports by government, and reports from various development partners and NGOs in the countries.

196. **Progress since 2017:** The 2021 RVAA Synthesis Report indicates that in early 2020, the RVAA Programme supported the development of guidelines for vulnerability assessment and analysis in the context of Covid-19, approved by SADC Committee of Ministers responsible for food security and agriculture and aquaculture and fisheries. The guidance embraces the principle of "Do No Harm", so that assessments are conducted in ways that safeguard the safety, health and civil liberties of all participants. Given Covid-19 movement restrictions, innovative data-collection approaches are outlined in the guidelines for consideration. With regards to methods, The HEA and IPC remained common analytical frameworks. Qualitative methods as well as quantitative household surveys (structured questionnaires) are used to collect primary data that is complemented with secondary data from multiple sources.

197. **Covid-19 Compatible VAA:** In response to the impact of Covid-19, the IPC Global Support Unit (GSU) re-evaluated the 2020 Global and Regional Strategy for southern Africa. To support countries to continue with acute food security analysis, the IPC GSU rolled out several new guidelines, including the:

- Guidelines for virtual analysis
- Guidelines for minimum evidence requirements for IPC in the absence of primary data-collection and developing assumptions for forecasted food security analysis.

198. In addition, the GSU completed the guidelines on urban IPC analysis to support data-collection and piloted the analysis of food insecurity in urban areas.

199. **IPC TWG:** The use of IPC has grown from seven during 2016–2017 - (DRC, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe) to 12 during 2021 (Angola, Eswatini, DRC, Lesotho,

Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe). Analysts had been trained on different levels of IPC as follows:

- 132 (Level 1)
- 11 (Level 2)
- 4 (Level 3).

200. Botswana, Comoros, Mauritius and Seychelles are yet to use IPC to ensure full harmonization on using IPC in the region. Reports in 2021 indicate that IPC had, as a tool, also improved with New ISS features which improved ways of uploading evidence, giving analysts more time for technical debates, and better conclusions and projections.

201. Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC): Acute analysis is a set of tools and procedures developed to provide critical information to support decision-makers with information for short-term relief objectives at a specific point in time, of a severity that threatens lives and/or livelihoods regardless of the causes, context or duration. Among the benefits of IPC is that it facilitates comparisons of the severity of food insecurity between areas and countries. Most countries included some level of nutritional analysis in their VAA.

202. Challenges with IPC: At baseline for IPC during 2017, the reports on the use of IPC noted various methodological and analytical framework limitations including the facts that “current assessments are, in most cases, limited to rural areas, [there is] insufficient data disaggregation by gender, [and] in some cases, lack of up-to-date data on livestock, fisheries and non-cereal crop production”.

203. Fast forward to 2021 and, during interviews, some NVACs, including ZIMVAC and the SADC Secretariat expressed concerns with the way IPC had been introduced “as a parallel tool” with BVAC indicating that it had never considered adopting it, while Namibia Vulnerability Assessment Commission (NAMVAC) had found it rather complex to use. In 2021, the SADC IPC Technical Working Group also reported a number of challenges in using it effectively, including:

- Communication over key issues: there are challenges of comparability with other food security analyses’ methodologies.
- Poor internet connectivity: resulted in delays or limited the quality of discussions in some country.
- Trainings: Lower capacity to engage with trainees/receive feedback and more challenging in new countries/new AT members.
- Analysis time: Some analyses lasted more than actually needed.
- Competing work priorities of analysts / limited attention/analysts assigned other tasks.
- Consensus-building was more difficult to handle, especially when virtual.
- Data verification: challenges of verification of virtually collected data.
- Shifting analysis dates: frequent changes affect availability of in-country analysts and other external technical support.
- Conflicting analyses pose challenges to CCLE engagement as analysts needed in their country.

### **2.3.8 Integration of nutrition, HIV and gender in VAA update**

204. In 2016, the presentation by the RVAA Integration of Nutrition, HIV and Gender Technical Working Group indicated that four countries (Lesotho, Namibia, Seychelles and Tanzania) had integrated nutrition, HIV and gender as activities in their RVAA workplan for 2015–2016. A further four countries (Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland and Zimbabwe) had included nutrition anthropometrics, HIV and gender data-collection as part of their 2016 VAA, using IPC Acute Analysis. The presentation highlighted that, in October 2015, the RVAA Programme published the “Guidance Document on Integration of Nutrition, HIV and Gender in VAA”, which now provides countries with a range of options for integration based on a Member States VAA modality.

205. Progress since 2017: About 10 regional trainings were conducted on nutrition related issues, and one on HIV and AIDS integration in VAA between 2017 and 2021. Training on gender was conducted during a

pre-assessment workshop, which is a one week detailed technical activity. To strengthen gender integration, and consolidate the work that began during Phase 2, closer links could be forged with the gender unit at the SADC Secretariat and organizations such as the United Nations and CSOs, which actively promote gender equality, and government ministries at regional and national levels.

206. Challenges with integration of nutrition, gender and HIV: However, there are several operational challenges as information on nutrition, HIV and gender varies across countries due to capacity, quality and overall investment in nutrition information systems/monitoring information systems or integrated information systems. Moreover, there is under-utilization of secondary data for nutrition, HIV and gender. Within the TWG there is consensus of the need to support countries to develop a plan for each country to integrate nutrition, HIV and gender into its VAA. The presentation also highlighted the importance of El Niño surveillance of nutrition, HIV and gender and concluded with a proposed concept note for improved regional and country level information management systems.

### **2.3.9 Relevant technical capacity supported for NVAC and SADC secretariat**

207. At baseline in 2017: The SADC RVAA Outcomes Review Synthesis Report of October 2016 indicates that one major way of sustaining VAA was to have the experts from Member States to lead and own their programme implementation. It said that A formal outcomes review conducted by NVACs, served to build their capacity in monitoring outcomes, and [...] assisted Member States to reflect on the progress made on the outcomes in their strategic plans.

208. The NVACs system was generally perceived as a credible source of VAA information and NVACs outputs were generally used by various stakeholders including:

- Governments (ministries, departments and institutions)
- NGOs (international and local)
- United Nations agencies (WFP, FAO and UNOCHA among others)
- Researchers and academia.

209. The system was seen as mostly useful for emergency or relief purposes to support vulnerable population, as well as policy and programme planning (mainly for disaster risk reduction and emergencies), monitoring and evaluation, and research. Cited interventions included “vulnerable group feeding, school feeding, social transfers e.g., cash transfers and food for work interventions, livestock feed subsidy among others”.

210. All 10 Member States included in the SADC RVAA Outcome Review Synthesis Report, October 2017 “had insufficient human and technical support despite significant investments in capacity-building in VAA over the years, and thus remained an area requiring support”. Thus, “implementation of the 2017–2021 RVAA strategy will require much more than numbers of staff but also the technical capacities required for integrated analysis of both short and long-term issues such as climate change. The ability to think beyond vulnerability, but to embrace resilience as a process through which VACs can provide a holistic analysis of livelihoods in the region is critical. There needs to be a strategy building and sustaining capacity in VAA.”

211. Progress since 2017: Using the Institutional Index during Phase 3, technical capacity at baseline Institutional Index assessment in 2020 was scored highly among five out of the nine Member States for which the scores were available for technical capacity as follows:

- Zambia (90 percent)
- Lesotho (78 percent)
- Zimbabwe (77 percent)
- Eswatini (74 percent)
- Malawi (69 percent)
- Tanzania (69 percent).

212. Low scores were recorded in:

- South Africa (10 percent)

- DRC (35 percent)
- Botswana (39 percent).

213. Seven Member States, (44 percent) did not have scores and therefore their capacity could not be established, suggesting that they were behind in the application of the Institutionalization Index or, as in the case of Mauritius, did not have an NVAC. In a review for technical capacity in 2021,<sup>120</sup> not much had changed. Zambia remained highest at 90 percent followed by Zimbabwe, 77 percent and Eswatini, 74 percent. South Africa remained lowest at 10 percent and Botswana, 38 percent and DRC, 35 percent. The virtual RVAA technical dissemination forum, on 8 July 2021 noted that “there is a need for continuous review of technical support as needs are ever changing.” This observation is backed by NVAC Chairs’ responses during interviews, indicating that, while they had received training from the RVAA programme on a number of areas, they still needed follow-up training and support to be able to implement effectively. They lamented that such follow-up support had not been adequately forthcoming.

### **2.3.10 Capacity-building technical working group (CBTWG) - CoE**

214. At baseline in 2017, there were efforts to revamp the CBTWG. Achievements of the CBTWG as reported in 2017 included the following a Centre of Excellence established in 2010 at University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) after competitive bidding. It was charged with the responsibility of leading capacity-building for NVACs. UKZN partnered with the Universities of Malawi, Namibia and Zimbabwe; and Sokoine University in Tanzania. It also later teamed up with a university in DRC and another in Mozambique. These developed a curriculum after consulting with Member States and agreed to offer the following short courses once a year:

- UKZN (food security analysis)
- University of Malawi (Poverty analysis)
- University of Namibia (GIS)
- University of Zimbabwe (climate change)
- Sokoine University (nutrition).

215. One or two participants per VAC per course were fully funded by the programme to attend. An NVAC Induction manual was produced. The centres took up a core capacity-building mandate on the academic side while RVAC created technical working groups to deal with practical side of capacity-building. An evaluation of the centres was carried out in 2014–2015, with changes still to be made.

216. Progress in 2021: Responses from some NVACs (Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe), the SADC Secretariat, and the UKZN indicate that the CoEs were not active during 2017–2021. NVAC Chairs said the centres, although useful, had “died a natural death”. Both NVAC Chairs and UKZN respondents were not aware of the reasons why the centres were no longer offering training. However, a document review indicates that a new model for centres of excellence has been agreed upon, including selected universities building capacity of other academic institutions in all Member States that will, in turn, transfer skills to NVACs. Each centre has a clear strategy and a clear funding and sustainability model. However, this was still at inception phase, confirming that the centres had not been operating during Phase 3.

217. Drawing on the RVAA Report of the Annual Organizational Meeting of the RVAA Programme held in December 2018, the evaluation team established that a review of the centres’ system in 2013 had raised some issues that required following up. These included:

- The need to clarify the relevance of a centre of excellence
- The sustainability and institutionalization of the centres within the RVAA and beyond the RVAC’s involvement
- The capacity for the centres to offer courses beyond those paid for by the RVAA programme
- Whether tertiary institutions could generate external resources to develop programmes

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<sup>120</sup> SADC. 2021. *RVAA Institutionalisation Support: Institutionalisation update and plans*, technical dissemination forum, 8 July (virtual).

- The need to review the fields of study
- Involvement of the knowledge management component of the RVAA Programme
- Expansion to French and Portuguese courses
- Utilizing technology to enhance delivery of courses
- Improving engagement between universities.

These issues would strengthen the design of the new model.

### 2.3.11 Integration of VAA into planning and M&E systems

218. The key objectives of the RVAA M&E framework are to:

- Support management and strategic decision-making by providing timely performance data to improve operations, assess delivery of outputs and effectiveness of programme strategies
- Systematically and coherently capture evidence that demonstrates progress towards achieving programme outcomes
- Facilitate learning for programme improvement and deepen understanding of emerging promising practices by national Vulnerability Analysis Committees and technical support partners
- Ensure accountability to programme stakeholders.

219. M&E trainings were conducted in nine countries in 2018 and 2019. The RVAA programme also detailed the impact of Covid-19 on food and nutrition security, on livelihoods and on productivity in the region, citing specific impacts on individual Member States. Details have been provided earlier under capacity-building on data-collection tools.

220. The programme developed an M&E Framework to guide its M&E agenda. The M&E internally tracked the activities conducted and the effect on programme targets through mechanisms such as episode studies, among other approaches. By the time of the evaluation, five-episode studies had been conducted. The studies map use and influence and impact pathways and provide feedback on performance to the programme team. This is also informed by other monitoring and tracking mechanisms including:

- NVAC scorecard
- NVAC activity and budget tracker
- NVAC Institutionalization Index
- Biannual progress reports
- Programme annual reviews
- Mid-term programme review.

221. M&E training was also provided to individual countries in 2018–2019. While the extent to which these trainings were followed-up is not very clear, there is evidence of considerable effort in obtaining a functional and usable M&E. Indeed, the programme is commended for having developed an annual budget tracker, although reporting by Member States appears to have been done once during the duration of the programme.

222. As has been highlighted earlier, the three work streams of the RVAA programme were systemic and interrelated. It would have been advisable to use a unitary M&E system between the two service providers, which seemed not to be the case. It is unclear how the regional M&E function holistically served the entire programme including activities driven by WFP (RTST), LM (RIST) and the SADC Secretariat, and how programme M&E efforts were integrated and coordinated.

223. At the national level, the major stakeholder engagement and reporting activities were the annual VAA assessment and analysis and dissemination events. Follow-up activities on the use and subsequent needs by different stakeholders of VAA data and information at national and subnational levels was limited. Thus, emerging issues were more likely to be identified and attended to only during the annual VAA forum. Secondary sub-analysis of VAA data by individual stakeholders, where access to such data was available was not institutionalized and publicly communicated within the NVACs VAA tradition and was left to the

determination of those partners who chose to conduct it for their own use. Some NVACs Chairs said support was inadequate for gender analysis, and for the use of specific tools developed at regional level.

224. Therefore, despite the notable gaps in the M&E system and processes, overall, there were commendable efforts in developing a functional and usable M&E framework in view of the complexity of the programme. M&E activities such as training were implemented among Member States and programme performance was tracked. The gap noted is that monitoring, evaluation and reporting particularly, as relating to programme implementation and tracking of the effects of outputs on outcomes and impact, reporting and sharing at national and regional levels did not receive much attention in the programme. The development of the Atlas platform will go a long way to support timely reporting and sharing of VAA information. However, more will need to be done to build capacity for wider application and use of Atlas at national and subnational levels.

### **Evaluation Question 9: Is there evidence of increased legitimacy, credibility and influence of the RVAA Programme at national and regional levels?**

225. One of the main questions for the evaluation is: Is there evidence of increased legitimacy, credibility and influence of the RVAA programme at national and regional levels? These are the intermediate outcomes of the programme as articulated in the ToC.

#### **2.3.12 Evidence of increased legitimacy**

226. According to the ToC interventions leading to institutionalization are expected to lead to the legitimacy and, ultimately, the sustainability of VAAs. The two immediate outcomes towards legitimacy are:

- NVACs/VAA are incorporated into government administrative and financial structures
- Mandate, institutional arrangements and coordination for VAA are defined.

227. These outcomes are expected to be derived from three outputs:

- Increased dedicated human and financial resources for the RVAA programme
- Strengthened mobilization of resources at national and regional levels
- Approved VAA Strategies.

#### **2.3.13 Understanding institutionalization**

228. An understanding of institutionalization summarized under Figure 4 was given by The RVAA Programme Capacity Review, October 2017. It said: "NVACs commonly defined institutionalization as the embedding of the VAC within existing national systems of planning and programming. [This] is when an NVAC is well established and recognized within a country's government systems and operations. There are different degrees to which the VAC can become institutionalized. It can be formalized through legislation, a regulation or policy framework. For a VAC to be deemed institutionalized, it must have a virtual or physical office where it is housed with the mandate to address issues of livelihoods and vulnerability. The VAC structure should have capacity (human/technical, material and financial) and its own budget to fulfil its mandate. Strong leadership in terms of having someone to champion and advocate for VAA is deemed essential. Finally, institutionalization of NVACs is generally viewed as a gradual process".<sup>121</sup> This understanding resembles the one depicted by the Institutionalization Index, although presented differently.

229. The Institutionalization Index: The extent of institutionalization is a good measure of progress towards achievement of the intermediate outcome – legitimacy. The index was approved in March 2020 and 10 Member States had completed their baseline studies as of September 2021 (see Table 7) with the following as their average baseline scores:

- Botswana (47 percent)
- DRC (66 percent in 2020 and 46 percent in 2021)
- Eswatini (56 percent)

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<sup>121</sup> SADC. 2017. *RVAA Programme Capacity Status Review: A Background Paper on the Institutionalisation of NVACs. Final Report.*



- Lesotho (63 percent in 2020 and 55 percent in 2021)
- Madagascar (50 percent)
- Malawi (65 percent)
- South Africa (46 percent)
- Tanzania (62 percent)
- Zambia (66 percent)
- Zimbabwe (76 percent).

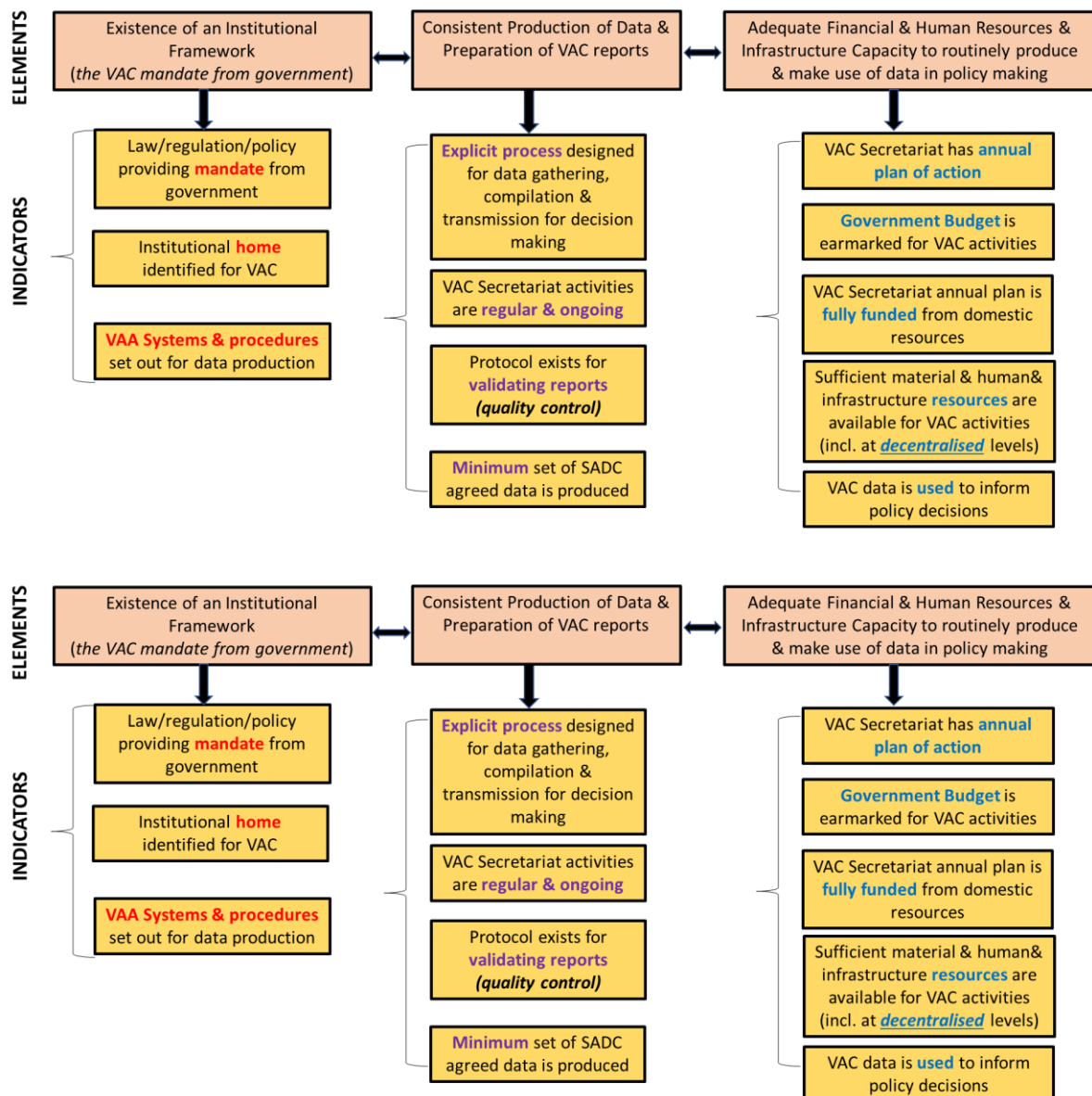
230. With regards to the funding of NVAAs, a review of the Institutionalization Index scores in 2021 as depicted in Table 7, showed that only Botswana (67 percent) and Zimbabwe (59 percent) scored fairly well on government funding with the rest of the Member States except Madagascar (50 percent), at 33 percent and below. Government financial contributions to VAA were generally low for most Member States and, in some instances, not available at all except in Botswana, South Africa and, to some extent, Eswatini, Lesotho and Zimbabwe. In some countries such as Angola, DRC, Madagascar and Mozambique, government financial contributions are below 15 percent or not available at all. Nevertheless, the majority of NVACs were increasingly mobilizing local funding from partners for VAAs although, in most cases, they were budget deficits. In such cases, the legitimacy of VAA is also a function of its credibility which in turn attracts local funding. This situation was better represented in countries such as Zimbabwe where partners who contributed funding for VAA also had, for example, additional privileges to access data for sub analysis on other indicators of interest to their programmes. The message to NGOs, donors, United Nations, and other stakeholders is therefore that information does not come cheap, and that they should take co-finance /support the VAAs. Another message of encouragement to Member States was from Botswana, the bulk of whose funding is from its government. According to the BVAC Chair, funding for VAAs should not be difficult for NVACs for as long as they can integrate VAAs into their government business-as-usual operations. NVACs needed to prioritize this kind of integration rather than turn them into projects. Meanwhile, with the advent of Covid-19, “most SADC governments shifted funding focus away from basic health and nutrition services to Covid-19 prevention, screening and the quarantine of infected individuals”.<sup>122</sup> In most Member States where local funding was reported, much of it was sourced from partners. This is a challenge to sustainability. Funding for VAA is also intricately linked to the value of VAA. In 2020, 11 Member States conducted vulnerability assessments without financial support from the programme by adapting processes (remote data-collection and use of secondary data etc.).

