

# **Causes of food crisis in the Southern African Development Community**

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## **Abstract**

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is one the largest region in the African continent. The region is made of fifteen countries. Over the current decade, this region has been going through a critical food crisis, particularly within the disadvantage rural areas. In order to relieve this situation, the state members of the SADC region have come up with various strategies such as the program called zero hunger and the second one called the outcome seven. These programs are designed to create a future environment where households are not dealing with issues relating to food insecurity. However, these approaches have not yet met the expected result because the trend of food dearth still rising considerably at regional and national level. To this end, this paper aims at measuring the main issues impacting negatively on food security at household level. At least ten countries out of fifteen countries that composed the SADC region were used as case study. To date, various studies have been carried out investigating the issues related to food insecurity at country' level in the region. However, there is lack of such study at regional level, hence, this paper aims at bridging this gap. The data were collected through quantitative approach at least 960 participants were involved in this research by answering to the questionnaires presented to them. The findings revealed that inequality in land distribution, unemployment, inflation, inequality in wealth distribution, shortage of adequate labor, HIV disease, households gender head, education status of household head, age are contributing to food crisis in all ten states of SADC region are the major concern towards food security.

## **Keywords**

Food security, poverty, agriculture, major factors of food insecurity, SADC

## **1.Introduction**

Since its creation, the SADC region has been steered through the need for establishing a regional amalgamation bloc in order to link regional economies, strengthening the region's economic performance, and improving the region's political stability. To begin with, the region was first founded in 1980 as the Southern African Coordination Conference (SADCC), the region had the goal not only to alleviate economic reliance on the then apartheid South Africa, however to promote economic links for the development of a genuine and impartial regional incorporation by mobilising the means for the promotion of interstate and regional policies. After most of the Southern African states had attained political independence, the region decided to revise the mandate of the regional body by putting more focus on economic and political issues in the post-colonial period. The establishment of the SADC in 1992 was therefore seen as a continuation of efforts to strengthen collective self-reliance within the Southern African region. However, there cannot be any economic development without food stability; therefore, the new revised regional body included food crisis in its principal mandate. Additionally, the regional body took cognisance of the fact that economic developments can only be realised through a concerted effort; hence the member states saw regional integration as the gateway to economic development within the region. During the past decade, food availability has become a serious concern for every human and particularly for those who live in the developing countries. Food security can be viewed as an easy access to adequate healthy and socially accepted food by different stakeholders such as government, non-governmental organizations, and public in general. While, food insecurity is the restricted access to sufficient healthy and safe food [1]; [11]. Coleman-Jensen *et al* [7] report that food security is a constant and reliable access to sufficient healthy food for humans. In this study, food security is defined in accordance with the definition provided by the Food Agriculture Organisation (FAO) "an existing situation where by all humans, at any times, have physical, social, and economic access to enough, secure, and healthy food meeting their nutritional needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life". This description involves four essential elements: availability, stability, accessibility and utilization. However, when one or two of these four elements are missing that means the food system is being vulnerable [11] FAO [12] report that food insecurity is currently a global issue because of the trend of undernourished human

beings is still increasing at a fast pace, which recently has amounted to 842 million, roughly 12% of the total world's inhabitants, and this situation affects seriously the developing countries. This is true in the Asian and African continent case where according to FAO [13] almost 92% of the world wide's undernourished people are living; 552 and 226.4 million respectively. Practically one out of ten households do not have an easy access to healthy and secure food [15]. More than three million children live in households classified as "very low food security". In light with the above lines, this paper informs on an analysis into the food insecurity status quo of rural areas within the member states of the SADC region. Over the past decades, several studies were conducted to investigate the factors affecting food security at a country' level in this region. However, there is a dearth of such work at the SADC level, hence, this paper aims at bridging this gap. At least ten countries (Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo) were used as case study. A quantitative approach was employed in this study, deploying a survey that was conducted based on a structured questionnaire as the primary data. The questionnaires were pre-tested before being delivered to the participant of the ten countries. At least a total of 960 valid response were collected from 1 000 questionnaires that were delivered to different households. Only 960 respondents answered to the questions. Due to the extended household structure and because of contemporary shift in the household structure, when conducting the data, we considered family as people that work and eat together, as well as sharing their earnings and expenses. Various factors were reported by the respondents as major causes for food insecurity in the SADC region, and these factors will be presented and discussed latter in this paper.

## **I.1 Food insecurity**

Food insecurity is a circumstance where there is a lack of sufficient healthy and secure food availability, which is required for living an active life. This situation also includes being anxious about lack of enough food to eat or lack of necessary means to produce or buy food when it is needed [5]. Humans around the world who are dealing with food crisis often do not produce adequate food because of restricted means [4]. Food insecurity is severe in the part of the world where people are victims of civil, economic, and political wars, thus, this situation generally affect negatively income of many households, mainly within under- developing countries. Furthermore, females living in low-income homes are largely vulnerable to food insecurity. One possible explanation is that households where females are head, they spend a large portion of their earnings on the basic needs of their children such as school fees, health care, clothing. The theory of food insecurity can be differentiated in two types: chronic and temporary food insecurity.

