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

### INTRODUCTION

This summary evaluation report presents the key findings and recommendations of the joint final evaluation of Phase 3 of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (RVAA) programme (2017–2022). The evaluation was jointly commissioned by a consortium of partners comprising the SADC Secretariat, the 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 was led by WFP and conducted by a team of independent consultants. Field data collection took place from 12 July to 13 August 2021.

### SUBJECT OF THE EVALUATION

The RVAA programme was implemented in SADC through Member States (MS) 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 MS in the RVAA covered by the evaluation 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.

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 MS (that submitted data) registered an estimated 65.52 million people as food-insecure.

### APPROACH AND METHODS

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 vulnerability assessment and analysis (VAA) processes
- Review of programme documents

A Qualitative Impact Protocol (QuIP) adapted tool was used to collect data from key informants from all 16 SADC MS. Data was collected virtually as the evaluation team could not travel due to COVID-19 restrictions. 97 key informant interviews, out of the targeted 102, were successfully conducted. Of these respondents, 52.5 percent were women, and 47.5 percent were men, which indicates a majority representation of female views. These were considered enough for qualitative analysis and to allow for objective evaluation conclusions. A survey was used to collect quantitative data from National Vulnerability Assessment Committee (NVAC) members and selected NVAC product users, including policymakers in MS. Due to officials' hectic schedules, the response rate for the online questionnaire was low (6%), with only 27 out of the expected 402 persons responding. Due to the low survey response rate, trend mapping across MS was limited.

### EVALUATION PURPOSE

The evaluation sought to determine the extent to which the RVAA programme has achieved its key intermediate outcomes of increased legitimacy, credibility, and influence of the RVAA system as well as determine the extent and ways in which the programme contributed to the final outcome of "Institutionalised and sustainable VAA systems that enhance emergency and developmental responses at national and regional levels"

Following the criteria by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC), the evaluation focused on 18 key evaluation questions centred on relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability,

including a seventh criterion on value for money drawn from the FCDO approach.<sup>1</sup>

## EVALUATION STAKEHOLDERS AND USERS

Key users of the evaluation findings include the following:

- **RVAA regional level:** Steering Committee, SADC Secretariat, RVAA Committee, RVAA Programme Management Committee, regional international cooperating partners (ICPs), service providers (WFP and Landell Mills), and donors.
- **Member State level:** National Vulnerability Assessment Committees (NVAC), SADC MS policymakers, users of NVAC products and international cooperating partners.

## KEY FINDINGS

### RELEVANCE

**Evaluation Question 1: Is the RVAA programme relevant to the needs, priorities and policies of the MS and SADC across the region?**

The RVAA programme is responding to MS needs, policies, and priorities. The needs and priorities focus on two areas:

- **Strengthening the technical capacity of Vulnerability Assessment Committees (VAC)** 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 regional vulnerability assessment committees (RVAC) and NVAC system resources**, and to the capacity to integrate various VAA tools and approaches for national planning processes and programme responses.

At a policy level, the programme is in line 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.

The aspirations of these policies, among other things, are to ensure poverty reduction, promote sustainable and equitable economic growth and socioeconomic development, support socially disadvantaged people, and promote the self-sustaining development of MS through reliable and credible information.

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

The programme has remained relevant through adapting to changes and emerging needs and priorities. This is seen in the revised ToC and development of the institutionalization index that assesses MS progress towards an institutionalized and sustainable VAA system. Activities and schedules for the RVAA programme were also modified in response to COVID-19.

The continuous modification of the ToC, which resulted in programme outputs and deliverables changing regularly, is comprehensible given the need for flexibility to accommodate several intervention options.

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

The programme has been **sensitive and responsive to the SADC Regional context, policies, and specific MS issues**. 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 Mid-Term Review (2019), VAA Opportunity Mapping Study (2020), and others that resulted in informing programme adjustments such as ToC and logframe revisions.