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<sup>122</sup> SADC. 2020. *Covid-19 Regional Food, Nutrition and Livelihood Analysis Report*.



Figure 6: Institutionalization analysis framework



Source: Adapted from Zida et al., 2017

231. Most Member States did well on VAA mandate with a low of 67 percent (Botswana and Madagascar) and a high of 100 percent (Lesotho, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe). Malawi, 71 percent, Tanzania, 71 percent and Zambia, 90 percent did well on strategy.

232. VAA decentralization, which also speaks to cost-effectiveness, was high with five Member States scoring 75 percent each, seven Member States scoring 67 percent and above, and three Member States scoring 33 percent and below. With increasing decentralization, VAA is will probably be affordable and thus increase credibility.

233. Drawing on the definition of Institutionalization, and the observation that, while most Member States fared well on VAA mandate and decentralization, government funding for VAA and functionality of NVACs were rated very low in most Member States. Using the programme’s technical definition of legitimacy and as scored on the Institutionalization Index, legitimacy is unquestionably considered to be generally high despite low government funding, with variations across Member States. It would appear that, from the perspective of Member States, legitimacy is to be determined more by the availability of a legally constituted, mandated and decentralized VAA system regardless of whether it is fully funded and effectively

functional or not. Taking this view, the VAA system can be considered legitimate in all 15 Member States where the NVACs have been established.

234. The following table<sup>123</sup> captures the institutionalization baseline scores as assessed by the respective NVACs.

**Table 7: Institutionalization baseline scoring<sup>124</sup>**

| 2020 Baseline      | Assessment Criteria  | Relevance Weighting | Ang. | Bot. | Com  | DRC  | Esw  | Les  | Mad  | Mal  | Mau  | Moz  | Nam  | Sey  | RSA  | Tan  | Zam  | Zim  | Ave. |
|--------------------|--|---------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
|                    |  |                     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Mandate            | The Committees have evolved differently in each of the Member States. This component seeks to establish Status of VAA Mandate as the starting point for institutionalisation of VAA.   | 1.00                |      | 0.67 |      | 0.83 | 0.83 | 1.00 | 0.67 | 1.00 |      |      |      |      | 0.83 | 0.50 | 1.00 | 1.00 |      |
|                    |  | %                   | 0%   | 67%  | 0%   | 83%  | 83%  | 100% | 67%  | 100% | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 83%  | 50%  | 100% | 100% | 83%  |
| Strategy           | Externalities and the uncertainty often prevent implementation of strategies and plans and, the probability of strategy and plans achieving their intended outcomes.   | 1.50                |      | 0.00 |      | 0.43 | 0.75 | 0.00 | 0.43 | 1.07 |      |      |      |      | 0.75 | 0.60 | 1.35 | 0.43 |      |
|                    |  | %                   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 29%  | 50%  | 0%   | 29%  | 71%  | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 50%  | 40%  | 90%  | 29%  | 39%  |
| Funding            | The predictability of the outputs of the VAA programme finding alternative sources of funding  | 1.50                |      | 1.00 |      | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.75 | 0.50 |      |      |      |      | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.38 | 0.88 |      |
|                    |  | %                   | 0%   | 67%  | 0%   | 33%  | 33%  | 33%  | 50%  | 33%  | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 33%  | 33%  | 25%  | 59%  | 40%  |
| Technical Capacity | The capacity to conduct credible VAAs, critically assess the information collected, analyse the information and its implications, and apply information for strategy and policy considerations.  | 2.00                |      | 0.77 |      | 0.69 | 1.47 | 1.15 | 0.92 | 1.38 |      |      |      |      | 0.20 | 1.38 | 1.80 | 1.54 |      |
|                    |  | %                   | 0%   | 39%  | 0%   | 35%  | 74%  | 58%  | 46%  | 69%  | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 10%  | 69%  | 90%  | 77%  | 57%  |
| Participation      | VAA is a multi-sectoral process best delivered with multi-stakeholder functional inclusion. The integration of HIV/AIDS, gender, nutrition, urban vulnerability assessment, climate change and markets among other emerging issues demands that VAA be a multi-stakeholder driven process. | 1.50                |      | 0.38 |      | 1.13 | 0.94 | 0.94 | 1.31 | 0.56 |      |      |      |      | 0.75 | 0.90 | 0.60 | 1.50 |      |
|                    |  | %                   | 0%   | 25%  | 0%   | 75%  | 63%  | 63%  | 87%  | 37%  | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 50%  | 60%  | 40%  | 100% | 60%  |
| De-Centralisation  | Decentralising the VACs and VAA system by generating information, conducting analyses, strategy and response planning at the most effective levels is a good indicator of institutionalisation.  | 1.50                |      | 1.13 |      | 0.38 | 0.50 | 1.13 | 0.38 | 1.13 |      |      |      |      | 1.00 | 1.50 | 1.00 | 1.23 |      |
|                    |  | %                   | 0%   | 75%  | 0%   | 25%  | 33%  | 75%  | 25%  | 75%  | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 67%  | 100% | 67%  | 82%  | 63%  |
| Use & Relevance    | The information and data analysis generated through the VAA should be used and relevant to those who demand it. This component seeks to understand who is using what and for what purpose.   | 1.00                |      | 0.78 |      | 0.67 | 0.56 | 0.78 | 0.56 | 0.83 |      |      |      |      | 0.58 | 0.83 | 0.50 | 1.00 |      |
|                    |  | %                   | 0%   | 78%  | 0%   | 67%  | 56%  | 78%  | 56%  | 83%  | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 58%  | 83%  | 50%  | 100% | 71%  |
| Total Score        |  | 10.00               | 0.00 | 4.73 | 0.00 | 4.63 | 5.55 | 5.50 | 5.02 | 6.47 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 4.61 | 6.21 | 6.63 | 7.58 |      |
|                    |  | %                   | 0%   | 47%  | 0%   | 46%  | 56%  | 55%  | 50%  | 65%  | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 0%   | 46%  | 62%  | 66%  | 76%  | 57%  |

**Source:** Landell Mills September 2021

### 2.3.14 Credibility

235. According to the programme ToC, credibility is measured by the extent to which NVAC VAA approaches, methods and strategic partnerships are strengthened, harmonized and integrated; relevant technical capacity is supported for the NVAC and SADC Secretariat; there is good participation by the stakeholders plus cost-effective VAAs; and predictable, timely and high-quality targeted VAA information products. Much effort has been placed on capacity-building during Phase 3.

236. Enhanced technical capacity for VAAs: Technical capacity for NVACs improved significantly in Member States during the 2017–2022 phase, particularly in the use of data-collection methods, analysis and information-sharing. The technical capacity-building entailed:

- Strengthening NVAC VAA approaches, with methods strengthened, harmonized and integrated (Output 1)
- Technical capacity support for NVAC and SADC secretariat (Output 2)
- Strengthened NVAC capacity for policy analysis and advocacy (Output 3)
- Making RVAA information products visible, accessible and influencing policies, strategies and programmes (Output 4)
- Strengthening regional coordination and leadership strengthening (Output 5)

<sup>123</sup> Landell Mills. 2021. *SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment Institutionalisation Technical Support, RIST Monthly Progress Report*, September.

<sup>124</sup> 0 percent is default for information not available

- Ensuring approved budgets for RVAA phase-out plans by MS and SADC Secretariat (Output 6).

237. There were, however, concerns that there was no follow-up monitoring and support to ensure that the many good trainings were being implemented effectively by Member States. The programme also managed to support NVACs to adapt their data-collection tools and methods to overcome the challenges posed by Covid-19 such as travel restrictions and local lockdowns.

238. Improved quality of VAA information produced: The quality of VAA information collected and disseminated has improved significantly in quality and usability. Different stakeholders including NGOs were satisfied with VAA system. Stakeholder participation has improved significantly.

239. The main challenge to the credibility of VAA is the inadequate human and technical capacities within the NVACs. This challenge was reported across the majority of NVACs, and more so in countries where the Institutionalization Index scores for technical capacity were low (as at 2021) such as South Africa lowest at 10 percent, Botswana, 38 percent and DRC, 35 percent. According to the VAA Opportunity Study Report 2020, in some countries such as Malawi, MVAC credibility issues were noted with the government ministries described as “somewhat absent” and sometimes questioning VAA data. Donors in Malawi were also described as having a “somewhat distant relationship although they use the results”, but it was unclear why they do not fund it. United Nations agencies were described as “mixed -mostly WFP engaged”. In Zambia, concerns were that of “a mismatch between VAC and donor expectations”. In the case of Zimbabwe, donors, NGOs, Government ministries and United Nations agencies were described as actively involved and considered NVAA data as credible. It is important to note that NVAAs attract political attention due to the sensitivity of the data that they collect, and an “evidence-based policy influence is viewed as a risky terrain as the evidence may not support government policy”.<sup>125</sup> The report further states that, “in some countries like Malawi, food insecurity and food aid have been politically sensitive issues under previous administrations that rendered it almost impossible to embark on significant policy influence”. There is therefore a risk that the credibility of VAA can be put to test by the politics of the day.

240. Overall, the VAA system and information products were being used by Member States and respected by decision-makers, and thus considered credible even in countries such as Botswana, DRC and South Africa where technical capacity was rated low on the Institutionalization Index. During the Institutionalization Baseline Index scoring (self-assessment) on prospects for mobilizing resources for VAAs in 2020, VACs in South Africa (33 percent) and Zambia (25 percent) had low confidence in or perception of their governments’ preparedness to fund VAA assessments. Reporting on their 2021 VAA assessments and sources of funding, Zambia indicated that 95 percent of funding had been provided by its government and 4 percent by IPC-FAO with 1 percent from other sources, while South Africa reported 100 percent government funding for the VAA. This suggests that, at the time of conducting the assessments in 2021, the VAA systems in these countries were considered credible by their governments beyond what the two NVACs would have expected in 2020. A second round of Institutionalization Index assessments would be useful to indicate any changes from the current self-assessments and scoring in these countries following the ‘surprise’ funding support by their governments.

### 2.3.15 Influence

241. The outcomes and outputs towards influence include:

- Integration of VAA into planning and M&E systems
- Increased political will in support of VAA
- Data, information and knowledge management system developed
- NVAC capacity for policy analysis and advocacy
- RVAA information products visible, accessible and influential to policies, strategies and programmes
- NVACs can lobby for inclusion of key Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) indicators in sectoral and/or national development policies and programmes.

<sup>125</sup> SADC. 2020. *VAA Opportunity Mapping Study Report*.

242. Eleven Member States adhered to the updated and agreed SADC Harmonized Framework Common VAA Reporting Indicators.

243. VAA use and relevance, according to the 2021 Institutionalization Index, is generally high with all 10 Member States scoring 50 percent and above and six Member States scoring 67 percent and above.

244. There is consensus across all categories of key informants that information and knowledge management had improved significantly since 2017, especially in terms of quality, completeness, timeliness and wider sharing of synthesis reports. Thus, the VAA system has been influential in all Member States where it is used. As discussed earlier, the influence of the VAA information was also related, dependent and linked to the legitimacy and credibility of the VAA system.

245. The Atlas web platform designed to store, access, share and visualize RVAA data and other related information products from the 16 SADC Member States (Atlas) provides easy access to good quality VAA data to inform evidence-based policymaking and programming. Going forward, this platform will be critical in providing RVAA information access and use among Member States.

246. The established system of how the RVAA works as described in section 2.1.1 and organogram and structure summarized in Figure 2, indicates the role played by the steering committee, council of ministers and summit including the annotated agenda produced in ensuring that issues emerging from the programme are channelled, shared and adopted at the relevant platforms by key stakeholders. This strengthens the influence of the programme as decisions adopted from the apex RVAA structures are encouraged to be implemented. The various RVAA programme studies such as the 'episode' and 'opportunity-mapping' studies provide crucial evidence for enhancing influence. These studies are used to inform and strengthen the programme's work on policy workstream, communication and advocacy, online Atlas, CPRA strategies and the e-learning module and tool kit. All these spaces provide platforms for the programme's optimal influence.

### **2.3.16 Programme uptake and inherent potential of the Institutionalization Index**

247. The Institutionalization Index builds on lessons and experiences of the previous phases of RVAA and is informed by an institutionalization assessment at the inception of the current phase of technical support. Its purpose is improving the programme to achieve the final RVAA programme outcome of "Institutionalized and sustainable VAA systems that enhance emergency and developmental interventions at national and regional levels". The index is systemically defined by seven interrelated and interdependent indices as articulated in the Institutionalization Index Manual. The interconnectivity and interdependence of the results (outputs, outcomes and impact) of the RVAA have been depicted in Figure 3 and Figure 6, better summarized by the RVAA programme's revised Theory of Change which defines three workstreams of institutionalization, technical capacity and advocacy and communication to achieve the results.

248. In its inherent design, the Institutionalization Index exhibits multiple functions as:

- A capacity-building tool in as far as it qualitatively assesses knowledge, skills and competencies on how to institutionalize for a sustainable VAA system
- Advocacy tool in as far as it can create a sense of urgency for commitment to action and resourcing for VAA
- Monitoring and evaluation and introspection tool as an instrument for self-reflection and learning, and regional peer review, and accountability among NVACs on how far they are with institutionalization
- Harmonization framework and guideline in its use as a benchmark and standard for comparative use by SADC Member States towards regional integration
- An intellectual /epistemological device in as far as it brings different disciplines together in the form of seven indices to define institutionalization for sustainable VAA system.

249. The evaluation team notes that the Institutionalization Index has not been sufficiently applied to demonstrate its inherent potential for different uses, primarily because of the following factors:

- The index was launched with three fifths of the programme phase cycle already lapsed at the end of 2019 giving it barely two years for implementation and full application. Its late introduction as a remedial measure following the mid-term review somewhat, from the perspective of the

evaluation team, depicts it as patched – not integrated holistically with the broader programme strategy

- It was not part of the originally budgeted priorities of the programme, and is supported by an extrabudgetary financing that has not been adequate to cover all member states
- Linked to the budget are the contractual limitations of the technical service provider that has resulted in about a third of the member states being earmarked for “on-deck” (planned and budgeted for in-country direct/physical support) and virtual on-request support for the rest of the member states
- Disruptions of its implementation due to Covid-19 has created challenges of effective implementation
- Inadequate capacity within Member States to implement the programme.

250. The Institutionalization Index presents an opportunity for wider, long-term application to guide the RVAA towards institutionalization for a sustainable VAA system. This will require that it becomes institutionalized by transitioning it from the current project (technical partner owned identity) to a SADC identity /ownership. This will require that it is further subjected, drawing on lessons learned and experiences on its application so far, to SADC policy/ harmonization instrument development, approval, domestication and monitoring process as a SADC Framework for Sustainable Institutionalization of the VAA System, with Landell Mills and WFP acknowledged as technical support partners and FCDO and SDC as funding partners. In addition, capacity-building of Member States and partners towards its effective understanding and multiple application should be enhanced.

**Evaluation Question 10: To what extent has the programme been responsive to changing operational context including disruption and unexpected shocks? (Conflicts, Covid-19 pandemic etc.)**

251. The evaluation sought to establish: To what extent has the programme been responsive to changing operational context including disruption and unexpected shocks? (Conflicts, Covid-19 pandemic etc.)

252. In July 2020, the RVAA system relied on projections and use of information already available to fill information gaps emanating from disruptions caused by Covid-19 and, on that basis, could advise on food and nutrition insecurity situation for the rest of the 2020/2021 season.

253. The effect of Covid-19 on programme effectiveness and responsive adaptive actions has been discussed in detail under the relevance section. Coping with Covid-19 lockdowns was a major challenge for the programme, but it addressed them by innovating. For instance, the BVAC official stated that “We encouraged districts to generate two reports virtually without having to go there, but [due to quality concerns] we realized we need to capacitate our districts to do things remotely. We will need to set up internet connectivity in remote areas.” The ZIMVAC official also explained that they were able to conduct NVAA activities physically after it “innovated on the field safety guide and fieldwork protocols – which were unique to Zimbabwe. They were developed in collaboration with Ministry of Health demonstrating inter-sector support”. At regional level, the programme developed knowledge products through studies on the effect of Covid-19, which informed changes to the programme’s implementation.

254. Thus, despite the immense challenges posed by Covid-19, most Member States innovated with the encouragement and support of the RVAA programme and continued to conduct VAAs and report at regional level. This adaptation was a remarkable achievement for the programme, demonstrating high levels of commitment to VAAs by most Member States.

**Evaluation Question 11: To what extent did the programme integrate gender in assessments?**

255. As a baseline on Integration of Nutrition, HIV and Gender, the 2016 RVAA Synthesis Report highlights that four countries (Lesotho, Namibia, Seychelles and Tanzania) had integrated nutrition, HIV and gender as activities in their RVAA workplan for 2015-2016. A further four countries (Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland and Zimbabwe) have practiced nutrition anthropometric, HIV and gender data-collection as part of their 2016 VAA, using IPC Acute Analysis. The RVAA Programme had published, in October 2015, a guidance document on Integration of Nutrition, HIV and Gender in VAA, providing countries with a range of options. However, the report noted that inadequate capacity and investment by most Member States during 2017 to 2021 resulted in low progress in integrating gender issues in VAAs. The TWG therefore pointed out that it is



crucial to support countries to develop an individual ‘road map’ on how to integrate nutrition, HIV and gender into their VAA modality.

256. The 2017 Synthesis Report also highlights gender, indicating that households headed by women tend to be more vulnerable to food insecurity, as was reported in some countries, such as Angola. Additionally, physical and sexual violence occurs in affected communities. For example, in Zimbabwe both males and females reported having experienced more physical violence than sexual violence. About 3.3 percent of the men and 4.2 percent of the women experienced physical violence. Of concern were incidences of sexual violence in both males and females that were mostly perpetrated by other relatives (19.6 percent and 24.4 percent respectively).