### **A. Chronic food insecurity**

Generally, this type of food insecurity arises when there is the scarcity of food lasting for long period. This is often created by insufficient food production and financial means owing to poverty [11]. Additionally, the European Commission [9] report that it constantly touches those that are unable to meet required resources to acquire or generate sufficient food. This type of food insecurity promotes unfavourable environments for vulnerability, which is viewed as constant vulnerability to food insecurity [8]. Chronic food insecurity eats the lives of nearly one billion individuals every year.

### **B. Temporary food insecurity**

Compared to chronic food insecurity, temporary food insecurity does not last for a long period. It is generally caused by factors such as short-range setbacks and deficiency of food availability because of instabilities in food prices (FAO, 2008). Generally, temporary food insecurity occurs when there is an unforeseen shift in the capability to generate enough food to uphold a nutritious lifestyle. To sum up, temporary food insecurity is viewed as the greatest critical occurrence of homes food insecurity since it produces hunger and famine, despite it takes place within a short period of time [10]. Unsuitable government policy can create this type of food insecurity because of the declining trends of sufficient food production and consumption [3].

## **II. Results and Discussion**

Due the limited maximum number of pages, in this section, we present and analyse only the results found to be the most important for this study. To date, the data were collected through a quantitative approach from 960 participants. When conducting the interview, we noticed that most of the households across the ten countries were living under severe poverty and coping with issues related to malnutrition. Thus, we identified different issues of food security at household level through the collected data, and these are presented in the tables 1 and 2 below:

Table 1. causes of food insecurity in South African rural areas (n=960)

Municipalities	Statistics	HIV disease	Inequality in land distribution	Inequality in wealth distribution	Inflation	Joblessness	Shortage of sufficient labor	Other
Botswana	Frequency	8	29	11	15	25	11	9
	Percentage (%)	9.75	10.2	10.1	10.2	14.2	11.9	13.0
Lesotho	Frequency	12	35	8	11	15	6	4
	Percentage (%)	14.6	12.3	7.3	7.5	8.5	6.5	5.8
Mozambique	Frequency	7	23	13	16	18	7	11
	Percentage (%)	8.5	8.1	11.9	10.9	10.2	7.6	15.9
Democratic Republic of Congo	Frequency	14	16	20	13	23	5	3
	Percentage (%)	17.07	5.6	18.3	8.8	13.1	5.4	4.3
Swaziland	Frequency	6	28	9	22	14	12	6
	Percentage (%)	7.3	9.8	8.2	14.9	7.9	13.0	8.7
Tanzania	Frequency	10	31	14	30	28	8	7
	Percentage (%)	12.2	10.9	12.8	20.4	15.9	8.7	10.1
Zambia	Frequency	9	36	6	12	9	11	2
	Percentage (%)	10.9	12.6	5.5	8.2	5.1	11.9	2.9
Zimbabwe	Frequency	5	42	8	8	13	16	12
	Percentage (%)	6.1	14.7	7.3	5.4	7.4	17.4	17.4
Angola	Frequency	4	15	16	9	19	10	6
	Percentage (%)	4.9	5.2	14.7	6.1	10.8	10.9	8.7
South Africa	Frequency	12	30	4	11	12	6	9
	Percentage (%)	14.6	10.5	3.7	7.5	6.8	6.5	13.0
<b>Total of participants</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>69</b>
	<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>29.7</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>15.3</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>7.2</b>

From the results in the table 1 above, it can be depicted that inequality in land distribution ranks at the first position with 29.7% as the most critical cause of food insecurity. In 2004, the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) report that land distribution is a complex matter, mainly since in South Africa land reform is viewed as distinct program, which can result in unplanned outcomes of leading to economy decline of the country, in case the issue is not well-resolved. On the other hand, land reform is considered as way of dealing with issues associated with inequality and alleviated poverty for the disadvantaged communities. Over the past decades, several studies point out that measures established in many African countries after being granted their independence from Western countries have not produced results to correct the inequalities of land distribution and land rights as expected. In the case of South Africa there is principle of ‘‘willing-seller-willing buyer’’ that still not progressive in distributing land in the way anticipated as mentioned before. Furthermore, access to land by black people who are majority in the country illustrates inequalities and this is jeopardizing food security, especially in rural areas. FAO [12] promoted radical change in policy to deal with the current trend of poverty. Policy change stated by FAO consist of unbiased access to land by all involving white and black from disadvantage background. In accordance with the respondents from the ten municipalities, unemployment comes in the second position as most critical factor of food crisis. Generally, the residents do not get jobs in light with their choice or they are jobless for other motives, which create food insecurity, because of lack of income to afford food items. The results also show that inflation is the second most important cause of food insecurity. During the last decades, the inflation’s rate has steadily increasing, therefore, the purchasing power of household has been on the decline, and this result in the food insecurity. Furthermore, the participants revealed that inequality in wealth distribution is another reason of food crisis. While, in South Africa at national level, they are wealthy people, especially from white minority community, however, most of black people living in rural areas are unable to even afford their basic needs. Shortage of adequate labor was also reported by respondents as reason of food insecurity. One possible explanation regarding this cause is because most people in Africa continent view male kids as important resources since they can easily make money for their households, while females are not seen as crucial assets since more often they do not take the risk of travelling around the world to find a job. To sum up, HIV disease was also stated by the participants as a critical factor regarding food insecurity issue in the all ten member states. The reason may be if someone is an HIV positive more often they give up on their lives, therefore, their health start deteriorating.