### COHERENCE

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

<sup>1</sup> Independent Commission for Aid Impact. 2018. [DFID's approach to value for money in programme and portfolio management](#)

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**The RVAA programme is well aligned with relevant SADC programmes and aspirations as spelled out in relevant policies.**

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 MS participation 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.

The SADC Disaster and Risk Management (DRR) Unit, which houses the RVAA, is responsible for coordinating disaster risk reduction, vulnerability assessment and resilience interventions. This promotes synergy between the DRR mandate on emergency preparedness and mitigation responses, and the RVAA focus 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 guarantees that broader disasters and emergencies and food and nutrition insecurity in SADC are effectively coordinated.

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

The RVAA programme was implemented within a framework of different policies which address the various vulnerabilities affecting food and nutrition security and well-being within MS and the region. This minimized the contradictions that would otherwise derail the programme. The VAA system would add more value to regional and national integration and development not only through information generation but also by contributing to better preparedness for emergencies and disasters, as well as by strengthening the promotion of gender equality and interventions tailored 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?**

The positioning of RVAA programme within the SADC Disaster and Risk Management (DRR) Unit fostered

complementarity between the DRR mandate on emergency preparedness and mitigation responses, and the RVAA focus on informing areas where food insecurity necessitates disaster and emergency responses at national and regional levels. Additionally, the RVAA programme allowed for better coordination of broader disasters and emergencies with those relating to food and nutrition insecurity in SADC. Furthermore, the RVAA focused on developmental indicators, including gender, and helped to portray a holistic picture of the specific impact of emergencies and disasters that would improve targeted planning and service delivery for targeted population groups.

## 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, the achievement of outcomes of the RVAA Programme?**

About 88 percent of the 26 planned activities were achieved and 3 were in progress at the time of the evaluation. Domestic resources accounted for 56 percent of the costs on average. The programme was rated A during the RVAA annual review, in terms of execution of activities, despite the 55 percent utilization rate. Some of the key activities implemented during the period 2018-2021 included the development of VAA reporting and guidelines for integration and harmonization; the completion of 14 NVAC technical capacity assessments, the procurement and installation of the SADC RVAA server on the SADC secretariat premises; and the development of an e-learning advocacy toolkit course. Out of the 11 NVACs only Eswatini, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe had integrated gender issues into their annual assessment by December 2020.

The RVAA annual programme review report of September 2020 scored the programme with 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".

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

The NVACs commonly defined institutionalization as the embedding of the VAC within existing national systems of planning and programming, and when an NVAC is well established and recognized within a country's government systems and operations.

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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>2</sup> six scored 55 or below, and four scored between 65 and 75. Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Africa ranked lowest on functionality while Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, and Malawi scored high.

During Phase 3 (2017–2021), institutionalization was explicitly elaborated to mean: the creation of dedicated core VAC units with full-time staff; full in-country funding of VAC activities; stronger leadership and VAC advocacy roles at both SADC and MS levels. The evaluation team concluded based on this definition of institutionalization, that most of the MS still had a long way to go. Nevertheless, 14 MS in 2017 and 15 MS in 2021 had some functional VAA system. The lack of common understanding of the definition of institutionalization as a process and final outcome necessitates the development of an institutionalization scale or continuum towards attaining an institutionalized and sustainable VAA system.

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, using technology-driven and virtual data-collection methods and to convene meetings.

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

**Legitimacy has improved, particularly in increased local resource mobilization efforts among MS.** 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 MS, including the Presidents' and Prime Ministers' offices.