257. Progress since 2017: The 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 RVAA Synthesis Reports devoted more attention to gender in a general situation analysis and recommendations, in particular highlighting the plight of women including in the context of Covid-19. The reports indicate that food and nutrition insecurity in southern Africa are directly correlated to gender inequality. Women in the SADC region contribute more than 60 percent to total food production, provide the largest labour-force in the agricultural sector and, in some Member States, perform more than 70 percent of agriculture work. However, the majority of women working in agriculture receive a disproportionately low share of income. It is estimated that the rural wage gap between men and women in some Member States is up to 60 percent and in some cases, women go unremunerated for their agricultural work on family farms. The United Nations Women report shows that some countries, particularly those highly affected by Covid-19, have registered an increase of up to a 30 percent in reported domestic violence cases and around a 33 percent increase in emergency calls for gender-based violence with women and girls reported as the victims.

258. The RVAA Programme and Member States have acknowledged that gender-based violence has been accelerated by the onset of Covid-19 and that gender perspectives should be incorporated into all aspects of Covid-19 responses. Member States recognize the correlation between food and nutrition insecurity and gender. According to the 2019 Sustainable Development Goals Gender Index, “Sub-Saharan Africa has an average regional index score of 51.1 - the lowest scoring region globally in terms of gender equality”.

259. **Gender reports make key policy and programme recommendations for improvement:** The gender presentation in the 2020 and 2021 synthesis reports made a number of recommendations related to gender, children’s and women’s nutrition, and HIV/AIDS and in the context of Covid-19. The programme provides practical follow-up support to Member States to ensure implementation of these recommendations. A standard minimum dataset has been developed to guide and encourage Member States integration and reporting on the guidelines for gender integration as part of the “unfinished” business of Phase 2 at the beginning of Phase 3. The RVAA has a standardizing minimum dataset, which is achieved through pre-assessment workshops where methodology and indicators are discussed. There is a ranking system used to encourage and recognize the countries that have made progress in adhering to the minimum dataset which includes: nutrition, HIV and gender. Thus, there is evident effort to strengthen the gender component of the RVAA programme.

### 2.3.17 Summary on Effectiveness

260. The overall effectiveness of Phase 3 of the RVAA programme can be summarized through an indication excellent, good, fair and weak as presented below.

#### Excellent progress:

261. The programme excelled in promoting multistakeholder partnerships and the use of VAA, which had the ripple effect of attracting local partner funding and in-kind support for VAA processes, while gradually encouraging governments’ fiscal contributions. However, more is still required to transform multistakeholder interest into multisectoral integration of VAA at national and regional levels. This means sectors taking ownership and responsibility for VAA in accordance with their sectoral mandates and comparative advantages.

262. The programme also performed well in enabling NVACs for VAA to cope with Covid-19, motivating innovation on VAA processes in Member States in both use of technology and virtual approaches, while for some, maintaining physical approaches guided by “do no harm” principle.

#### Good progress:

263. Good effort was put in improving VAA tools and methodologies, including extending to urban vulnerability and encouraging integration of emerging issues and decentralization of VAA.

264. The programme also performed well towards packaging, communication, accessibility of VAA information and knowledge products especially through the Atlas. This has led to increased use of VAA information and products to inform policies, programmes and emergency resources appeal at regional and national levels.

265. The programme also did well to innovate, and to motivate reflection by Member States /NVACs on institutionalization through the development and initial application of the Institutionalization Index. However, there has been inadequate follow-up support across Member States to ensure capabilities are embedded and the use of the index as a self-monitoring and peer review tool at national level and regional levels. There has also been inadequate embracing of the index, or building on its systemic strengths, as an overall RVAA programme monitoring tool and capacity-building benchmarking approach towards “institutionalized and sustainable VAA”.

#### **Fair progress:**

266. Progress towards integrating gender, children and disability could be considered as fair. Regional facilitation and practical support to Member States has been described as weak, with NVAC Chairs wishing for more follow-up support, skilling and mentorship.

267. There has been a fair effort to encourage and train Member States to prioritize local monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER); but regionally this has remained weak – inwardly focused on programme delivery processes (activity-oriented) than outward looking into Member States progress and achievement of outcomes. There has been less participation and leadership of Member States experts in regional MER than during Phase 2, especially on annual outcome reviews.

268. Fair conceptual effort has been provided towards exit planning, but there has been delayed finalization of sustainability and phase-out planning – which has increased the risk of “over the wall handover” of programme benefits and ongoing processes.

## **2.4. EFFICIENCY - IS THE INTERVENTION DELIVERING OR LIKELY TO DELIVER RESULTS IN AN ECONOMIC AND TIMELY WAY?**

269. To assess the RVAA programme, two questions were asked:

- What internal and external factors enabled or constrained the achievement of programme results?
- What are the key achievements and challenges of the technical assistance offered by WFP and Landell Mills?

### **Evaluation Question 12: What are the key achievements and challenges of the technical assistance offered by WFP and Landell Mills?**

270. When asked to describe the achievements and challenges of the technical assistance offered by WFP and Landell Mills, respondents had mixed perceptions of appreciation while asking for more. It is clear that the services provided by WFP and LM, as articulated in their terms of reference and in progress reports and narratives from NVACs, are relevant and have contributed significantly to improving the credibility and influence of VAAs.

#### **2.4.1 Mandate of the service providers (WFP and LM)**

271. According to the Proposal for Technical Assistance the RVAA Programme submitted in August 2017, WFP also known as the Regional Technical Support Team was commissioned to provide technical assistance to VAA in SADC and Member States to achieve the following outcomes:

- Regional VAC structures strengthened and incorporated into SADC and Member State administrative and financial structures
- VAA approaches and methods strengthened, harmonized and integrated
- RVAA information products visible, accessible and influential to regional and national policies, strategies and programmes



- Enhanced regional and national learning, innovation and resilience-building.

272. WFP could issue grants to NVACs as a contribution towards conducting national VAAs. The support was to be provided for five years from August 2017 to July 2022 with a budget of US\$ 11.6 million.

273. Landell Mills, also known as the Regional Institutionalization Support Team (RIST), was commissioned in June 2018 with a budget of US\$ 1,305 million over three years to implement the institutional component of the RVAA Programme as predetermined by SDC during the design process per the appended ToR. The support from RIST was technical and did not include budget supplementation, to be delivered in two phases of:

- Institutional Assessments: Support all 14 Member States and the SADC Secretariat to assess their current institutional status in terms of operational support for the VAA process. By so doing, determine the uncertainties and opportunities that they are confronted with in continuing the VAA process post July 2021
- Institutional support processes: Provide intensive, hands-on support to five pilot Member States [Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe] to assist them with institutionalizing VAA within their national governments and ensure sustainability beyond the end of the RVAA programme.

#### 2.4.2 Achievements

- Technical support highly catalytic and inspirational on Member States to focus on vulnerability:

274. All categories of respondents were unanimous that “Yes, we received quite some support in terms of technical capacity through consultants coming on board [and that] data-collection tools have been improving over the years...particularly to cater for those emerging issues” (SAVAC and LVAC Key Informants). Two NVAC Chairs stated that they were inspired to stretch their limits and adopt new ways of doing things that they would not have done without the RVAA’s technical support (SAVAC and LVAC). Specifically, some NVACs have adopted the Washington group of questions on disability that are now included in their tool. Since 2017, the RVAA programme has built systems and the capacity of Member States on:

- Information management and communication
- How assessments are carried out
- The atlas as a way of information and knowledge management.

275. According to the SADC Secretariat, “the credibility of the system has helped to push the VAA system to scale”.

#### 2.4.3 Resource mobilization

276. WFP was singled out to have supported Member States efforts to mobilize resources to augment VAA resources in Member States such as Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe. In Botswana there was a sense of great appreciation that the RVAA programme had brought back WFP attention to the country. According to BVAC Chair, “...we had an MoU with WFP in the 1990s...but then they left...now they are back, and we appreciate that. We need their technical support...we are worried about the increasing malnutrition in the country”.

#### 2.4.4 VAA methodologies and tools

277. The improvements on methodologies for VAA promoted by WFP were said to have significantly improved data quality especially “with improved tools”. The creation of a platform whereby NVACs in SADC could exchange ideas (good/best practices) through exchange visits was appreciated across Member States, with calls that this should be done more often.

278. Representing civil society/ international NGOs in national VAA systems: NGO key informants underscored the role that WFP played, for example, in Zimbabwe, to “represent our interests in VAAs”. There is also an acknowledgement that “WFP is an interested party because they use NVAA information for resource mobilization”.

#### 2.4.5 Decentralized data-collection method

279. The emphasis and support towards decentralized data-collection was said to have reduced the cost of VAAs. This also enhanced the participation of local stakeholders at national level and helped staff at local levels.

#### 2.4.6 Good governance for RVAA effectiveness

280. There was a general perception that the governance structure for the RVAA and, in particular, the roles and relationship between MANCO, RVAC, and RVAC Secretariat and the links with SADC Secretariat and NVACs was highly supportive of effective VAA implementation in terms of ensuring objective reporting of progress and negotiating the rescheduling of activities (see Section 2.1.1 and Figure 2 for RVAA governance structure).

#### 2.4.7 Adaptation during Covid-19

281. Member States highlighted the role played by service providers to enhance capacity that enabled adaptation for NVACs to continue conducting activities even with the limitations and restrictions of Covid-19.

282. The Institutionalization Index was developed to provide guidance to Member States towards institutionalizing the VAA system. Technical assistance was offered to:

- Develop the Institutionalization Index
- Conduct index baseline studies
- Apply the Institutionalization Index
- Develop VAA strategy, develop programme phase-out plans.

283. The response from Member States was varied as depicted in Table 2 on the Status of Institutionalization Support under the subsection effectiveness. Twelve (12) Member States had been supported to establish Institutionalization Index baselines and apply the index for the first time; only DRC and Lesotho had reapplied the index as required/planned; two Member States (Eswatini and South Africa) had developed VAA strategies; and none of the Member States had developed phase-out plans at the time of conducting the evaluation. With the exception of Tanzania, only countries originally earmarked as “on-deck”<sup>126</sup> or physical /in-country support (Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe) appeared to have fared well in the institutionalization functionality than those that were not targeted for on-deck support. More countries should have been targeted for this kind of support.

#### Evaluation Question 13: What internal and external factors enabled or constrained the achievement of programme results?

284. **Factors that affected or slowed down the achievement of programme results:** The issues that affected or slowed down the achievement of programme results include:

- Limited staff, staff turnover and funding for VAAs in some Member States, which limited the activities that were conducted
- Delays in starting implementation by one service provider (LM) resulting in shorter implementation time compared to WFP resulting in lost implementation time
- Covid-19 restrictions that caused activity implementation moderations and delays
- Limited financial resources to follow through some of the technical support in the majority of Member States by one service provider (LM)
- Perception of RVAA as SADC Secretariat and funders’ programme resulting in Member States’ slow buy-in
- Less prioritization of VAA amid competing national priorities at the beginning.

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<sup>126</sup> “On-deck” means these were the countries that were originally identified /planned /budgeted for in-country support while the rest were to be supported remotely on demand. But, in 2019, the Steering Committee requested that all countries be supported in the same manner.

285. Other issues that affected or slowed down the achievement of programme results included differing design and execution methods between the service providers (LM and WFP) such as:

- Implicit mandate overlaps with regards to institutionalization, which required seamless implementation approach
- Lack of clarity by Member States on the scope and delineation of responsibilities between WFP and LM on institutionalization
- LM inheriting an already designed programme portfolio to implement halfway through Phase 3, necessitating extra effort to fit it seamlessly into the overall programme design
- Lack of clarity, from a programme design perspective, about at what point institutionalization was expected to turn into a final outcome.

286. It should also be noted that institutionalization as a process (means to an end) overlaps to influence the three outcomes of legitimacy, credibility and influence, which otherwise have different work streams, implemented by different service providers, engaged to commence within at least two years apart, which is a design challenge to achieving “programme integration management”. The changes in the Theory of Change and logframe, also took focus, momentum and time away from programme implementation.

287. The institutional and organizational processes of the key regional and international organizations SADC and WFP are often lengthy and may not always match the urgency of implementing (providing inputs and coordinating) specific results targeted, time and resource limited projects such as the RVAA. For example, there were concerns about delays in the disbursement of funds to NVACs; certain programme decisions and activities would wait for approval during scheduled SADC Statutory meetings; and SADC Secretariat programme approvals, staffing and budgeting decisions would often take prolonged consultations at a higher level (Council). However, the processes involved in implementing the project were streamlined as Member States learned about WFP rules and regulations that meet international standards.

288. **Factors that enabled achievement of results:** The factors that enabled achievement of programme results include:

- A demand-driven approach that allowed Member States to select their preferred activities, which ensured relevant interventions and their motivation to participate
- Programme learning that enabled ongoing programme adaptation to changing situations
- Programme team agility and quick decision-making to ensure the programme remained on course to achieve its deliverables – this was particularly evident during Covid-19
- Innovative activities that resulted in unique outputs such as Atlas, that integrates data on a web platform from all RVAA phases
- Effective consultation and coordination resulting in Member States’ buy-in and meaningful involvement in the programme
- Utilization trainers from Member States who have the local knowledge to encourage effective training and skills-building
- Prudent management, strict oversight and control of financial resources resulting in savings that were reinvested in other key programme areas.

#### 2.4.8 Efficiency enabling factors

289. **Resource utilization efficacy.** The evaluation sought to establish: “How well are the resources being used”? The resources for VAA can be classified as inputs (funding; skilled human resources; materials, supplies and equipment; time; knowledge of the specifications or quality standards). Resources can also refer to outputs of the programme in terms of data and information from the VAA and extent to which it is used.

290. The main cost unit for VAAs was the conducting of assessments and analysis of data. The size of budgets varied by country. Within country the size of budget was a function of the depth of information collected, geographic coverage and sample sizes, methods of data-collection and analysis process. From a

regional perspective, the total cost of conducting NVAAs (2020/2021) in 14 Member States was estimated at US\$ 11,722,649, ranging from smallest to highest as follows:

- US\$ 117,000 (Namibia)
- US\$ 120,000 (Lesotho)
- US\$ 122,000 (Mauritius)
- US\$ 131,844 (Eswatini)
- US\$ 140,000 (Madagascar)
- US\$ 250,285 (Zambia)
- US\$ 360,000 (Tanzania)
- US\$ 400,000 / 445,000 (Zimbabwe)
- US\$ 433,886 (Angola)
- US\$ 562,000 (Malawi)
- US\$ 600,000 (Botswana)
- US\$ 865,000 (DRC)
- US\$ 1,663,801 (Mozambique)
- US\$ 5,956,243 (South Africa).<sup>127</sup>

291. **While lower cost does not equal efficiency**, efficiency can be argued to exist where budgets would have decreased while collecting the same breadth and quality of information, and Member States have increasingly begun to explore cheaper ways of conducting assessments. For example, in Zimbabwe the cost of the assessment declined sharply from US\$ 911,000 (2018/2019) and US\$ 1,111,000 (2019/2020) to US\$ 445,000 (2020/2021). In the case of Zambia, the cost of VAA has been increasing (depending on number of districts covered) from US\$ 334,500 (2018/2019), US\$ 369,500 (2019/2020) and US\$ 556,785 (2020/2021); in Malawi, the costs were US\$ 860,731 (2018/2019), US\$ 625,500 (2019/2020), and US\$ 707,000 (2020/2021). The RVAA programme had been encouraging cost reduction in VAAs.

292. **Digitalization of VAA brought efficiency:** Respondents indicated that “the introduction and use of digital technology for data-collection had ushered in a new era and brought efficiency”. The same data could be collected within a shorter space of time and with less cost. However, in some cases, initial concerns were raised relating to quality, with Member States highlighting that they had addressed, or could address, this by training, and the equitable distribution of technology gadgets to remote areas as was reported in Botswana and Zimbabwe.

293. **Improved governance for RVAA efficacy:** There was a general perception among NVAC Chairs who responded that the relationships between the different governance structures for the RVAA and, in particular MANCO, RVAC, RVAC Secretariat and the links with SADC Secretariat and NVACs, and their oversight functions were highly supportive of efficient and effective VAA implementation in terms of accountability of the allocation of regional funds to Member States, the timelines of decision-making and the responsiveness of support to Member States.

294. **Seed funding to Member States attracting more money for VAA activities:** While it was acknowledged as “not enough, the RVAA funding support for VAA activities alongside the technical capacitation was said to have triggered other streams of financial support that increased the pot of funding for the NVACs to conduct NVAAs.

295. **Networking and learning across Member States:** NVACs described the benefits of and “positive ‘ripple/knock-on effects’ of inter-country learning” as far-reaching. There was a sense that the regional RVAA platform accelerated faster learning and adaptation of better and new ways of doing things as well as exerting influence among Member States for continuous improvement. Some NVACs such as the BVAC

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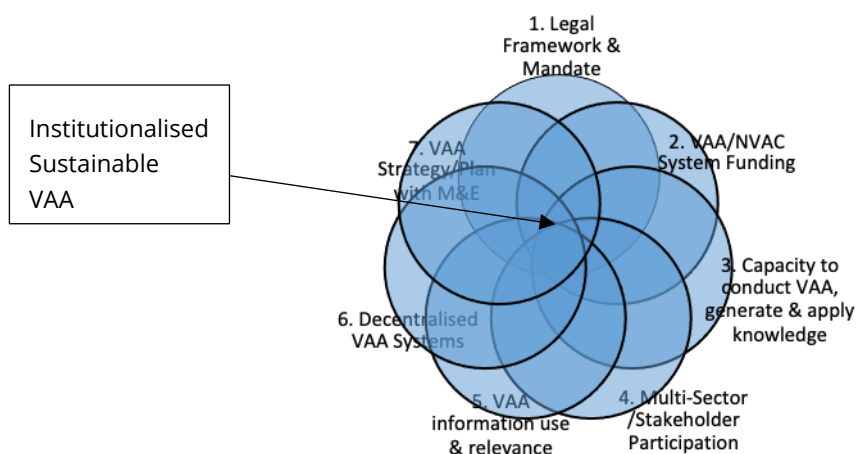
<sup>127</sup> SADC. 2020. *Summary of NVACs’ 2020/21 Vulnerability Assessment Plans and Progress as at 5 June.*

Chair underscored the need to sustain inter-country learning, including through staff exchange visits, as this provided better and more practical learning of good practices between Member States. Member States were leveraging networking opportunities offered by the RVAA system. When common issues are dealt with at regional level, they have ability to influence national thinking. "You begin to appreciate that we face common problems as a region and address them collectively".

296. **Decentralization of data-collection and analysis enhanced programme efficiency:** Some NVACs were now able to accelerate capacity-building by cascading training activities to strengthen provincial and district level VAA processes as a result of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through the services of WFP and LM. Thus, regional training and learning for a few focal people was being efficiently applied to reach more people at much less cost, while supporting decentralization towards the realization of the final outcome of the programme – "an institutionalized and sustained VAA system".

297. **Nexus of Institutionalization Indices as a Programme Efficiency Promoting Tool.** While both the responses from the field and documented progress point towards under-utilization of the Institutionalization Index thus far – and perhaps now too late to maximize the benefits of its effective application, the index represents an efficiency-promoting tool for VAA. The relationship between the seven variables, and their cross-cutting nature (serving the three intermediate outcomes) as depicted in Figure 3 makes the index a systemic tool, able to contribute towards the attainment of the three work streams and intermediate results of the RVAA (Institutionalization /Legitimacy; Technical Support /Credibility; Influence (Communication and Policy Advocacy) in a holistic manner. The strengths of a VAA system depend on the number of subsystems (indices) that overlap, with the central point of convergence of all the indices representing the point of utmost institutionalization and sustainability for a VAA system. And as shown earlier, the three intermediate results areas by themselves are systemically interrelated, and the full institutionalization can be the glue that sustainably binds them. According to the evaluation team, these relationships depict the index as a central tool to the RVAA final outcome "Institutionalized and sustainable VAA systems that enhance emergency and developmental responses at national and regional levels" (see figure 7 below for the interrelationships of the II elements). More attention and funding should be given towards its full understanding and application by Member States, both as a self-monitoring tool as well as a means (through its component indices) towards the desired outcome.