Because, if someone is not healthy, it will be difficult for him/her to work harder to earn some money. Considering this one says ‘ health is wealth.

Table 2. SADC rural areas households’ characteristics (n=960)

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Statistics</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	Frequency	713
	Percentage (%)	74.27
Female	Frequency	247
	Percentage (%)	25.72
<b>Age</b>		
18-30	Frequency	67
	Percentage (%)	6.97
31-40	Frequency	326
	Percentage (%)	33.95
41-50	Frequency	365
	Percentage (%)	38.02
51 & above	Frequency	202
	Percentage (%)	21.04
<b>Education</b>		
Primary school	Frequency	326
	Percentage (%)	33.95
High school	Frequency	163
	Percentage (%)	16.97
College	Frequency	211
	Percentage (%)	21.97
University	Frequency	182
	Percentage (%)	18.95
Illiterate	Frequency	78
	Percentage (%)	8.12
<b>Household size</b>		
2-3 members	Frequency	144
	Percentage (%)	15
4-5 members	Frequency	413
	Percentage (%)	43.02
5 & above members	Frequency	403
	Percentage (%)	41.97
<b>Household occupation</b>		
Farmer	Frequency	173
	Percentage (%)	18.02
Shop assistant	Frequency	118
	Percentage (%)	12.29
Government employ	Frequency	298
	Percentage (%)	31.04
Daily wager & other	Frequency	259
	Percentage (%)	26.97
Shopkeeper	Frequency	112
	Percentage (%)	11.66

When collecting the data from different households in the ten countries, it was found out that male headed households were less vulnerable to issue regarding food insecurity than those of females headed households. One possible explanation is that in Africa females are not given the same opportunity as men. And most of time the few females that are employed are mentally and physically abusive. Thus, this study strongly urges the SADC leaders to emphasize on empowering women headed households and providing them with significant social security grant as most of them are living under severe poverty and do not have the same job opportunity as men headed households. The available data, also revealed that age was another crucial component in influencing the status of food security in a household. Thus, the data of this study illustrate that the status of food insecurity varies

depending upon the age groups. For example, we noticed that in all ten member states older headed households were found to be less vulnerable than younger headed households. The reason maybe most of youngers do not prioritise food instead they are focus on having expensive items such as latest phone brand, cars, etc. That is why, they end up feeding themselves with fast food, which in general are not healthy and expensive. We also collected the data regarding the education level of households' head. No surprisingly, the level of food insecurity across the region varies widely. For example, headed households with higher level of education are less vulnerable to food insecurity than those with less education level. Education is a key player in determining household food insecurity level regardless of gender headed households. When collecting the data across the region, we figured out that the size of household plays a critical role in determining food security status. For example, household with few members are unlikely to be food insecure as the one with many members.

### **III. Conclusion**

Over the past decade, SADC as a region has been coping with a crucial food insecurity status, especially within the disadvantage rural areas. To alleviate this crisis, the SADC leaders have introduced various strategies, including the program called zero hunger and the second one called the outcome seven. These programs are designed to create a future environment where households are not dealing with issues relating to food insecurity. However, this approach has not yet met the expected result because the trend of food shortage still growing dramatically at regional and national level. Although, Therefore, the present research article aims at analysing the major factors affecting food security at household level. The SADC region was used as case study since in this this part of the Africa continent, access to sufficient food is not stable, consequently many households are coping with recurrent food crisis, which in turn is threatening their livelihoods and negatively affecting their welfare. several studies were conducted to investigate the factors affecting food security at country' level in SADC region. However, there is a lack of such study at regional level as SADC, this paper aims at filling this gap. The data were collected through quantitative approach out of 1 000 questioners only 960 respondents answered to the questioners. The study revealed that inequality in land distribution, unemployment, inflation, inequality in wealth distribution, shortage of adequate labor, HIV disease, households gender head, education status of household head, age are contributing to food crisis in all ten municipalities of Limpopo province.

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## **Biography**

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