**Improved credibility and outreach to vulnerable populations.** Improved credibility was notable in terms of improvement in conducting VAAs, including using combined methods, conducting urban assessments, and reaching out to more expansive geographical areas at the national level, and more vulnerable populations. Emerging issues such as gender, chronic poverty, and climate change

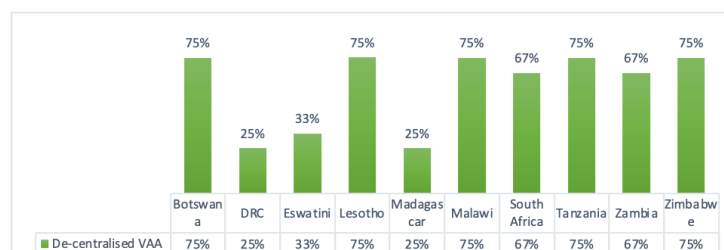
have begun to be integrated into VAAs, albeit at different levels across the MS. Countries such as Lesotho, Madagascar, Namibia, and Zimbabwe have integrated gender into VAAs.

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

Implementation and monitoring of the harmonized framework has been facilitated through the annual pre-assessment workshops and the Annual Dissemination Forums.

Decentralization also served as an indicator towards credibility and 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, upskilling of local personnel and enhanced ownership of VAA processes at local levels.

Figure 1: Decentralization levels among SADC MS



**The programme developed a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework as a guide to its monitoring and evaluation objectives.** Using techniques such as episode studies, the internal M&E looked at the activities and how they affected the programme's aims. However, it is unclear how the M&E function served the entire programme, which included activities from WFP, Landell Mills, and the SADC Secretariat. It is also unclear how M&E activities were integrated and coordinated. In addition, the M&E outputs, outcomes, and impact results were not adequately reported and disseminated at the national and regional levels. Despite these gaps in the M&E system and processes, commendable efforts were made to

<sup>2</sup> Landell Mills. 2019. *SADC RVAA Programme Institutionalisation Support Component Institutionalisation Index Manual Draft 0.3*.

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create a functional and usable M&E framework, considering the programme's complexity. Monitoring and evaluation activities, including training and programme performance tracking, were implemented among MS.

**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)**

The programme responded very well to developing and training MS on guidelines and standards for conducting VAAs during COVID-19, which assisted most MS to continue conducting VAAs despite restrictive measures. The programme 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.

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

**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.** Gender has been incorporated into VAAs in countries such as Lesotho, Madagascar, Namibia, and Zimbabwe. More efforts should be made to provide follow-up training and mentorship of MS to transition from regional capacity-building outputs to immediate outcomes such as improved knowledge, skills, and competencies for domestication and implementation of regional commitments, as well as to achieve intermediate regional and national outcomes and impact.

The regional VAA harmonized framework developed in close consultation with technical NVAC members reinforced the need for conducting gender-disaggregated analysis for VAA

## EFFICIENCY

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

The programme had an M&E evaluation framework based on the logframe and theory of change. The framework provides structure, processes, and tools for tracking programme progress at regional and national levels and for 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 review, the mid-term review, and the final evaluation.

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?**

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

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

**The strengths of a VAA system are dependent 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

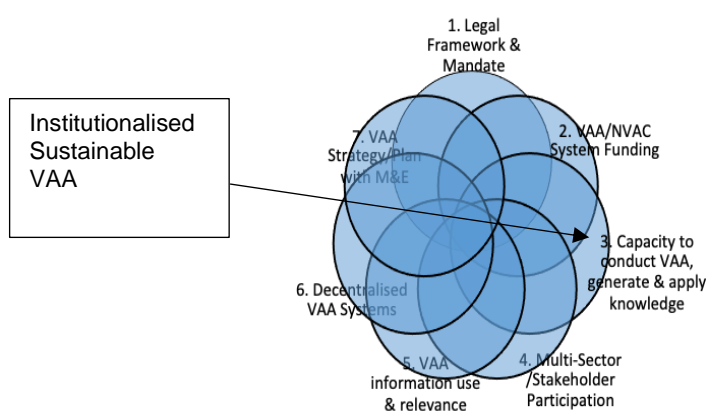
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sustainability for a VAA system. The three intermediate results areas by themselves are systemically interrelated, and the full institutionalization can be the glue that sustainably binds them. According to the evaluation team, these relationships 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 2 below for the interrelationships of the elements.