**Figure 7: Systems' interconnectivity or linkages of VAA institutionalization outcomes**



#### 2.4.9 Stakeholder participation as a resource mobilization tool

298. While multi-stakeholder participation in NVAC and VAA system is not only an enabling attribute towards institutionalization and sustainability of VAA system, but also directly a magnet for mobilizing resources for NVAC activities. As the Zimbabwe NVAC Secretariat said, "...our sister Member States should realize that mobilizing local funding for VAA is not difficult, it comes naturally with stakeholders".

participation". In the words of the BVAC Chair, "Most NVACs would be shocked that they really do not need external financing – VAA is part and parcel of their day-to-day work. SADC Secretariat should advocate to convince Member States on this one".

299. With the increased credibility of VAA information and products comes stakeholders' dependence on it, increasing their interest to ensure that it is sustained and, consequently, its funding. With more stakeholder participation comes more opportunities for funding – and VAA becomes a self-sustaining business model. To some extent, NVACs also use this as a business model by ensuring that those partners who fund VAA also have privileged access to more information, including data for secondary analysis, that is not available to all. Thus, stakeholder participation has become an efficient attractor of resources for VAA. In turn, according to the ZIMVAC Secretariat, "the ability for mobilization of local resources and government funding is a great enabling factor for the Secretariat [and] we haven't been struggling on this one".

#### **2.4.10 Wide coverage of VAA as an attribute of efficiency**

300. An important attribute of an efficient VAA system is its ability to cover the most vulnerable population groups including in remote hard to reach areas. With more stakeholder participation, comes more resources and easier reach and greater geographic coverage. The NVACs in Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe have been able to cover remote areas. All population groups are covered, and a wide array of issues included. As evidence to this, one NVAC Chair indicated that "The methodology page of our RVACs says it all. In terms of spatial distribution there is no bias. Look at the map of areas covered by data collection – we cover all. The spectrum of indicators covers – vulnerability, shocks, disability, HIV/AIDS, gender, focus on resilience – across the thematic areas – it is quite broad; we place emphasis on early recovery, civil protection, strengthening livelihoods". On the flip side of this strength, has been the criticism that for some NVACs, the current VAA system and specifically the annual rural assessment is viewed as cumbersome and costly, leading to the collection of a lot of information that is underutilized. This is perceived as compromising the value proposition.

#### **2.4.11 Methodological pluralism in VAA**

301. RVAC recommends the use of combined methods in conducting VAA. As in rural VAA, several frameworks for analysing and understanding urban vulnerability have been proposed in the Urban Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (UVAA) guideline. These include the Household Economy Approach (HEA), Individual Household Method, Emergency Food Security Assessments (EFSA), and secondary data analysis. According to the RVAA Synthesis Report (2017) no particular approach on its own is able to comprehensively address the diversity of rural and urban contexts as well as the food security and vulnerability conditions. The various assessment methods and approaches to assessments employed by NVACs are harmonized through a common set of indicators in their assessments.<sup>128</sup> The methods and approaches yield better information outcome. Member States have also been sharing innovations and support NVACs to adopt more relevant and cost-effective assessment methods. Some 13 NVACs shared lessons and innovations with other NVACs at regional meetings including:

- Botswana: decentralizing assessments to districts
- Madagascar: combining IPC Acute malnutrition with IPC Acute Food Insecurity
- Malawi: increased engagement with Parliamentary committee on agriculture
- Mozambique: use of secondary analysis in its IPC
- Tanzania: using revised data-collection tools to integrate climate change, gender and HIV<sup>129</sup>
- Zambia: making protection issues more prominent.

#### **2.4.12 Summary on Efficiency**

302. The services provided by WFP and LM were greatly appreciated by Member States. They significantly improved NVAA processes, as well as the credibility and influence of VAA information and products as:

- The RVAA grants given to Member States for VAA helped Member States to galvanize local resources for VAAs.

<sup>128</sup> SADC. 2020. RVAA Synthesis Report

<sup>129</sup> DFID. 2020. Annual Review Report



- The service providers responded promptly in providing technical support to Member States to cope with the impact of Covid-19.
- VAA tools and methodologies were improved and the use of multiple VAA methodologies encouraged for efficacy and Member States were trained on incorporating emerging issues in VAAs.
- There was good governance of the RVAA programme and decentralization of VAAs at subnational levels.
- Digitalization and use of technology, especially virtual communication, was used to good effect.
- There was improved sharing of lessons learned and increased stakeholder participation.
- The institutionalization index was introduced as a self-assessment tool and guide providing the requisite indices for institutionalization.

303. A number of challenges hampered the programme's effective implementation including the impact of Covid-19. However, the revision of the programme's Theory of Change and Logical Framework barely two years before the end of the programme phase funding was necessitated by challenges identified by the mid-term review, such as:

- Emphasis on "the long-standing approach of demand-driven service provision", without consideration of the "standardization of VAA analytical frameworks" necessary for "harmonization and synthesis to advance in the post 2021"
- A "need for the programme to identify and support efficient and cost-effective assessment strategies"
- The delayed appointment, to early 2019, of responsible staff to the SADC Secretariat DRR unit, combined with the similarly delayed roll-out of activities to support institutionalization at Member State level, means that half the programme time has been lost for [institutionalization] component
- Considerable influencing work required...for governments to incorporate VAC staffing and operations into their budget planning
- Lack of clarity and absence of "any RVAA planning document regarding the institutionalization of RVAA within the SADC Secretariat that would set the parameters for the forthcoming handover process"
- Reporting on more indicators (nutrition, gender, HIV/AIDS) not generally reflected in the reports in terms of causal analysis or through deepened integrated analysis"
- Recommendations for medium to long-term measures required to tackle chronic vulnerability are generally static and do not change from year to year"
- Communication products are not advocacy-oriented to raise attention to calls for urgent action on the rising wave of vulnerability, and yet "rapid escalation of chronic vulnerability which is outstripping current development response capacities, and the difficulties in scaling up responses in a climate of slow economic growth and constrained government budgets [requires] high-level political advocacy on how resilience-building contributes to economic growth and how disaster preparedness reduces humanitarian budget requirements"
- Lack of clarity on "systematic coordination of workplans between SADC Secretariat and the two service providers...the synergies between institutionalization and technical capacity strengthening predicted in the programme theory of change are not being maximized"
- Assumptions that SADC Secretariat M&E systems would be able to serve the programme, and that the four staff assigned to RVAA would assume technical capacity strengthening roles in the absence of donor funding, have proven to be unfounded"
- Lack of dedicated monitoring and evaluation capacity to complement technical, communications and information management competencies at the programme and NVAC level is a key risk to the programme"



- A need for “rigorous, evidence-based resourcing proposals on reducing vulnerability and strategic partnerships with development partners.

304. Other challenges included inadequate stakeholder participation and incorporation of recommendations from the previous programme Phase 2. Budgetary and scope of work limitations given to the service providers compromised programme delivery. Human resource and technical capacity challenge posed a major threat to the VAA system in some Member States. Some of the assumptions made, and implementation strategies adopted by service providers were not always in the best interest of Member States, in particular, overly consultancy driven initiatives, demand-driven technical assistance perspective, activity-driven monitoring and evaluation practice.

**2.5. VALUE FOR MONEY – HAS THE PROGRAMME DELIVERED VALUE FOR MONEY?**

**Evaluation Question 14: Has Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis delivered Value for Money?**

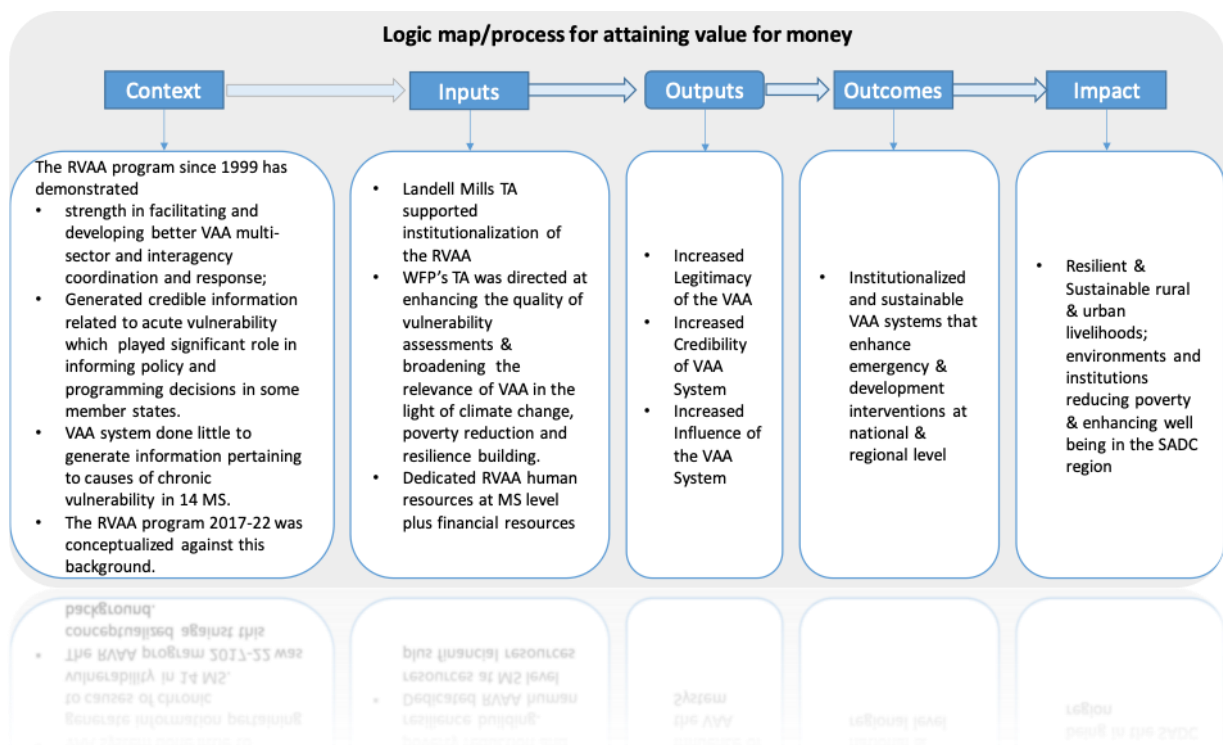
305. This assessment has been used to assess whether public resources for the SADC RVAA programme 2017–2022 achieved the outputs and outcomes which provided the greatest benefits to Member States in the most efficient way and whether investment decisions were based on clear and robust value for money advice. Value for money is defined by four ‘E’s:

- How economical was the purchase of inputs
- How efficiently those inputs were converted into outputs
- How effectively those outputs achieved outcomes
- Were there equity considerations in benefit-sharing.

306. As the RVAA has impact at regional and Member State level, value for money has not been considered at these levels and has also assessed the impacts of the programme that are ‘additional’ (i.e., lead to a net increase in overall value for money).

307. The process through which the RVAA made an impact on public value, is a good starting point for thinking about how value for money was achieved; the process is described in Figure 8.

**Figure 8: Logic map/process for attaining value for money**



Source: Adapted from FCDO value for money framework

**2.5.1 Was the cost of the programme justified in relation to the project benefits obtained?**

308. The RVAA programme Phase 3 started in 2017 and WFP started offering its services in the same year while Landell Mills started a year later, in 2018. Landell Mills had to be introduced to Member States a year later which, in a way, duplicated efforts among service providers resulting in an inefficient use of resources and also frustration among Member States. Some Member States associated themselves more with WFP services due to the multitasking nature of its responsibilities. WFP, apart from performing technical functions on credibility and influencing intermediary outcomes of the programme, it was also performing managerial functions for the programme through MANCO. Such an arrangement gave WFP a comparative advantage over Landell Mills as this meant WFP had more contact with Member States than Landell Mills which, as depicted in the Theory of Change, was responsible for delivery of only the legitimacy intermediary outcome. The evaluation team observes that this logic made the programme and the roles and relationship between the two WFP and LM overlapping and complex.

309. The programme used the WFP platform to implement its activities. For example, the final evaluation of RVAA programme benefited from the WFP system of quality control. The programme also benefited from WFP country offices to facilitate and support efficient fund disbursement and support from the RVAA programme. In addition, in some Member States such as Malawi, support from some local donors was also being channeled through the country office of WFP Malawi. The use of both WFP quality control at regional level and WFP country offices at Member State level brought some efficiency in the use of RVAA resources, with the implementation arrangement generating value for money for the RVAA Programme.

310. The cost of the RVAA programme is also justified because of its benefits. Most Member States rely on VAA data generated by NVACs for them to develop a humanitarian or emergency response because the information generated is comprehensive. The programme therefore provides added value which would not be realized without the VAC because it would not be cost-effective for each partner to carry out their own individual assessments as their coverage would be limited to their own locations and issues of interest and would therefore not be relevant enough to other stakeholders to share.

311. The holding of regional meetings/events through consolidation into back-to-back meetings resulted into cost savings by reducing the number of regional flights and increasing programme efficiency.<sup>130</sup> For example, the July 2018 dissemination forum was immediately followed by the RVAC meeting and then the Steering committee meeting. The same approach applied in February 2019 when the programme held the Annual Organizational Meeting, the RVAC and the Steering Committee meeting back-to-back over a week.

312. Which of the planned activities for the NVAA for the period 2017–2022 have not been delivered on time? What are the reasons why they have not been delivered on time?

313. The 2017–2022 RVAA programme focused on:

- Strengthening analysis and utilization of vulnerability data
- The institutionalization of VAA systems at national and regional level.

314. Legitimacy is about NVACs/VAA becoming incorporated in government administrative and financial structures. All the NVACs in Member States are hosted in power ministries and institutions, which gives them the highest status and influence on several sectors linked with VAA products. In Zambia, the NVAC is in the office of the Vice-President; in Malawi, it is in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development and Public Sector Reforms with the Vice-President as its Minister and, in Seychelles, it is in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Tourism, while in Eswatini and Tanzania it is in the Office of the Prime Minister. In almost all Member States, NVACs are included in the Government financing structures. The inclusion of VACS into government administrative and financial structures is value for money for the programme.

315. Value for money from the credibility point of view of the VAA system includes some Member States being able to integrate VAA into planning and M&E systems. In the case of Malawi, VAA is integrated into the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy, which is the overarching planning tool for the Government of Malawi. Integration into planning and M&E systems, demonstrates value for money for the RVAA activities. The decentralization of data-collection has improved the efficiency of data-collection resulting in high cost-savings in countries where it has been piloted such as Malawi and Zambia.

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<sup>130</sup> SADC. 2018/2019 Annual Progress Report

316. Value for money from the perspective of influence is defined by participation and use of its products by a wide range of stakeholders. At Member State level, there is wide participation and enhanced use of VAA products by stakeholders. The composition of VAC committees encompasses a wide range of stakeholders including government, NGOs and academia which are important for achievement of influence. In most Member States, no humanitarian response can be planned and implemented without VAC report. For example, in Botswana, Namibia, Malawi and Zimbabwe, any humanitarian response needs an MVAC report because such a report is comprehensive. Enhanced use of VAA products is due to the fact that the programme produced a diversity of Communication, Policy and Resource Advocacy (CPRA) products, which largely responded to the 2017–2021 Strategic Plan, NVACs and other stakeholders' knowledge and information needs. VAA products are made visible using various tools such as the bimonthly newsletter, press releases, digital news and social media messages, IPC reports and the Atlas, which was launched in 2021. The RVAA programme mainstreamed communication, advocacy and visibility as an integral part of its activities including the use of traditional and new media (digital news, Facebook, Twitter) with key messages disseminated, for example, on WFP and SADC platforms; and development and distribution of branded visibility products (such as T-shirts). The Atlas and the IPC have created an information repository on food security, nutrition and vulnerability where all information is kept in one place, rather than visiting each Member States in order to access information. The Atlas has also allowed for the consolidation of food security information for the past two decades to be stored beyond the life of the RVAA programme, against the old system of storing information on memory sticks which could easily be lost. As with Atlas, the NVAC information is also deposited for wider accessibility at the IPC website in Rome and other relevant websites (which also creates value for money). These products disseminated evidence and influenced decision makers to support policies and programmes related to VAA.

317. The RVAA programme was planned to make an impact on livelihoods and help reduce poverty. The term 'livelihoods' is defined by food and nutrition security outcomes, while poverty is defined by the amount of the population below the international poverty line. The evidence so far shows that there is a growing population of food-insecure people in the region. According to the RVAA regional synthesis report of 2021, an estimated 65.52 million people from 10 SADC Member States that submitted data, were food insecure. This is an increase of 45.5 percent from previous year and 105.7 percent above the five-year average. In 2020, food insecurity affected 51.3 million people in 13 SADC Member States. The food insecurity problem in 2021 therefore had worsened.

318. The challenge with RVAA making an impact on food security and reduction of poverty is that the programme focuses on the assessment and analysis of vulnerability data to generate outputs which show who are the vulnerable. The responses to the VAC findings are left mainly to disaster and preparedness units for the SADC to declare a disaster, while activities to do with building resilience are left to interested stakeholders to develop response strategies. Some Member States have developed resilience strategies, such as Malawi with its National Resilient Strategy (2018–2023) while, at regional level, the SADC has developed the Regional Resilient Strategy. This is seen as a tool for mobilizing resources for building resilience and is a step towards contributing to the expected impact of RVAA programme if the resilient strategies get implemented. It is therefore difficult, for now, to ascertain the value for money of the RVAA programme at impact level.

319. The programme's overall performance rating is good, although output milestones for some were not achieved as expected due to Covid-19 which brought travel restrictions and social distancing. This resulted in the use of alternative means of delivering activities such as virtual meetings. As mentioned, Covid-19 caused some delays in the delivery of some outputs; four out of the five programme outputs had achieved a 'B' in their delivery by March 2021. Three of the four achievements were:

- NVAC VAA approaches and methods are strengthened, harmonized and integrated
- Relevant technical capacity supported for NVAC and SADC secretariat
- NVAC capacity for policy analysis and advocacy strengthened and regional coordination and leadership strengthened.

320. The fourth achievement, the only output which achieved an 'A', is RVAA information products are visible, accessible and influential to policies, strategies and programmes.<sup>131</sup> A 'B' rating means that outputs moderately did not meet expectations, while an 'A' rating means achieved expectations.

321. What has been the percentage of domestic funding for NVAC assessments each year? How many NVACs can mobilize resources to fully fund their annual assessment?

322. The expected key outcome for the VAA programme is institutionalization and sustainable VAA systems that enhance emergency and development interventions at national and regional level. Achievement of value for money in terms of the institutionalization of VAA systems is still a work in progress considering that the institutionalization process is not fully achieved. The institutionalization index, which was conducted in March 2021, shows that the average performance for the 10 Member States that conducted baseline assessments show partial achievement of institutionalization.

323. VAA Funding is a key variable for demonstrating VAA institutionalization in Member State governments.<sup>132</sup> Current VAA funding is a blend of donor and national government funding and in-kind contributions. Currently, a few Member States are able to generate local resources for VAA activities. For example, South Africa has been able to receive 100 percent government funding for their assessment in 2021; in Botswana and Zambia it has been 95 percent or more funding from Government and, for Zambia, 4 percent from IPC-FAO<sup>133</sup> meaning that 96 percent of the funding for VAA in Zambia is locally generated. However, even for the Member States which are able to mobilize local financial resources, particularly to conduct the assessments, a review of the Institutionalization Index would suggest that most are weak overall and may not be able to sustain the VAA system as it has been defined by the index. Taking the example of South Africa, it had an overall Institutionalization Baseline Score in 2020 of 43 percent average, 10 percent for technical capacity, use *and relevance* at an average 58 percent, 50 percent, and 33 percent funding (implying that its 100 percent financing of the VAA in 2021 is not predictably sustainable). This points to a weak NVAC where, in terms of achieving the final RVAA programme outcome, its institutionalization cannot be guaranteed particularly as to how it relates to a sustainable VAA system. Since funding for VAA is intricately linked to VAA institutionalization and value of VAA, without adequate locally generated funds for funding VAA activities for most Member States that the RVAA programme cannot be said to have adequately achieved value for money on institutionalization.

### **2.5.2 Are NVACs combining different methodologies and approaches to produce a timely comprehensive vulnerability analysis? What are the merits and demerits for using combined methodologies in NVAA?**

324. Through capacity-building efforts by the programme, experts have been trained in all Member States in the use of multiple methodologies and approaches to produce VAA data, with some Member States such as Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe faring better than others in terms of application. For example, for Malawi has Level 3 experts in VAC, who have learned their skills from the RVAA capacity-building activities, which qualifies Malawi to carry out its data analysis without technical support from outside. At the same time, Malawi is also able to support other Member States. It is able to use different methodologies and approaches such as Household Economy Approach (HEA); IPC (acute, nutrition, chronic); and also, market assessment among others, which enables the country to produce comprehensive data on VAA which can be triangulated, enhancing the reliability of the data. The only challenge is that the use of multiple methods requires maintaining the availability of well-trained staff which is a challenge as there is a problem of high staff turnover.

### **2.5.3 To what extent did the programme reach young women?**

325. The evaluation team observed the Dissemination Workshop in Zimbabwe in July 2021 and determined that there is evidence of equity in access to information about the extent to which RVAA services are available, including by young women. Sessions and activities observed included an annual data validation workshop in Malawi that also had other Member States participating. The team also examined the IPC website; and the recently launched Atlas. The programme is also trying to address equity through

<sup>131</sup> SADC. 2021. *RVAA Annual Final Review*, approved 20 March, and SADC. 2021. *RVAA Annual Progress Report*.

<sup>132</sup> SADC. 2021. *RVAA Programme: Institutionalization Service Provision Regional Institutionalization Shared Learning Event Report*, March.

<sup>133</sup> SADC. 2021. *Zambia Vulnerability Assessment Presentation*, SADC RVAA Technical Dissemination Forum, 6–9 July.

the gender lens, although only Eswatini, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe have integrated gender issues into their annual assessments, with most Member States not having started to significantly collect gender disaggregated data.

**2.6. IMPACT OUTLINE**

326. The team also sought to answer the questions:

- What are the positive and/or negative, intended and unintended effects of the RVAA programme?
- Has the RVAA Programme influenced emergency and developmental policy and programming?

**Evaluation Question 15: What are the positive and/or negative, intended and unintended effects of the RVAA programme?**

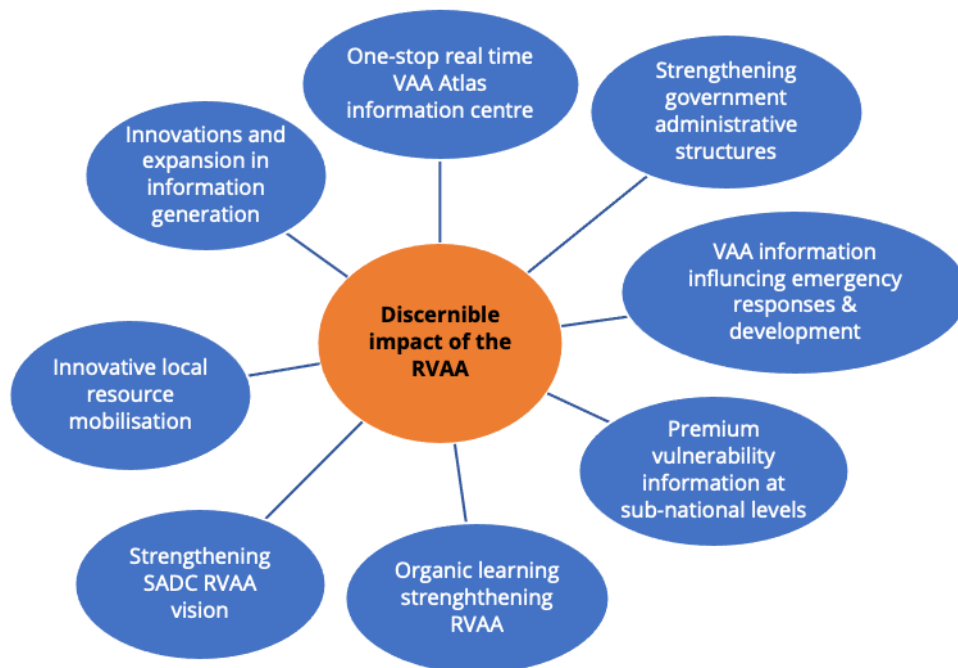
327. The three key RVAA programme interventions are:

- Institutionalization and capacity development through deepening VAC institutionalization
- Enhancing approaches and tools to be used by employing innovative approaches to effectively address emerging issues
- Advocacy and leadership development to raise the profile of VAA activities through a stronger advocacy role, deeper institutionalization and increased government financial support.

328. These interventions are expected to result in three intermediate outcomes - increased legitimacy, credibility and influence. These are expected to lead to the programme’s final outcome of an “institutionalized and sustained VAA system”, which should contribute to the impact “Resilient and sustainable rural and urban livelihoods, environments and institutions reducing poverty and enhancing well-being in the SADC region”. The expected final outcome was: “Institutionalized and sustainable VAA systems that enhance emergency and developmental responses at national and regional levels.” This impact should result in contributing to SADC aspirations, African Union and SDGs particularly Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 17 that aim to end poverty, hunger, improve health and welling and increase gender equality.

329. The extent to which the RVAA programme has made an impact that contributes to the above goals through timely and reliable VAA information is clearly discernible. This is particularly notable at both Member State and regional programme levels and can be seen in broad interrelated areas that are influenced by the programme. Figure 9 below summaries the impact areas of the programme.

**Figure 9: Discernible impact of the RVAA programme**





330. Phase 3 of the programme achieved a significant milestone in developing Atlas, which provides a one-stop real-time VAA information access. Atlas stores RVAA data that has been produced over the last two decades since the programme has been implemented. Thus far, Atlas arguably stands out as the flagship and pinnacle of RVAA Phase 3. It is the most valuable asset of the RVAA, providing instant information and, consequently, opportunities for meta-analysis data to facilitate decision-making, trend-mapping and informed policymaking.

331. The high quality of RVAA information has proven to be an asset in Member States. The VAA information, produced annually, is used by governments to strengthen their administrative structures, policies and processes and helps Member States plan and respond to emergencies. In many Member States, Central Statistical Offices produce national data that is not disaggregated at provincial and district levels. However, the RVAA programme has strengthened the provision of premium vulnerability information at subnational levels through disaggregated data. This enables provincial and district levels to plan, based on concrete reliable data.

332. The RVAA programme has enabled Member States to learn from each other through sharing learning and experiences. This has contributed to the development of innovative approaches in VAA, including resource mobilization, which has strengthened the quality of the programme products. Overall, it is noteworthy that the efforts of the RVAA programme through interactions such as regional meetings, planning, and reviews has positively, though unintentionally, strengthened a common SADC RVAA vision that has bolstered cooperation and consensus.

333. The impact of the RVAA has also been notable in various programme efforts such as monitoring risk and vulnerability threats. For instance, the threat of the African migratory Locust and the Fall Armyworm within the region was monitored leading to an AML appeal by the SADC Secretariat resulting in funding of US\$ 2.5 million. In addition, climate emergency preparedness is being enhanced through regular advisories and updates from the SADC Secretariat Climate Services Centre. This is being undertaken through national and regional meteorological services with NVACs in 12 Member States raising resources to identify impacts of climate shocks.

#### **Evaluation Question 16: Has the RVAA Programme influenced emergency and developmental policy and programming?**

334. A key pursuit of the RVAA programme is to support vulnerability evidence-based policymaking and emergency programming in the region. This is envisioned through regularly generated VAA information and data on food and nutrition security. This endeavour is often undertaken by the VACs in close collaboration and partnerships with international cooperating partners. The nature and extent of using VAA information within Member States and regionally indicates a progressive reliance and use of this information by governments in their strategic plans, emergency responses, disaster risk reduction, social protection, resilience-building and emergency preparedness. Evidence of reliance on VAA data within the RVAA programme can be seen in Tanzania where VAA information on food-insecure populations and their locations was used by the government to plan food relief efforts via grain struggle. This food relief plan by the disaster risk management unit in 2017 resulted in national food reserves being channeled to the affected districts.<sup>134</sup>

335. In 2019 The Red Cross raised an emergency appeal as a result of the severe drought in Zambia and relied on VAA data in the selection of the target district to support. This appeal raised 31 percent of the budget 3.5 million Swiss francs and supported 4,000 households with emergency cash transfers.<sup>135</sup> Similarly the Zimbabwe Government's Domestic and International Appeal for multisector assistance following the devastating drought of 2018/2019 and, later, efforts to mitigate the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic were boosted by the various VAA data outputs such as the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee assessments and the IPC analysis, among others, leading to the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan. In 2019, with the support of donors, who contributed nearly US\$240 million to this response, partners were able to reach nearly 2 million people with critical and life-saving interventions.<sup>136</sup>

<sup>134</sup> MUCHALI. 2017. *The Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Assessment Report*.

<sup>135</sup> SADC. 2021. *RVAA Citation Analysis and Ecosystems Mapping Report*.

<sup>136</sup> UNOCHA. 2020. *Humanitarian Response Plan, Zimbabwe*, <https://reliefweb.int/report/zimbabwe/zimbabwe-humanitarian-response-plan-2020-march-2020>

336. At the regional level, RVAA information has been used to influence and inform food livelihood and nutrition security with the “Regional Inter-Agency Standing Committee (RIASCO), Humanitarian Outlook for November 2017–April 2018 Southern Africa Report” and the “SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan” at the forefront being referenced as key resources within policy formulation and appeal documentation.<sup>137</sup>

337. The VAA system has been progressively broadened to address other vulnerabilities beyond food insecurity with reinforced multisectoral /multi-stakeholder collaboration and holistic perspectives on national information and development needs. The findings suggest stakeholder engagement with the programme has improved because of the deeper engagement of international cooperating partners with governments through the programme. Nine Member States have reported using the VAA to inform humanitarian, social protection and resilience policies, strategies and programmes including targeting, scaling, and informing budget allocations, and monitoring performance.<sup>138</sup> More than seven of the NVACs decided to integrate emerging issues into their annual assessments, combining different methodologies and approaches.<sup>139</sup> In keeping with the remit to “leave no one behind” and to safeguard human rights, including gender, the programme phase three involved an explicit agreement of NVACs to collect household level-data that allowed for disaggregated analysis by gender. Some 13 NVACs used this data for their VAA context analysis<sup>140</sup> in 2018. The inclusion of this data and the evidenced gender related multi-stakeholder involvement in the programme has built a firm foundation to measure differential impact and this gender lens approach, in itself, is transformational with significance beyond the programme phase.

338. There is a growing recognition of the need to address the vulnerability in the region through regional efforts. Member States appreciate the utility of the RVAA in meeting developmental problems in their context; problems that are often long-standing and which demand efficacious remedies often needing regional approaches. The emphasis given to the programme for concerted efforts is, likewise, born of the realization that RVAA produce results. Joint review and dissemination forums for the Member States attest to this. The RVAA regional approach has had the added benefit of enabling cross learnings, benchmarking and the adoption of best practices between Member States. The programme also completed several cross-country learning exchanges. A case in point is Tanzanian NVAC representatives (MUCHALI) who visited Eswatini for first-hand observation of VAA data analysis processes, including acute scale IPC analysis.<sup>141</sup> Also, Botswana NVAC representatives visited the Malawi NVAC for on-the-ground training in the Household Economy Approach (HEA).<sup>142</sup>

339. The technical ability of NVAC has grown significantly. This is seen in the quality of information that the system generates, and the recognition of the information generated by NVAC by key decision-makers. These movements attest to the utilization of technical support. Programme reports indicating the 70 percent of the technical capacity plans were implemented. This impact is seen in the quality of information that the system generates. The increased demand for information, as attested through report downloads from repository sites, points to utilization value. However, challenges by some Member States to analyse information generated by the RVAA system in a policy sense points to the need for further technical support in policy and advocacy.

340. The political acceptance of the value of the RVAA system can be deduced from the support given to this system in political structures. This is shown by NVACs being placed at the apex of political institutions in several countries. The RVAA system is, furthermore, coordinated by senior government officials in many Member States. Thus, the holding of RVAA meetings in Member States is either evidence of political support or tones up political commitment. These apex political institutions have the authority to coordinate and supervise the implementation of government policies.

341. VAA assessments are considered the primary activities of the programme and the key output that supports the VAA system. Budgets to perform the VAA have increasingly been funded in-country by

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> SADC. 2021. *RVAA Annual Review*.

<sup>139</sup> Programme reports

<sup>140</sup> NVACs (Lesotho, Eswatini, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe)

<sup>141</sup> Muchali key informant interview

<sup>142</sup> Programme reports



government and donors with currently 60 percent of the total funding from governments.<sup>143</sup> This points to the positive effects of the programme in spurring local resource mobilization and points to the potential for sustainable impact beyond the programme phase.

342. The programme systems have demonstrated, in many instances, an effective and fair mechanism for the distribution of resources. The programme, by organizational design and functioning, lends itself to transparency in resource allocation. The composition of multi-stakeholders in governance structures also encourages the fair allocation of resources. When disaster strikes any country, vulnerability information can be objectively determined, allowing for the transparent distribution of resources. In Zimbabwe for example, VAA information was used to inform the geographical targeting of assistance and to provide baseline data for the National Development Strategy (2021–2025) and Food and Nutrition Security Strategy.<sup>144</sup>

343. Responses from stakeholders, such as NGOs in Zimbabwe, point to lack of access of VAA data for their own sub analysis purposes. Some VAC members in Botswana, and the low participation scores in Botswana, Malawi, South Africa and Zambia have pointed to an inability of the programme to effectively make available the diverse, regularly generate VAA data. This was due to technical limitations such as to adequately disaggregate information sets across jurisdictions. The increased complexity and demand for food and nutrition insecurity information was cited as critical, yet several Member States were using unreliable methods in knowledge access platforms. Efforts to mitigate this challenge were evidenced within the evaluation lifecycle (2021) by the development of the “Atlas” Portal that is poised to integrate already available data with historical data, merged into a central depository system. Atlas has obvious benefits, allowing stakeholders to access credible and comparable data, including entities keen to use data to advance advocacy ambitions. It will hold a wealth of information that analysts can use to understand the multi-dimensions of poverty and vulnerability, allowing analysis of trends, causal relationships and aiding policy formulation.

344. The recognition of the asymmetry of organizational capacities and technical capabilities among the various NVACs are notable within programme activities and plans. During Phase 3 the programme completed technical capacity assessments of 14 NVACs<sup>145</sup> using “demand-led and participatory approaches that places emphasis on experiential and joint/collaborative learning” leading to 11 capacity-building plans. However, some NVACs felt that the programme is consistently propagating the adoption of new VAA methods and techniques that some Member States were not ready for, or which were not particularly relevant to their needs. This has led to perceptions of a programme overload” or one which has a “one-size fits all approach.”<sup>146</sup>

## **2.7. SUSTAINABILITY - WILL THE BENEFITS OF THE RVAA PROGRAMME LAST?**

### **2.7.1 Sustainability assessment framework**

345. Assessment of sustainability focuses on answering the evaluation question: will the benefits last? In doing so, it determines the extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.<sup>147</sup> Sustainability analysis focuses on understanding the components of the enabling environment, the continuation of positive effects, and risks and trade-offs. Assessing sustainability allows one to determine if an intervention’s benefits and long-term processes will last financially, economically, socially and environmentally. In this instance, the programme Theory of Change and the Results Framework as depicted in the logframe provides the basis for understanding what the benefits and long-term processes of the programme are. To reiterate, the final outcome of the programme is “Institutionalized and sustainable VAA systems that enhance emergency and developmental interventions at national and regional levels”. The intermediate outcomes were increased legitimacy, credibility and influence of VAA. Sustainability depends on the achievement of the intermediate outcomes. The work streams (processes) that were leading to the intermediate outcomes were institutionalization, technical and capacity-building support and communication and policy advocacy.

<sup>143</sup> Programme reports.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> SADC. *RVAA Annual Progress Report 2018/2019*

<sup>146</sup> Namibia, ESwatini, Zimbabwe, key informant interviews

<sup>147</sup> OECD. 2021. *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully*.

346. It is also important to indicate that Institutionalization was considered key to sustainability and thus an important work stream, an overarching programme strategy as well as final outcome. Meanwhile, the Institutionalization Index is a system, with interrelated, ecologically interdependent, and mutually reinforcing attributes /indices (subsystems) or component parts that address or are vehicles towards achieving both legitimacy, credibility and influence. It is also important to indicate that legitimacy, credibility and influence are systemic outcomes that reinforce and benefit each other. The ET therefore considered that an understanding of the extent to which Member States score on the Institutionalization Index is one way to better understand their potential for sustainability.

347. In assessing the RVAA sustainability, the following evaluation questions were asked: To what extent have NVACs/VAA been integrated into national systems and processes (administrative, financial structures, planning, information systems etc.)? How sustainable is the RVAA system beyond the current donor-funded cycle?

348. The ET observed that the sustainability plan had not been completed at the beginning of October 2021, six months before the project end date in March 2022. To ensure its ownership and implementation by Member States, the plan once completed, will need to be reviewed and approved /endorsed by them. NVACs will need to advocate for its adoption and implementation at national level. The evaluation team estimates that that there is unlikely to be enough time for Member States to be consulted and to approve the plan, or to building enough capacity to adopt and implement it. However, most of the elements highlighted in the sustainability plan have already started being implemented, which gives a positive picture on sustainability. Table 8 below indicates sustainability plan areas and progress on implementation of the areas.

**Table 8: Sustainability plan areas and progress on their implementation**

| Sustainability Plan Recommendation  | Current Status                    |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Develop an RVAA Strategy and Action Plan for 2022–2030. This will guide the programme implementation at both regional and Member States levels.   | Still to be done                  |
| Strengthen the SADC Secretariat oversight and coordination capacity for the RVAA Programme within the DRR unit and to also guide the day-to-day operations and implementation of the programme.   | Ongoing                           |
| Promote advocacy and knowledge-building on the VAA system to also support the NVACs in the different Member States.   | Ongoing                           |
| Manage effective partnerships, including the private sector by defining RVAA Programme services as demand-driven, rather than supply-driven.  |                                   |
| Mobilize resources for increased funding for the regional and national level interventions.   | Ongoing                           |
| Promote the broadening of the scope of the VAA to inform resilience programming which is multisectoral by drawing in additional sectors within the institutional arrangements at regional and national level and operationalize the regional resilience framework through a “resilience index” ranking. | Ongoing                           |
| Explore the synergies between RVAA and Anticipatory Action programming in the region by engaging with other partners.   | Ongoing but still be strengthened |
| Ensure continuous monitoring and evaluation of the Programme, in line with the RVAA Strategy M&E system to track the performance of the programme in supporting the regional integration agenda.  | Ongoing                           |

**Evaluation Question 17: To what extent have NVACs/VAA been integrated into national systems and processes (administrative, financial structures, planning, information systems etc.)?**

### 2.7.2 Reflection on Institutional Index suggests that VAA in all MS is at risk of being unsustainable

349. Drawing on the Institutionalization Index, we look at the extent to which sustainability is likely to be achieved. Looking for example at legitimacy, the ranking of 10 NVACs on overall functionality score in 2021 indicates that six Member States had a score of 55 or below and four Member States scored between 65 and 75. Botswana, DRC and South Africa ranked lowest on functionality while Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and

Zimbabwe scored on the higher side; this is despite the fact that for example, Botswana ranked highest (nearly 100 percent) in terms of government funding for VAA, and South Africa had its 2021 assessment fully funded by government. Additionally, Eswatini and Madagascar initially declined the RIST offer of support to develop VAA strategies, on the assumption that they were already institutionalized, and yet they scored low at 56 percent and 50 percent respectively on the index's overall functionality score. They also ranked low on funding at 33 percent and 50 percent respectively. LM has had to make follow-up requests to which these countries later accepted, implying the need to sensitize Member States on sustainable institutionalization and on the merits of having a VAA strategy; implementation in these two countries was, however, yet to be realized at the time of concluding the evaluation. This points towards low chances of sustainability. Thus, sustainability depends on a good balance of all, not just a few, of the component indices of the Institutionalization Index. Meanwhile, a country like Zimbabwe, which has scored highly on all indices except strategy development (which it rejected on the basis that it was already well institutionalized) has a higher chance of sustainability, and yet should not be complacent about strategy.