**Figure 2: Systems’ interconnectivity or linkages of VAA institutionalization outcomes**



## 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?**

The RVAA programme was on course to achieve most of the outputs by 2022, when Phase 3 ends, with some challenges such as MS providing local funds for VAA activities. The NVACs, because 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 MS themselves and international cooperating partners. However, ensuring predictable funding for the assessments and the intended NVAC capacity-building remains a challenge.

The decentralization of the data-collection process in some MS 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 the use of paper to electronic questionnaires combined with data collection and data entry in household surveys saved both time and money. Opportunities for data-collection errors were also greatly reduced.

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

## IMPACT

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

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 MS. For instance, during the July 2021 looting that broke out in South Africa, the RVAA information was used to make decisions on how to address the situation.

**There is evidence that data collected by the VAA system influences most MS emergency responses** 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, the data and information that it generates, and its subsequent influence on national and regional planning and development.

**The RVAA has had the added benefit of enabling MS to share learning, benchmarking, and the adoption of best practices.** This resulted in joint efforts to address common challenges 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.

The impact of the programme is also noted in the way it has assisted SADC MS in supporting the RVAA system and programme. For instance, at the beginning of Phase 3, training was conducted on VAA tools and assessment

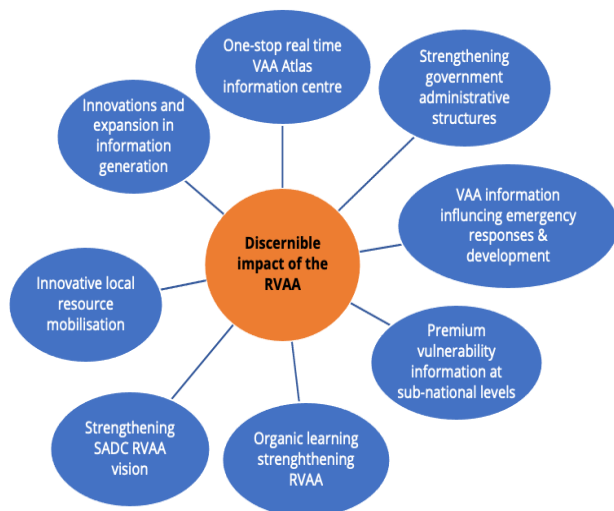
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methods, but this was given a lukewarm response by MS, except Zimbabwe. However, as implementation progressed, other MSs began to appreciate the advantages of the training, resulting in increased engagement with the programme strategy and the activities. This strengthened the MS to build a clear shared regional VAA vision, which in turn strengthened regional resolve and commitment to the programme.

**Figure 3: Discernible impact of the RVAA programme**



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.)?**

**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 MS through the 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?

Sustainability depends on the integration of VAC in national government processes, but this is unpredictable, due to low institutionalization in some MS and inadequate VAC staff in others. There is also a perception in some MS (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 ends. 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.

## CONCLUSIONS

The RVAA programme made great strides **towards achieving the intermediate outcomes of credibility and influence**, although other outcomes and legitimacy were already high among MS 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 MS. More still needs to be done to strengthen VAAs across all MS and to reduce variations between them towards attaining the programme goal.

## LESSONS LEARNT

Below are the lessons learnt in the implementation of the RVAA programme.

**A balance between a broad menu of flexible options and concise regional integration activities:** The RVAA

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programme usefully provided MS 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.

**Programme design and planning clarity:** The programme proposal and plans were informed by the broad RVAA strategy. However, the close alignment of the strategy and the proposal seemed to diminish the need for a specific programme implementation plan that is sufficiently detailed to provide clear guidance. In addition, **the 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 serves to transfer knowledge, skills, and technologies and to build the capacity of local staff and stakeholders.

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. Another 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 more practically oriented learning of good practices such as staff exchange visits between the MS.