350. Member States scored well on VAA mandate with the lowest at 67 percent, meaning that the NVACs have been officially established and legally recognized by government NVACs. That's a good pointer towards sustainability. However, in the case of South Africa for example, the high VAA mandate is not matched with good credibility of VAA, which is threatened by poor technical capacity (scored at 10 percent). It is difficult to consider that, without its technical capacity being significantly improved, South Africa will sustain VAA with efficacy. Drawing on an analysis of the different dynamics surrounding scoring of NVACs on the Institutionalization Index, the evaluation team concludes that sustainability is not a given for the 10 Member States, for which scoring has been available, never mind for the 16 SADC Member States. Sustainability is country specific. In addition, the fact that an NVAC may exist for much longer, does not mean that the benefits accrued from VAA system and ongoing processes will continue, and with the desired efficacy. Sustainability is threatened whenever one or more components of the index are weak; most if not all NVACs are at varying degrees of risk of not having their VAA systems fully functional with efficacy after the programme ends and will still require some form of regional support and shepherding.

### **2.7.3 Some progress made thus far give promise on sustainability but reality rests with individual Member States**

351. Despite the risks highlighted above, there are a number of issues to consider that give hope for sustainability in some Member States. The RVAA programme integrates approaches and systems that foster sustainability in the SADC region and Member States. Indeed, the environment encouraging sustainability has been developed as well as nurtured while implementation efforts are also evident. These sustainability initiatives include:

- Capacity strengthening for NVAC sustainability
- Strengthening Member State ownership through institutionalization and programme adoption and incorporation into government national systems
- Intentional programme phase-out plans as well as sustainability planning
- Programme financing of a sustainability phase-out approach.

352. The RVAA programme strengthened capacities of NVAC members to conduct good quality assessments and for the NVACs structures to be better coordinated and managed. NVACs have been institutionalized resulting in VAA enhancing their work. Thus, as NVACs/VAA in MS improved in institutionalization, senior government officials and political leaders are embracing the programme. However, key informant interviews indicate that some Member States lost the knowledge and skills acquired through high staff turnover and were requesting for the same training that had been conducted before. This suggests that the capacity-building approach of targeting a few individual officers in Member States was not a sustainable approach for those countries. Building the capacity for local training as well as cascading training models may have had better and sustainable impact.

353. Overall, the increased financial or budgetary commitments by Member States as indicative of some level of RVAA sustainability is noticeable among many Member States. For instance, in addition to Zimbabwe, Member States such as Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa, and others carried most of their VAA costs. This progress in the sustainability of VAA is a result of a planned programme strategy embedded within the RVAA, where financial support for assessments decreased while the proportion of

this cost is 'picked up' by Member States from other national financial sources. The 2021 Annual Review Report captures this approach in its report as follows:

- Programme allocations to NVAC budgets amounted to just 5.7 percent, the vast majority of which (98 percent) was focused on capacity-building, with only two countries (Eswatini and Mauritius) receiving funding for assessments. Other assessments were funded by in-country sources with governments providing 60 percent of the total funding.<sup>148</sup>

354. Sustainability in practice is likely to be achieved when Member States will be encouraged and supported to address their weaknesses on the Institutionalization Index, while building on their strengths. There should be no complacency nor exception for any Member States. Sustainability will be a function of continuous commitment and improvement on the index performance of Member States. However, this will require the coordination of the SADC Secretariat. Meanwhile, the extent to which the RVAA programme will be sustained at the SADC Secretariat is unclear. The SADC Secretariat currently does not have a dedicated person for RVAA funded by the Secretariat nor donors. The Secretariat has also declined the initial offer of support to develop a RVAA strategy as well as an institutional operational plan, although the RIST continues to engage it in this regard. However, consultancy is developing a regional sustainability plan to guide the SADC Secretariat going forward. The potential lack of a coordination function and budget at the SADC Secretariat is perhaps the biggest risk to the sustainability of the RVAA programme/system.

355. Meanwhile, a SADC regional sustainability plan is being developed to potentially serve a strategic and phase-out function. Its development has been delayed but is in the final stages of finalization. This position was indicated in the interview with the consultant<sup>149</sup> developing the sustainability plan as well as from reviewing the draft plan. The developments in finalizing the sustainability plan were also reported in the Annual Report 2021 thus: The development of the RVAA Sustainability Plan with SADC was delayed but is now in progress and expected to be submitted to the July 2021 steering Committee meeting for approval.<sup>150</sup> It is not clear if now a proper handover and sustainability assuring process will be conducted effectively with end of funding phase in a few months' time. It is however important to note that programme "handover is a process not a date".<sup>151</sup> The APM Body of Knowledge 6th edition defines handover as: "*The point in the life cycle where deliverables are handed over to the sponsor and users.*" And PRINCE2® states: "*The project should have a clear end with a correct handover of information and responsibility.*" To avoid an "over the wall" handover of the programme's deliverables, know-how, and the responsibilities for benefits realization (and risk mitigation) beyond the end of the funding phase lifecycle, the programme should spend the last few months supporting planning by Member States for sustainability. According to the International Project Management Association (IPMA):

- Defining handover is necessary to ensure all parties have an agreed focal point and their efforts are aligned to a common goal. Dates, priorities and responsibility allocation must be clearly communicated. Assumption of these can put handover at risk. Understanding that handover is a transition period rather than a date is paramount to smooth the change curve and close the gap between project phase and operational/business as usual.

#### **Evaluation Question 18: How sustainable is the RVAA system beyond the current donor-funded cycle?**

356. NVAC members' capacity to conduct assessments has been enhanced and bolstered resulting in credible VAA information being produced in Member States. In addition, the catalytic funding provided by the RVAA programme appears to have triggered the mobilization of more funding. The skills and experience gained through RVAA programme capacity development efforts 'stands out' as a critical resource and investment made in NVACs that will continue to exist for future VAA activities beyond the funding period. Notwithstanding the inevitable loss of trained staff due to staff movements or resignations from institutions actively involved in NVACs, some NVACs have started to train district level officials with skills that ensure good quality assessments, which becomes a critical Member State technical capacity

<sup>148</sup> SADC. 2021. *RVAA Annual Review Report*.

<sup>149</sup> Scott Drimie interview

<sup>150</sup> SADC. 2021. *RVAA Annual Review Report*.

<sup>151</sup> IPMA. 2017. *Handover in projects – some pitfalls and good practices*, <https://www.ipma.world/handover-projects-pitfalls-good-practices/>

reservoir to draw from in the future. An NVAC member in South Africa expressed appreciation of RVAA skills enhancement as follows:

- “Before the RVAA programme we used not to collect much information on vulnerability because we were limited in our skills but now, we are collecting data on vulnerable issues to lower levels such as districts, which informs country programmes. We can now do that because we have the skills. We have also continued to impart these skills to our teams”.

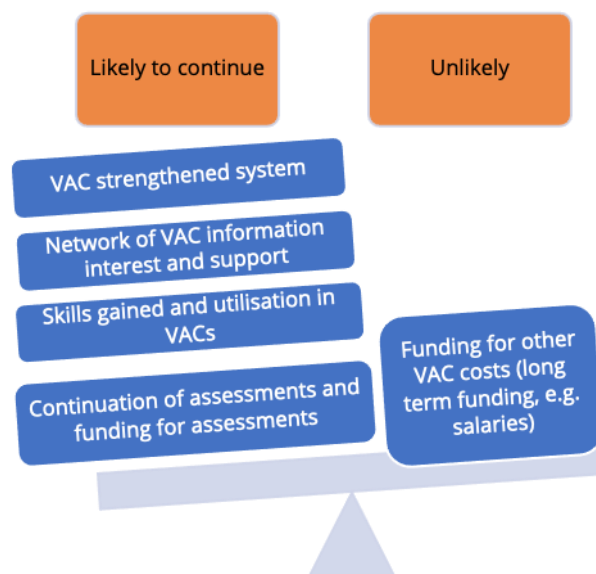
357. Further to VAA technical skills gained that will be utilized in the future when funding ends, there are networks and structures that have been formed within NVACs that are likely to continue beyond the current funding period. Credible VAA information that has been produced by NVACs has created demand for such information in the future because of its use in making decisions. Member States such as Zimbabwe have used this demand as selling point to attract local funding of VAA from other ‘would be users’ of VAA information. The interplay of credible information produced by NVACs that is increasingly being used for planning has strengthened institutionalization. This will result in positive “future knock-on effects” that will create a vacuum of NVAC/VAA information if activities are halted. Therefore, this may result in future programme investment by stakeholders. An NVAC member in Lesotho expressed this perspective clearly as follows:

- “Some of our country development partners and United Nations agencies use the VAA information to timely plan their programmes than wait for other government produced information that takes a long time to come out and is also not conducted frequently”.

**2.7.4 Considerations and clarifications for sustainability**

358. A response to the evaluation question: “will the benefits of the RVAA programme last?” is mixed but overall, it is positive. There are RVAA elements that are likely to continue when funding ends. These include vulnerability assessments and some degree of NVAC existence and functionality, albeit in different forms as informed by respective Member State situations. Positively, there are RVAA programme design elements to foster sustainability beyond the current period. These initiatives should be intensified and monitored to ensure they achieve the intended goals. At this stage, it cannot be clearly ascertained whether the sustainability efforts in practice will stand, although there are signs that indicate some level of sustainability through the governments’ evident ownership and financial support of NVACs to conduct assessments. Below (figure 10) are some sustainability elements and their likelihood of continuing.

**Figure 10: Elements and their likelihood of continuing**



359. The notable gaps among some Member States are that there is weak integration of VACs in national government processes, while other VACs are understaffed and lack the requisite technical capacity. Another concern for sustainability is that some Member States perceive the RVAA programme as a SADC Secretariat

project, which weakens their sense of ownership. In such instances, it is highly likely that when funding support ends then the RVAA programme system in its current state will be weakened or even stop.

360. However, the RVAA as a SADC project needs to be understood from two points of view, namely, that the RVAA is:

- A 'system' with a continuous life regardless of efficacy
- A 'programme' with a short, fixed timeframe.

361. These two dimensions need to be differentiated although they are intertwined. They are critical to conceptualizing the continuing management of the RVAA programme. The WFP official clarified that:

- "The effect of the perception of the RVAA as a SADC Secretariat and donor project and its impact on future VAC activities and processes is minimal because the RVAA structure as an information generation system embedded within SADC Secretariat and Member States has a continued life of its own and will continue to exist while the programme refers to capacity enhancing activities that have a period of 5 years (2017–2022). Hence, these two aspects should be viewed separately when considering sustainability".

362. Further aspects that inform sustainability to be noted and clarified are that there is a need to harmonize, clarify, monitor and consider the understanding of institutionalization across Member States. On the one hand, institutionalization can entail government ownership of NVAC processes as evidenced by financial support and integration into government. On the other hand, institutionalization can mean Member States recognize and embrace the VAA process where all different stakeholders contribute within the country. In this second approach, donors may be contributing most of the funding for the VAC activities, which may result in some of them demanding specific additional indicators related to their programmes, which may be outside the VAC focus. The threat in the second approach was clearly expressed by one NVAC member in Lesotho:

- "The challenge with limited capacity to fully fund NVAC processes is that donors may provide most of the funding. When that happens, these donors may expect inclusion of certain additional indicators to justify such financial investments".



## 3. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 3.1. CONCLUSIONS

363. This section draws on the findings of the assessment to present concluding observations on each evaluation criteria: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, value for money and impact.

#### 3.1.1 Relevance

##### **Evaluation Question 1: Is the RVAA Programme relevant to the needs, priorities and policies of the Member States and SADC across the region?**

364. The RVAA programme is relevant to the needs, priorities and policies of the Member States and SADC across the region. It responds to the needs of Member States. The needs and priorities being addressed focus on two areas:

- Strengthening the technical capacity of Vulnerability Assessment Committees to be able to effectively broaden and integrate complex and emerging issues into the VAA, including chronic vulnerability, poverty and resilience, as well as increase VAA technical rigour and improve quality of VAA produced information
- Contributing to the institutionalization of the RVAC and NVAC system resources, and capacity to integrate various VAA tools and approaches for national planning processes and programme responses.

##### **Evaluation Question 2: To what extent is the design of the programme, its components and expected results as outlined in the ToC relevant to the achievement of the stated final outcome?**

365. The programme has been adapting to changes and emerging needs and priorities. This is seen in the programme ToC that has been revised to strengthen the design. There have been adjustments in programme activities to respond to Covid-19 and conducted studies on an ongoing basis to keep understanding the operational context, and prioritized sustainability and phasing out as the programme ends. Thus, the ToC and logframe developed to guide implementation kept being adapted to remain relevant and to ensure outcomes are achieved.

##### **Evaluation Question 3: Has the RVAA Programme been able to adapt and be responsive to emerging needs and changing contexts?**

366. The programme has been sensitive and responsive to the SADC regional context, policies and specific Member States issues. This has enabled the RVAA to effectively address emerging issues during the entire implementation period. The programme's adaptability is evident in the three implementation stages:

- Transitional phase from Phase 2 to Phase 3 (period of programme set up in 2017)
- After set-up to full implementation where most activities are conducted
- Towards programme closure 2021/2022 where the focus is on phasing out and close-out.

At each stage, emerging needs were identified, and responsive actions were taken to address the situation.

#### 3.1.2 Coherence

##### **Evaluation Question 4: To what extent is the SADC RVAA programme aligned with relevant SADC programmes?**

367. The RVAA programme is well aligned with relevant SADC programmes. Its vision of "Community, household, and individual development and resilience throughout SADC Member States"; and its goal "To support resilient and sustainable rural and urban livelihoods, environments and institutions in reducing poverty and enhancing well-being in the SADC region" are aligned with the vision and aspirations for SADC, African Union and the SDGs. This vision is realized through Member States taking an active role and



participating in relevant processes that further this vision through “Institutionalized and sustainable VAA systems that enhance emergency and developmental responses at national and regional levels”.

**Evaluation Question 5: Are there contradictions with national policies that have constrained implementation and achievement of results?**

368. The RVAA programme is implemented within a framework where different policies are integrated and mainstreamed to address the different dimensions of vulnerabilities affecting food security and well-being within Member States and the region. This promotes harmony and minimizes contradictions that may derail the programme.

**Evaluation Question 6: Is there complementarity with the actions of different actors, and is there sufficient coordination?**

369. The RVAA is housed in a SADC Disaster and Risk Management (DRR) Unit, responsible for coordinating disaster risk reduction, vulnerability assessment and resilience interventions. This fosters complementarity among the DRR mandate on emergency preparedness and mitigation responses, and the RVAA focuses on informing areas where food insecurity necessitates disaster and emergency type responses at national and regional levels. The positioning of the RVAA programme within the DRR unit also ensures effective coordination of responses to broader disasters and emergencies with those relating to food and nutrition insecurity in the SADC. In addition, the RVAA focuses on developmental indicators, including gender (as an example); and helps to portray a holistic picture of the specific impact of emergencies and disasters across population groups that will improve targeted planning and service delivery.

### 3.1.3 Effectiveness

**Evaluation Question 7: To what extent has the programme achieved the planned outputs, and have these led to, or are likely to lead to, achievement of outcomes of the RVAA Programme?**

370. The programme is on course to achieve outputs in the areas of training, developing communication and advocacy tools, documenting good practices for sharing and facilitating the exchange of learning; providing technical support towards programme phase-out and sustainability, and in the use of the Institutionalization Index. However, the programme was interrupted and slowed in 2020–2021 by Covid-19 at both national and regional levels. Nevertheless, the programme recovered to catch up with the scheduled activities using virtual methods, although these had limitations among Member States.

**Evaluation Question 8: Has VAA capacity been strengthened and institutionalized?**

371. Fifteen VACs have been institutionalized but are at different levels of functionality. Out of the 10 countries ranked for functionality, 6 had a score of 55 or below and four scored between 65 and 75. Botswana, DRC and South Africa ranked lowest on functionality while Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe scored on the higher side. Capacity was strengthened through training to enhance knowledge, skills and improve tools in many areas of the VAA system. These included:

- Conducting VAAs in the context of Covid-19 (following the principle of “doing no harm”)
- Using technology-driven and virtual data-collection methods
- Convening virtual meetings
- Using document library and communication platforms such as Atlas
- Using VAA information to inform policy and decision-making
- Applying the application of the Institutionalization Index for self-assessment
- Monitoring and reporting using scorecards and dashboards
- Sharing lessons learned and experiences among Member States.

372. More needs to be done to ensure that there are dedicated personnel for VAA at the SADC Secretariat, and to ensure greater synergy and alignment of VAA with DRR at national and regional levels.

**Evaluation Question 9: Is there evidence of increased legitimacy, credibility and influence of the RVAA programme at national and regional levels?**

373. Legitimacy has improved, particularly in terms of increased local resource mobilization efforts among Member States, which include:

- Mandated NVACs with supportive policy /legislative frameworks increasing from 14 to 15
- Decentralization of VAAs
- NVACs housed in ministries or institutions that are considered powerful enough to wield some multisectoral influence in Member States including offices of the presidency and Prime Minister.

374. More effort is required to support Member States towards use of the Institutionalization Index, and to develop programme phase-out and sustainability plans ahead of March 2022.

375. Credibility has improved in terms of improvements in the way VAAs are conducted, including the use of combined methodologies, conducting urban assessments, reaching further geographically at national level, and also reaching more vulnerable populations. Emerging issues such as gender, chronic poverty and climate change have begun to be integrated in VAAs but at different paces in Member States. The consolidation of some capacity-building approaches that had existed in the previous phase, such as use of Centers of Excellence and the participation and leadership of Member States in regional VAA activities through M&E experts in outcome reviews, was missed out during Phase 3, and efforts to resuscitate the centers of excellence were continuing at the time of the evaluation. There is a need for the design and execution of the RVAA system to strengthen its appreciation of the SADC regional integration subculture. The expectations of Member States on regional integration /harmonization programme efforts, must also be strengthened, particularly in terms of balancing the use of consultancy to increase their participation and leadership in VAA processes as a form of capacity-building, mentorship and for greater ownership and sustainability. More effort should be made to provide follow-up training and mentorship of Member States to transition from regional capacity-building efforts to the adoption and implementation of regional commitments towards achieving regional and national outcomes.

376. Influence has also improved, particularly in the use of VAA information for policy, strategy formulation and decision-making by governments and partners. More stakeholders have been participating in VAAs although at varying degrees. The Atlas was well received by Member States, more still needs to be done to increase its use at national and subnational levels. In the majority of Member States, the VAA remained more used to inform emergency responses than for developmental purposes. However, the evaluation team noted the increased diversification of the use of the VAA to inform broader national development issues in some countries such as Zimbabwe. Phase 3 contributed significantly to promoting VAAs to include vulnerabilities, and to reach more population subgroups. However, more regional facilitation and coordination is required to maintain and build on the gains made during Phase 3. The external support will continue to be required to ingrain VAA coordination and execution capabilities at regional and national levels.

**Evaluation Question 10: To what extent has the programme been responsive to changing operational contexts, including disruption and unexpected shocks? (Conflicts, Covid-19 pandemic etc.)**

377. The programme responded very well to developing and training Member States on guidelines and standards for conducting VAAs in the context of Covid-19, which assisted most Member States to continue conducting VAAs despite the restrictive measures. The programme has created a heightened sense of urgency for the region to integrate climate change and other thematic areas in VAAs. Programme coordination and management modalities were adapted to the use of virtual meetings and workshops; the VAA processes were also adapted through the:

- Use of remote data-collection
- Promotion of hotspot analysis
- Increased use of secondary data in VAA
- Provision of technical support to VAA analysis and VAA training through virtual platforms
- Incorporation of Covid-19 as one of the shocks analysed and reported on in VAA, including special thematic studies focused on better understanding of the impacts on Covid-19.

**Evaluation Question 11: To what extent did the programme integrate gender in assessments?**

378. Integration of gender as an emerging issue was identified as a priority for the RVAA programme Phase 3 alongside the integration of resilience to climate change, HIV/AIDS, urban and markets, poverty and chronic analysis. The regional VAA harmonized framework, developed with close consultation with technical NVAC members reinforced the need for collecting gender disaggregated analysis for VAA. Implementation and monitoring of the harmonized framework have been facilitated through the annual pre-assessment workshops and the annual dissemination forums. Annual monitoring by the programme shows that, in the 2021 assessment cycle, the level of integration of emerging issues including gender was given due attention. Awareness on integrating gender, children and people with disability had increased, leading some Member States to take their own initiatives through multisectoral collaboration at a national level to incorporate gender and people with disabilities in VAAs without much regional support. These commendable efforts in integrating gender in the programme needs to be further supported at a regional level to provide ongoing follow-up support at national levels, share experiences and lessons among the Member States.

### 3.1.4 Efficiency

#### Evaluation Question 12: What are the key achievements and challenges of the technical assistance offered by WFP and Landell Mills?

379. The services provided by WFP and LM significantly improved NVAA processes, as well as the credibility and influence of VAA information and products. The RVAA grants given to Member States for VAA helped Member States to galvanize local resources for VAAs:

- The service providers responded promptly to provide technical support to Member States to cope with the impact of Covid-19
- VAA tools and methodologies were improved and use of multiple VAA methodologies encouraged for efficacy
- Member States were trained on incorporating emerging issues in VAAs.

380. Other elements which contributed to improving the VAA efficacy and complemented each other in achieving institutionalized and sustainable VAAs included:

- Good governance of the RVAA programme and decentralization of VAAs at subnational levels
- Digitalization and use of technology, especially virtual communication
- Improved sharing of lessons learned
- Increased stakeholder participation.

#### Evaluation Question 13: What internal and external factors enabled or constrained the achievement of programme results?

381. The major external challenge that slowed down programme implementation was Covid-19 due to the need for adaptations and moderations. Internally, the revision of the Programme Theory of Change and Logical Framework within two years, including revisions to address challenges<sup>152</sup> identified by the mid-term review,<sup>153</sup> would have affected the guiding of the programme. However, this threat was averted as the refinement of the ToC was highly consultative, which improved clarity on the programme results framework, particularly among the programme service providers, which aided collaboration and maximized synergies in implementing the programme. As part of responding to the mid-term review, monthly service providers meetings commenced.

### 3.1.5 Value for Money

#### Evaluation Question 14: Has RVAA delivered value for money? Elements to consider include economy, efficiency, cost-effectiveness and equity. What has been achieved at what cost?

382. The programme increased the legitimacy and credibility of NVACs and their information products. As a result, the NVACs have demonstrated the ability to replace direct programme funding for vulnerability

<sup>152</sup> A summary of the key challenges has been paragraphed under 2.4.2, specifically the summary on efficiency

<sup>153</sup> UKAID, Landell Mills, WFP, SDC, 2019. *Mid-Term Review*.

assessments, which was deliberately scaled down gradually as part of the programme phase-out strategy. The gap created by this reduced funding is filled by funds raised domestically from Member States Governments and international cooperating partners. The utilization of WFP platforms such as WFP country offices to support Member States unlocked considerable value due to readily available support to NVACs. The reliance of Member States on VAA data generated by NVACs for decision-making and humanitarian or emergency response indicates the great value of the RVAA programme. The development of the Atlas, a flagship activity of the programme, expands the possibilities of use and, therefore, value of the RVAA data and information, thus enhancing its cost-effectiveness. The decentralization of the data-collection process in some Member States improved the efficiency of data-collection resulting in high cost-savings on travel, hotel accommodation and per diems. The sustained and expanded move from use of paper questionnaires to electronic questionnaires combined data-collection and data entry in household surveys in ways that saved both time and money. Opportunities for data-collection errors were also greatly reduced by this process.

### 3.1.6 Impact

#### Evaluation Question 15: What are the positive and/or negative, intended and unintended effects of the RVAA programme?

383. There is sufficient evidence of NVACs and VAA systems' strengthening government administrative structures, as well as policies, through reliable information that is produced promptly, and which is used to inform financial decisions in some Member States.

384. Some Member States are innovating and expanding the scope of VAA in countries such as Zimbabwe to include broader issues deemed necessary to inform policy and development. While this expansion indicates the important space and role played by NVACs, it may also cause NVACs to be viewed as displacing Member States' existing central information generation systems. Secondly, the continued expansion of the scope of assessments by NVACs indicates a positive step from data relevance and utility within Member States but, it could also risk weakening the focus on VAA information. NVACs need, therefore, to be alert to the necessity of balance between the expansion of VAA scope and the focus of VAA information generated on issues such as emergency response, building resilient and sustainable livelihoods.

385. There is evidence that data collected by the VAA system influences the ways Member States respond to emergencies. and, to a lesser extent how the system affects national development programmes and interventions in some countries such as Eswatini, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The positioning of the NVACs within the top political institutions in several countries is evident of the acceptability and value attached to the VAA system and the data it generates, and its subsequent influence on national and regional planning and development.

386. From recognizing the need to address vulnerability through a regional approach, the RVAA has had the added benefit of enabling Member States to share learnings, benchmarking and the adoption of best practices. This has resulted in concerted efforts to address common challenges, such as through regionally coordinated emergency assistance appeals. However, it should be noted that it is not just about responding to emergency humanitarian situations but also about building resilient and sustainable livelihoods, which Zimbabwe has obviously embraced.

387. The impact of the programme is also noted in the way it has assisted SADC Member States to support and rally behind the RVAA system and programme. For instance, at the beginning of Phase 3, training was conducted on VAA tools and assessment methods, but this was received without much enthusiasm by Member States, except Zimbabwe. However, as implementation progressed, the other countries began to appreciate this technical capacity-building, with increased engagement in the programme's strategy and the activities. This increased enthusiasm strengthened the resolve of Member States to build a clear, shared regional VAA vision. At the same time, this experience provided critical lessons for the SADC regional programme management, on the importance of patience, consultation, wisdom, and building a common vision in implementing a complex programme where stakeholders and key participants have diverse interests.

388. As noted earlier in the section on value for money, the programme has had a positive effect in spurring the mobilization of local resources and the potential for sustainability beyond the programme

phase. However, the impact towards an institutionalized and sustainable VAA system) varies between Member States with some more advanced than others. Continued technical and coordination support will be required post the current programme Phase 3 to move the entire region (all Member States) towards a fully integrated and sustainable VAA system on areas where Member States have low scores on the Institutionalization Index. This will assist in contributing effectively to the SADC goal of sustainable development and well-being, and as set out by the SDGs.

389. Some notable good practices emerging from the programme include innovative efforts for mobilizing local resources for sustainability, drawing on legitimacy, credibility and the influence of VAA by some Member States. For instance, ZIMVAC has been able to convince local partners, including the national treasury, different government departments, United Nations agencies, NGOs, to contribute financially, materially and in-kind resources towards annual VAAs in ways that have a high potential for sustainability. This success has hinged on its credibility arising from its high level of technical expertise, timely, comprehensive and high-quality annual VAAs, inclusive multisectoral and a multi-stakeholder approach. The consistent generation of good quality data has enabled ZIMVAC to extend the application of its data to an analysis of resilience, among other client-oriented analyses, thus encouraging partner participation and financial contribution.

390. The Botswana Vulnerability Assessment Committee has also managed to mobilize local fiscal resources drawing mainly on the legitimacy of the VAA system. The BVAC function and VAAs have been integrated into already existing government operations, priorities and processes dealing with disaster risk reduction and management. This has resulted in VAA being considered an integral part of government annual budget allocations. These examples present opportunities for the other Member States to consider in order to enhance local financing and sustainability of VAAs in the region.

391. NVACs are focusing on having the NVACs positioned within key ministries to enhance and strengthen the mobilization of resources for sustainability. For instance, the South African VAC (SAVAC) is focusing on having the NVAC placed in the Deputy President's Office where all government departments are coordinated.

#### **Evaluation Question 16: Has the RVAA Programme influenced emergency and developmental policy and programming?**

392. The programme activities involve multisector partnerships with key stakeholders, including INGOs and other non-state actors, to achieve RVAA programme outcomes and cohesion. VAA products have increasingly been used in monitoring risks and vulnerability threats while aiding decision-making and disaster mitigation appeal action plans, including climate emergencies. The increased complexity and demand for food and nutrition insecurity information within the region necessitates reliable knowledge access platforms. The RVAA programme developed the Atlas platform, allowing stakeholders to access credible and comparable data, aiding their policy formulation. Efforts should now be focused on transforming VAAs from information generation systems to ones that contribute to planning for the prevention and better mitigation of food and nutrition and related emergencies and disasters in the SADC.

### **3.1.7 Sustainability**

#### **Evaluation Question 17: To what extent have NVACs/VAA been integrated into national systems and processes (administrative, financial structures, planning, information systems etc.)?**

393. The NVACs/VAA integration into national systems and processes, financial structures and planning are evident within the RVAA programme. The integrated approaches and systems that foster sustainability include:

- Capacity strengthening
- Strengthening member state ownership through institutionalization and programme adoption and incorporation into national government systems
- Intentional programme phase-out plans
- Programme financing sustainability phase-out approaches
- The development of a RVAA Sustainability Plan.

### Evaluation Question 18: How sustainable is the RVAA system beyond the current donor-funded cycle?

394. The extent of the RVAA programme's sustainability is mixed as some aspects are clearly likely to continue when the programme ends while others may stop. The ones that are likely to continue are vulnerability assessments and NVAC structure existence. The issues that seem to hinder sustainability include the unpredictable extent of the integration of VAC in national government processes, as evidenced by low institutionalization in some Member States as well as inadequate VAC staff in others. There is a perception, although only expressed by a few Member States, that the RVAA is a SADC (Secretariat) project linked to donor funding, which may weaken their motivation to sustain interventions when Phase 3 funding ends. This seems to arise from a lack of differentiation between RVAA as an institutionalized 'system' of producing information and a 'programme' as an initiative to enhance the system within a particular period and with resource limitations.

#### 3.1.7 Overall Assessment

395. The extent to which the programme has and/is likely to achieve its intended results outcomes slightly vary but all the outputs as drawn from the activities have been achieved. There has been intense effort to ensure the implementation of all the activities of the three programme components of the RVAA programme namely:

- Institutionalization
- Technical capacity
- Communication and advocacy

396. This is despite some delays caused by unforeseen circumstances particularly Covid-19. Technical capacity and communication and advocacy were adequately delivered while institutionalization started about 18 months into the programme, which delayed the programme.

397. Of the intermediate outcomes, the programme made great strides towards achieving credibility and influence, while legitimacy was already high among Member States at the onset of Phase 3. The extent of "institutionalized and sustainable VAAs" varied from weak to strong. Therefore, the bulk of the work on the future programme should focus on strengthening the institutionalization of the NVACs to ensure that methods, tools and approaches developed by the programme are applied effectively to enhance the functioning and sustainability of the NVACs. At the same time, the attainment of resilience to shocks and food and nutrition insecurity remains aspirational in most Member States. More still needs to be done to strengthen VAAs across all Member States and to reduce variations between them towards attaining the programme goal at regional level.

## 3.2. LESSONS LEARNED

398. **A balance between a broad menu of flexible options and concise regional integration activities:** The RVAA programme usefully provided Member States with a comprehensive 'menu of options' (a multi-country approach) in the context of geometrical asymmetry while prioritizing a concise package of common regional activities across the countries that promote harmonization and integration in attaining regional outcomes and goals. This flexibility, within a context of many options and yet operating within a concise regional framework, provides a critical lesson to balance the individuality of a Member State within the broader community of the SADC region.

399. **Programme design and planning clarity:** The programme proposal and plans were usefully informed by the broad RVAA strategy. However, the close alignment of the strategy document and the proposal seemed to diminish the need for a specific programme implementation plan that was sufficiently detailed to provide clear guidance. The programme implementation processes were well thought out, and included annual plans, letters of agreement (with their attendant activity concept notes) that emerged from the AOM and which were reviewed by the RVAC, and PSC meetings held at least twice each year. However, despite this, the ToC had to be revised at least twice. Also, the logframe was considered synonymous with an implementation plan. A lesson learned is that it is critical to maintain the RVAA programme strategy as a broader guiding document and then develop budgeted implementation plan(s) (five-year, annual and sub annual) that are sufficiently detailed to cover the diverse aspects of the programme, and which are



systematically implemented, monitored and reported within the structures of SADC to ensure their continued relevance towards regional integration focused results chain (outputs-outcomes-impact). This will require that future programme budget ample time for planning and design to allow for the detailed implementation plan to be thought through and developed.

400. **Balance in implementation adjustments:** The implementation schedule for the RVAA programme was disrupted at regional and national levels mainly due to the impact of Covid-19 and challenges related to staff turnover. The programme did well in adjusting to this. A lesson learned is that, in such cases, it may be more prudent for project activities to be re-examined, streamlined and prioritized, rather than attempt to complete them all within a compressed timeframe. The adjustments made to adapt to Covid-19, for instance in technical capacity-building through virtual training, assisted significantly in maintaining the implementation of activities albeit by virtual delivery. The implementation could have given Member States a learning period with little pressure, which inevitably would have resulted in the loss of implementation time. This suggests that there should be a balance between maintaining planned activities and patience as well as consultations within programme adjustments.

401. **Programme decentralization:** Decentralization of programmes to local levels of national administration bears many benefits such as cost-effectiveness, ease of adaptation to disruptive emergencies such as Covid-19 and serve to transfer knowledge and skills and technologies and to build the capacity of local staff and stakeholders. This also has potential to entrench a sense of ownership and sustainability of programme efforts. Hence, this should be integral to the design and execution of regional and national programmes.

402. **Consolidation from earlier implementation phases:** A major strategic focus of Phase 3 was “Consolidation and Continuity: Protecting the Gains of the RVAA Programme”. Stakeholder consultations were conducted with a view of consolidating lessons and experiences from Phase 2, and to inform the design of Phase 3. In addition, some transitional activities were undertaken at the beginning of Phase 3 that provided resources to selected “unfinished” activities from the previous phase.

403. For long-term programmes where subsequent phases are meant to consolidate gains or correct inadequacies of previous phases, the consolidation efforts should be clearly defined in the results framework and cumulative progress, if any, tracked and accounted for. This will limit the extent to which new phase designs may consciously or unconsciously abandon essential aspects of the critical path towards the achievement of long-term programme goals and forgo the benefits that are likely to accrue from the “butterfly effect” (knock-on cumulative /ripple effect) characteristic of systemic and complex long-term programmes such as the SADC RVAA.

404. **Regional networking and learning:** A key lesson reported by some NVACs was that regional networking and inter-country learning of good practices and exchange of ideas was more effective when conducted in a more practically oriented learning of good practices such as staff exchange visits between the Member States. Regional networking opportunities can influence national thinking by allowing for peer review and reflection and exposing the Member States to new ideas and better ways of doing things. For instance, at the beginning of the programme ZIMVAC was the first NVAC that warmly embraced capacity-building initiatives aimed at, among other things, strengthening assessment methodologies in resilience, chronic vulnerability, climate change, which enhanced their capabilities to effectively conduct resilience assessment. Further to this, Zimbabwe is considered the most functional NVAC. Therefore, it may be worthwhile to establish ZIMVAC as a Centre of Excellence on resilience for other NVACs.

405. **VAA information as a resource mobilization tool:** In a programme such as RVAA, multi-stakeholder participation does not only serve to provide the credibility and influence of VAA. When VAA information is considered credible, multi-stakeholder participation can serve as a platform for mobilizing resources to conduct and sustain NVAAs, particularly in cases where stakeholder contributions to NVAAs processes are rewarded with more privileged access to VAA data.

406. **SADC Secretariat ownership:** Implementation of a regional programme such as the RVAA is more effective when there is greater involvement, ownership and control by the Member States and through the SADC Secretariat, than when largely delegated to international partners and primarily executed through a series of consultants. In such cases, more emphasis should be placed on enabling the SADC Secretariat and the Member States to drive the programme processes. At the same time, international partners and consultants operate in the background behind the SADC Secretariat to provide a technical catalytic

function. A function that is seen to be facilitated and coordinated by the SADC Secretariat as the mandated custodian of the regional subculture towards integration outcomes.

407. **Implementation modalities – use of existing structures improve programme efficiency:** The use of existing structures at regional and Member State levels increased the value for money of the programme as it brought in efficiency and cost-effectiveness through a reduction in the cost of delivery. At the regional level, the use of the WFP platform for quality control of the evaluation process and the use of WFP country offices enhanced the cost-effectiveness of the programme. In addition, Member States that used decentralized data-collection systems involving existing district structures resulted in huge savings on costs. The lesson is that the implementation modalities using WFP structures and national, local district structures enhanced programme efficiency.

408. **Programme formulation and gender issues:** One of the key outcomes for Phase 3 is broadening and deepening the scope of the RVAA to include causes of chronic vulnerability, poverty reduction, resilience and climate change, including gender issues. The coverage of gender issues during VAA data-collection and analysis has not been systematic (i.e., translated from regional strategy to regional support for Member States integration and reporting of gender), with only a few Member States capturing the gender information partially, despite this being emphasized as an emerging issue and guidelines for its integration being developed and promoted. The lesson is that key issues should be adequately covered during programme formulation and explicitly emphasized in the results framework, to avoid gaps during implementation.

409. **Comprehensive programme monitoring framework:** Overall, the programme is on track to successfully deliver expected outcomes by 2022. The monitoring framework consisted of tools such as the RVAA Functionality Scorecard, Budget tracker, Institutionalization Index as well as routine reporting by Member States and service providers. M&E tools, such as the budget tracker and RVAA scorecard were developed. However, the use of the tools to consistently generate M&E information from Member States for use at regional level was limited. Owing to the complexity of the programme, an effort was made to map the use and influence of VAA products through episode studies to get a sense of the programme contribution to intermediate outcomes and impact. To strengthen effective monitoring and evaluation of a complex programme like the RVAA, developing NVAC M&E systems, which was lacking in the design of the programme, should be prioritized as a key component of an integrated regional VAA M&E system. It would be beneficial for the M&E to measure the programme systematically at the different stakeholders' levels, e.g., SADC Secretariat (focusing on tracking progress on skills transfer and programme management), regional RVAA level whereupon the M&E aggregates Member State (NVAC) level frameworks, and at NVAC level where tracking is done at Member State level.

410. **Popularization of Atlas and its exposure for optimal use:** The web platform Atlas provides an opportunity for improving on M&E, and future rigorous meta-analysis studies that show longer-term programme impact beyond the programme's lifecycle. The Atlas offers Member States a chance to store, share, access and visualize their data and information while fostering regional collaboration. The lesson and challenge for RVAA is to maintain and enhance data quality across Member States to ascertain that collated data is credible, accurate and valuable. Thus, Atlas needs to be promoted among Member States as well as its effective use encouraged.

### 3.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 3.3.1 Relevance

411. **Recommendation 1: Determine core consistent Member State Interventions of the RVAA programme to be maintained post end of programme Phase 3 cycle as part of processes for continuity of the VAA system.** For purposes of continuity and project management best practice, the achievements, challenges, lessons learned, experiences, good/best /promising practices of the RVAA programme cycle Phase 3, and the current situation of vulnerability in the region should be well documented and considered as baseline information for future programme efforts in the context of the VAA system as a going concern. A selected core package of Member State VAA interventions should be planned to be maintained after the end of Phase 3. This will help to ensure the sustenance of a basic monitoring system for the RVAA system and will maintain momentum towards the achievement of medium

to long-term primary targeted results. The recently launched Atlas will provide critical information that can be accessed for future programmes.