In a programme such as the 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 NVAA processes are rewarded with more privileged access to VAA data. Implementation of a regional programme such as the RVAA is more effective when there is greater involvement, **ownership, and control by the MS** and through the SADC Secretariat than when largely delegated to international partners and primarily executed through a series of consultants.

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 MS integration and reporting of gender), with only a few MS capturing the gender information partially, despite this being emphasized as an

emerging issue and guidelines for its integration being developed and promoted.

The web platform Atlas provides an opportunity for improving M&E, and future rigorous meta-analysis studies that show longer-term programme impact beyond the programme's lifecycle. The **Atlas** offers MS 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 MS to ascertain that collated data is credible, accurate and valuable. Thus, Atlas needs to be promoted among MS and its effective use encouraged.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Relevance

**Recommendation 1:** Determine core consistent MS 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.

**Recommendation 2:** Expedite the finalization of the sustainability plan and intensify capacity-building support focusing on issues needed for sustainability such as resource mobilization, assessment quality assurance partnerships and network management.

### Effectiveness and efficiency

**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 rather than a multi-country or individual Member state-focused perspective in RVAA technical facilitation efforts.

**Recommendation 4:** Integrate gender, children, and people with disabilities in VAAs in a manner that NVACs are guided to include in MS assessments. The RVAA programme should prioritize providing technical support to MS to accelerate the integration of gender in VAAs, working jointly with the SADC gender and development programme, and other relevant programmes.

**Recommendation 5: Improve RVAA conceptual clarity and monitoring, evaluation and reporting** among all stakeholders. Among other aspects, this should include designing the RVAA monitoring, evaluation, and reporting system with adherence to the results-based management, and accountability frameworks for regional integration, obliging MS to account for their domestication and implementation of regional and international commitments.

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**Recommendation 6: Strengthen the capacity-building of MS in resource mobilization and technical skills** through cascading technical capacity-building broadly to subnational structures like provinces and districts. Attention should be given to the adoption of a cascading training model on VAA for MS to address human resource shortages and staff turnover. Trainees should be identified from across different sectors and members of NVACs /RVAC, and include non-governmental organizations, training, and research institutions.

**Recommendation 7: Facilitate the development of national resilience strategies within MS.** Very few MS have national resilience strategies, even though they are seen as a tool for mobilizing resources to support the development of resilience among the vulnerable population who have passed the emergency stage.

**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 policy formulation.

**Recommendation 9: Promote nimble approaches to VAA by employing the use of new technology** that would have been successfully utilized in other MS 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.

**Recommendation 10: Ensure well well-planned and prepared handover of the 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. The Management Committee (MANCO) and RVAC, in support of the SADC Secretariat, should ensure the responsible handover of programme deliverables, ongoing processes and responsibilities.

**Recommendation 11: Promote the 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.

**Recommendation 12: Promote and encourage the full participation of MS in virtual RVAA** programme meetings. Among other aspects, this can be achieved using 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.

**Recommendation 13: Strengthen, systematize, and intensify MS to MS 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 who are performing poorly in the same area so that they can then conduct learning exchange visits.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAADP	Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DRRU	Disaster Risk Reduction Unit
FCDO	Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office
FNSS	Food and Nutrition Security Strategy
KII	Key Informant Interviews
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MS	Member States
MANCO	Management Committee
NVAA	National Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis
NVAC	National Vulnerability and Assessment Committee
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
QuIP	Qualitative Impact Protocol
RVAA	Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis
RVAC	Regional Vulnerability Assessment Committee
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
ToC	Theory of Change
VAA	Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis
VAC	Vulnerability Assessment Committee
WFP	World Food Programme

### Reference:

Full and summary reports of the evaluation and the Management Response are available at <https://www.wfp.org/publications/sadc-regional-vulnerability-assessment-and-analysis-programme-joint-evaluation>

For more information, please contact the Office of Evaluation [wfp.decentralizedevaluation@wfp.org](mailto:wfp.decentralizedevaluation@wfp.org)