412. **Recommendation 2: Expedite finalization of the sustainability plan and intensify capacity-building support focusing on issues needed for sustainability** including prioritization of relevant activities such as resource mobilization, assessment quality assurance and partnerships and network management. Ensure that there is a proper handover of benefits and ongoing processes of the RVAA at regional and national levels.

### 3.3.2 Effectiveness and efficiency

413. **Recommendation 3: Strengthen the capacity of the SADC Secretariat for regional coordination of technical support for the RVAA programme** to enhance participation and ownership consistent with an emphasis on harmonization and regional integration subculture than a multi-country or individual Member State focused perspective in RVAA technical facilitation efforts. Specific action could include encouraging the SADC Secretariat to hire a dedicated programme manager specifically for RVAA ahead of March 2022 to enable handover of programme benefits, outstanding activities and ongoing activities for ease of follow-up on them.

414. **Recommendation 4: Integrate gender, children and people with disabilities in VAAs in a manner that NVACs are guided to include it in Member State assessments.** The RVAA programme should prioritize providing technical support to Member States to accelerate the integration of gender in VAAs, working jointly with the SADC gender and development programme, and other relevant programmes. It may be useful to have Member States that have begun conducting gender analysis and using the information, such as in Lesotho, Madagascar, Namibia and Zimbabwe to help in sharing lessons learned and experiences with those countries that have not taken up this recommendation. Gender analysis should be considered, together with that of children and people with disabilities, in view of the vulnerabilities facing these groups, whose care is largely the responsibility of women.

415. **Recommendation 5: Improve RVAA conceptual clarity and monitoring, evaluation and reporting among all stakeholders.** This should include:

- Designing the RVAA MER system with adherence to the results-based management, and accountability frameworks for regional integration, obliging Member States to account for their domestication and implementation of regional and international commitments. Consideration should be given to strengthen the role of Member States in regional MER, capacitate and support them to self-reflect on their progress in implementing regional/international commitments, and to report to national and regional/international stakeholders, while subjecting themselves to a regional peer review mechanism.
- The MER system should extend its functions beyond tracking the programme execution of planned activities, to being an instrument for facilitating regional integration towards a SADC unitary community where possible.
- Clarify and differentiate the RVAA as a data generation system on one hand, and the RVAA programme as a (series of) transient endeavours of VAA improvement efforts and communicate this distinction to stakeholders and in the programme design and implementation processes. This is particularly important in enabling a focused contextual tracking of the programme elements while improving on the VAA as an evolving and purposive long-term system.

416. **Recommendation 6: Strengthen capacity-building of Member States in resource mobilization and technical skills through cascading technical capacity-building broadly to subnational structures like provinces and districts.** Attention should be given to:

- Training and supporting Member States in writing project proposals, and to engage the private sector for resource mobilization.
- Adopting a cascade training model on VAA for Member States to address human resource shortages and staff turnover. Trainees should be identified from across different sectors and members of NVACs/RVAC, and to include NGOs, training and research institutions.

417. **Recommendation 7: Facilitate the development of national resilience strategies within Member States.** Very few Member States have national resilience strategies, even though they are seen as a tool for mobilizing resources to support development of resilience among the vulnerable population who have passed the emergency stage. The SADC should take a leading role in supporting Member States who have not yet developed such a strategy.

418. **Recommendation 8: Consolidate the Communication and Advocacy Initiative to strengthen its use and influence in policy and resource mobilization.** As the policy thrust is the most recent to take root in the programme, there is a need to package the Policy Toolkit to enhance its use and influence in formulating policy. The opportunity, value proposition studies and episode studies should be utilized to enable NVACs to position themselves as knowledge brokers and contributors in policy formulation and implementation.

419. **Recommendation 9: Promote nimble approaches to VAA through employing the use of new technology that would have been successfully utilized in other Member States through cross learning.** In addition to current practice, the programme needs to further promote and develop capacities in forecast-based approaches to VAA, which is integrated to support safety net programmes. This strengthening of capacity should be carried out in tandem with investments in technology assets to ensure NVACs can take advantage of technology.

420. **Recommendation 10: Ensure well planned and prepared handover of RVAA programme to SADC including ongoing processes and responsibilities.** The Atlas platform is an ideal platform and space to be utilized for such a handover process. MANCO and RVAC, in support of the SADC Secretariat, should ensure the responsible handover of programme deliverables, ongoing processes and responsibilities. This will include:

- Putting in place, at the minimum as part of sustainability planning, measures to sustain the gains that have been achieved by the programme thus far. This could be a part of the handover and programme sustainability plan, “bearing in mind that handover is a process not a date”, while avoiding an “over the wall” handover.
- Documenting all activities that are not likely to be implemented, and those that have been implemented or likely to be implemented and for which follow-up support would be required and provide an assessment of implications for non-implementation or follow-up of those activities. This report will help the programme stakeholders to make decisions on how those activities will be handled post March 2022. It would be a waste (inefficiency) if some key activities were to be left hanging or not properly completed and handed over to Member States and the SADC Secretariat as benefits.
- Clearly defining stakeholders’ roles, responsibilities and accountability towards maintaining /sustaining the benefits going forward, while ensuring uninterrupted continuity of ongoing processes as well as implementation of unfinished activities. Opportunity should be taken to support integrating benefits and processes into government and partners’ business-as-usual operations drawing on multisectorality, economies of scale and intersectoral linkages of VAA for efficiency, cost management and sustainability.
- Identify products of the RVAA programme Phase 3 that can be transformed for wider long-term application to guide the RVAA towards institutionalization for a sustainable VAA system, such as the Institutionalization Index and RVAA online Atlas, the e-Learning Advocacy Toolkit course Covid-19 VAA guidelines, gender disaggregation guidelines, among others as may be determined by programme stakeholders. This will require that these tools are institutionalized by transitioning them from the current project (technical partner owned identity) to a SADC identity /ownership. It will also require that they are further subjected, drawing on lessons learned and experiences on their application thus far, to SADC policy / harmonization instruments or guidelines development, approval, domestication and monitoring process with new titles as for example The SADC Framework for Sustainable Institutionalization of VAA System, or the SADC RVAA Online Atlas, among others. The SADC Secretariat should guide this process as part of handover of products and processes of the RVAA programme Phase 3.

421. **Recommendation 11: Promote VAA system to play a preventive and futuristic planning advisory function on vulnerability beyond the supply of data.** The RVAA system seems to have

remained too focused on information collection and advisory services on food and nutrition security, and vulnerability. The RVAA should consider playing a more preventive and futuristic planning advisory role on vulnerability, building on the relationship of NVACs and DRR in most Member States, among other vulnerability monitoring systems. The RVAA should use different functions in in order to come up with one holistic strategy to address vulnerability. This is particularly important because disasters and emergency situations are intricately linked with food and nutrition insecurity in the SADC region.

422. **Recommendation 12: Promote and encourage the full participation of Member States in virtual RVAA programme meetings.** This can be achieved through:

- Use of SADC technical subcommittees as the overall approach to technical engagement – ensuring that meetings are also technically motivated, specific results-oriented and accountable to SADC policy organs
- Use of local rather than international expertise (such as collaboration from a United Nations agency), and national /regional intersectoral collaboration as for example, applied by Zimbabwe on VAA gender analysis
- Decentralization of VAA, ensuring involvement and capacity-building of local staff and communities
- Building capacity for conducting virtual VAA
- Designing and facilitating virtual meetings in ways that are interactive and motivating.

423. In order to achieve this, adequate time would have to be allocated to agenda items, with video linked virtual communication tools bringing a personal touch that motivates attention. Member States delegations should be well equipped and able to participate on virtual platforms. Physical meetings should continue to complement virtual meetings where possible, although a hybrid approach could also be used where, for example members of the same organization or country operate from the same venue during national and regional virtual meetings.

424. **Recommendation 13: Strengthen, systematize and intensify Member State to Member State learning as a peer-to-peer capacity-building approach.** This may include identifying those states performing well on certain aspects and pairing them with others which are performing poorly in the same area, so that they can then conduct learning exchange visits.

425. The evaluation recommendations' details indicating (1) classification (short/medium/long-term), (2) recommended lead entity and other entities, (3) recommendation priority (high/medium/low), and (4) by when the recommendation should be implemented is presented below (Table 9), The table indicating the link between findings and conclusion, evaluation criteria and recommendations is indicated in annexures document (Annex 17).

Table 9: Evaluation Recommendations<sup>154</sup>

| # | Recommendation   | Recommendation Grouping<br>Short/medium/<br>long-term | Responsibility<br>(One lead office/<br>entity) | Other contributing<br>entities (if<br>applicable) | Priority:<br>High/medium<br>Medium | By when              |
|---|--|---|--|---|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | <b>Recommendation 1: Determine core consistent Member State Interventions of the RVAA programme to be maintained post end of programme Phase 3 cycle as part of processes for continuity of the VAA system.</b> For purposes of continuity and project management best practice, the achievements, challenges, lessons learned, experiences, good/best /promising practices of the RVAA programme cycle Phase 3, and the current situation of vulnerability in the region should be well documented and considered as baseline information for future programme efforts in the context of the VAA system as a going concern. A selected core package of Member State VAA interventions should be planned to be maintained after the end of Phase 3. This will help to ensure the sustenance of a basic monitoring system for the RVAA system and will maintain momentum towards the achievement of medium to long-term primary targeted results. The recently launched Atlas will provide critical information that can be accessed for future programmes. | Short-term to medium term                             | WFP  | Landell Mills, SADC                               | High                               | Next programme phase |
| 2 | <b>Recommendation 2: Expedite finalization of the sustainability plan and intensify capacity-building support focusing on issues needed for sustainability</b> including prioritization of   | Short-term to medium term                             | WFP  | Landell Mills, SADC & NVACs                       | High                               | By March 2022        |

<sup>154</sup> It is noted that SADC Secretariat should be playing a leading role in implementing all the recommendations. However, due to human resources capacity limitations, it is recommended that WFP plays a leading role including capacity transfer to SADC Secretariat as well as exploring raising resources from Member States to have a fulltime RVAA Officer within the DRR Unit of the SADC Secretariat.



|   |   |                                       |     |                     |        |                                      |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|-----|---------------------|--------|--------------------------------------|
|   | relevant activities such as resource mobilization, assessment quality assurance and partnerships and network management. Ensure that there is a proper handover of benefits and ongoing processes of the RVAA at regional and national levels.  |                                       |     |                     |        |                                      |
| 3 | <b>Recommendation 3: Strengthen the capacity of the SADC Secretariat for regional coordination of technical support for the RVAA programme</b> to enhance participation and ownership consistent with an emphasis on harmonization and regional integration subculture than a multi-country or individual Member State focused perspective in RVAA technical facilitation efforts. Specific action could include encouraging the SADC Secretariat to hire a dedicated programme manager specifically for RVAA ahead of March 2022 to enable handover of programme benefits, outstanding activities and ongoing activities for ease of follow-up on them.  | Short-term, medium-term and long-term | WFP | Landell Mills, SADC | High   | By end of phase three and next phase |
| 4 | <b>Recommendation 4: Integrate gender, children and people with disabilities in VAAs in a manner that NVACs are guided to include it in Member State assessments.</b> The RVAA programme should prioritize providing technical support to Member States to accelerate the integration of gender in VAAs, working jointly with the SADC gender and development programme, and other relevant programmes. It may be useful to have Member States that have begun conducting gender analysis and using the information, such as in Lesotho, Madagascar, Namibia and Zimbabwe to help in sharing lessons learned and experiences with those countries that have not taken up this recommendation. Gender analysis should be considered, together with that of children and people with disabilities, in view of the vulnerabilities facing these groups, whose care is largely the responsibility of women. | Short-term, medium-term and long-term | WFP | Landell Mills, SADC | High   | By end of phase three and next phase |
| 5 | <b>Recommendation 5: Improve RVAA conceptual clarity and monitoring, evaluation and reporting among all stakeholders.</b> This should include:  | Short-term                            | WFP | Landell Mills, SADC | Medium | Next programme phase                 |

|   |  |                           |     |                     |      |               |
|---|--|---------------------------|-----|---------------------|------|---------------|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designing the RVAA MER system with adherence to the results-based management, and accountability frameworks for regional integration, obliging Member States to account for their domestication and implementation of regional and international commitments. Consideration should be given to strengthen the role of Member States in regional MER, capacitate and support them to self-reflect on their progress in implementing regional/international commitments, and to report to national and regional/international stakeholders, while subjecting themselves to a regional peer review mechanism.</li> <li>• The MER system should extend its functions beyond tracking the programme execution of planned activities, to being an instrument for facilitating regional integration towards a SADC unitary community where possible.</li> <li>• Clarify and differentiate the RVAA as a data generation system on one hand, and the RVAA programme as a (series of) transient endeavours of VAA improvement efforts and communicate this distinction to stakeholders and in the programme design and implementation processes. This is particularly important in enabling a focused contextual tracking of the programme elements while improving on the VAA as an evolving and purposive long-term system.</li> </ul> |                           |     |                     |      |               |
| 6 | <p><b>Recommendation 6; Strengthen capacity-building of Member States in resource mobilization and technical skills through cascading technical capacity-building broadly to subnational structures like provinces and districts.</b> Attention should be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and supporting Member States in writing project proposals, and to engage the private sector for resource mobilization.</li> </ul>  | Short-term to medium term | WFP | Landell Mills, SADC | High | By April 2022 |

|   |  |                           |     |              |        |                                      |
|---|--|---------------------------|-----|--------------|--------|--------------------------------------|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopting a cascade training model on VAA for Member States to address human resource shortages and staff turnover. Trainees should be identified from across different sectors and members of NVACs /RVAC, and to include NGOs, training and research institutions.</li> <li>Training and supporting Member States in writing project proposals, and to engage the private sector for resource mobilization.</li> <li>Adopting a cascade training model on VAA for Member States to address human resource shortages and staff turnover. Trainees should be identified from across different sectors and members of NVACs /RVAC, and to include NGOs, training and research institutions</li> </ul> |                           |     |              |        |                                      |
| 7 | <p><b>Recommendation 7: Facilitate the development of national resilience strategies within Member States.</b> Very few Member States have national resilience strategies, even though they are seen as a tool for mobilizing resources to support development of resilience among the vulnerable population who have passed the emergency stage. The SADC should take a leading role in supporting Member States who have not yet developed such a strategy.</p>  | Short-term to medium term | WFP | SADC & NVACs | Medium | Next programme phase                 |
| 8 | <p><b>Recommendation 8: Consolidate the Communication and Advocacy Initiative to strengthen its use and influence in policy and resource mobilization.</b></p> <p>As the policy thrust is the most recent to take root in the programme, there is a need to package the Policy Toolkit to enhance its use and influence in formulating policy. The opportunity, value proposition studies and episode studies should be utilized to enable NVACs to position themselves as knowledge brokers and contributors in policy formulation and implementation.</p>  | Short-term to medium term | WFP | SADC         | High   | By end of phase three and next phase |

|    |  |            |     |                     |        |                                      |
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| 9  | <p><b>Recommendation 9: Promote nimble approaches to VAA through employing the use of new technology that would have been successfully utilized in other Member States through cross learning.</b> In addition to current practice, the programme needs to further promote and develop capacities in forecast-based approaches to VAA, which is integrated to support safety net programmes. This strengthening of capacity should be carried out in tandem with investments in technology assets to ensure NVACs can take advantage of technology.</p>  | Short Term | WFP | Landell Mills, SADC | Medium | By end of phase three and next phase |
| 10 | <p><b>Recommendation 10. Ensure well planned and prepared handover of RVAA programme to SADC including ongoing processes and responsibilities.</b> The Atlas platform is an ideal platform and space to be utilized for such a handover process. MANCO and RVAC, in support of the SADC Secretariat, should ensure the responsible handover of programme deliverables, ongoing processes and responsibilities. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Putting in place, at the minimum as part of sustainability planning, measures to sustain the gains that have been achieved by the programme thus far. This could be a part of the handover and programme sustainability plan, “bearing in mind that handover is a process not a date”, while avoiding an “over the wall” handover.</li> <li>• Documenting all activities that are not likely to be implemented, and those that have been implemented or likely to be implemented and for which follow-up support would be required and provide an assessment of implications for non-implementation or follow-up of those activities. This report will help the programme stakeholders to make decisions on how those activities will be handled post March 2022. It would be a waste (inefficiency) if some key activities were to be left hanging or not properly completed and handed over to Member States and the SADC Secretariat as benefits.</li> </ul> | Short-term | WFP | SADC                | High   | By April 2022                        |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly defining stakeholders' roles, responsibilities and accountability towards maintaining /sustaining the benefits going forward, while ensuring uninterrupted continuity of ongoing processes as well as implementation of unfinished activities. Opportunity should be taken to support integrating benefits and processes into government and partners' business-as-usual operations drawing on multisectorality, economies of scale and intersectoral linkages of VAA for efficiency, cost management and sustainability.</li> <li>Identify products of the RVAA programme Phase 3 that can be transformed for wider long-term application to guide the RVAA towards institutionalization for a sustainable VAA system, such as the Institutionalization Index and RVAA online Atlas, the e-Learning Advocacy Toolkit course Covid-19 VAA guidelines, gender disaggregation guidelines, among others as may be determined by programme stakeholders. This will require that these tools are institutionalized by transitioning them from the current project (technical partner owned identity) to a SADC identity /ownership. It will also require that they are further subjected, drawing on lessons learned and experiences on their application thus far, to SADC policy /harmonization instruments or guidelines development, approval, domestication and monitoring process with new titles as for example The SADC Framework for Sustainable Institutionalization of VAA System, or the SADC RVAA Online Atlas, among others. The SADC Secretariat should guide this process as part of handover of products and processes of the RVAA programme Phase 3.</li> </ul> |  |  |  |  |  |
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| 11 | <p><b>Recommendation 11: Promote VAA system to play a preventive and futuristic planning advisory function on vulnerability beyond the supply of data.</b> The RVAA system seems to have remained too focused on information collection and advisory services on food and nutrition security, and vulnerability. The RVAA should consider playing a more preventive and futuristic planning advisory role on vulnerability, building on the relationship of NVACs and DRR in most Member States, among other vulnerability monitoring systems. The RVAA should use different functions in in order to come up with one holistic strategy to address vulnerability. This is particularly important because disasters and emergency situations are intricately linked with food and nutrition insecurity in the SADC region.</p>   | Short-term | WFP | Landell Mills, SADC | High | By end of phase three and next phase |
| 12 | <p><b>Recommendation 12: Promote and encourage the full participation of Member States in virtual RVAA programme meetings.</b> This can be achieved through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of SADC technical subcommittees as the overall approach to technical engagement – ensuring that meetings are also technically motivated, specific results-oriented and accountable to SADC policy organs.</li> <li>• Use of local rather than international expertise (such as collaboration from a United Nations agency), and national/regional intersectoral collaboration as for example, applied by Zimbabwe on VAA gender analysis.</li> <li>• Decentralization of VAA, ensuring involvement and capacity-building of local staff and communities.</li> <li>• Building capacity for conducting virtual VAA.</li> <li>• Designing and facilitating virtual meetings in ways that are interactive and motivating.</li> </ul> | Short-term | WFP | Landell Mills, SADC | High | By end of phase three and next phase |



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| 13 | <p><b>Recommendation 13: Strengthen, systematize and intensify Member State to Member State learning as a peer-to-peer capacity-building approach.</b></p> <p>This may include identifying those states performing well on certain aspects and pairing them with others which are performing poorly in the same area, so that they can then conduct learning exchange visits.</p> | Short-term<br>Medium term | WFP | Landell Mills, SADC | High | By April 2022 |
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**Southern African Development Community, Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Landell Mills and the World Food Programme (Regional Bureau for Southern Africa)**

**[Link to the website]**

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