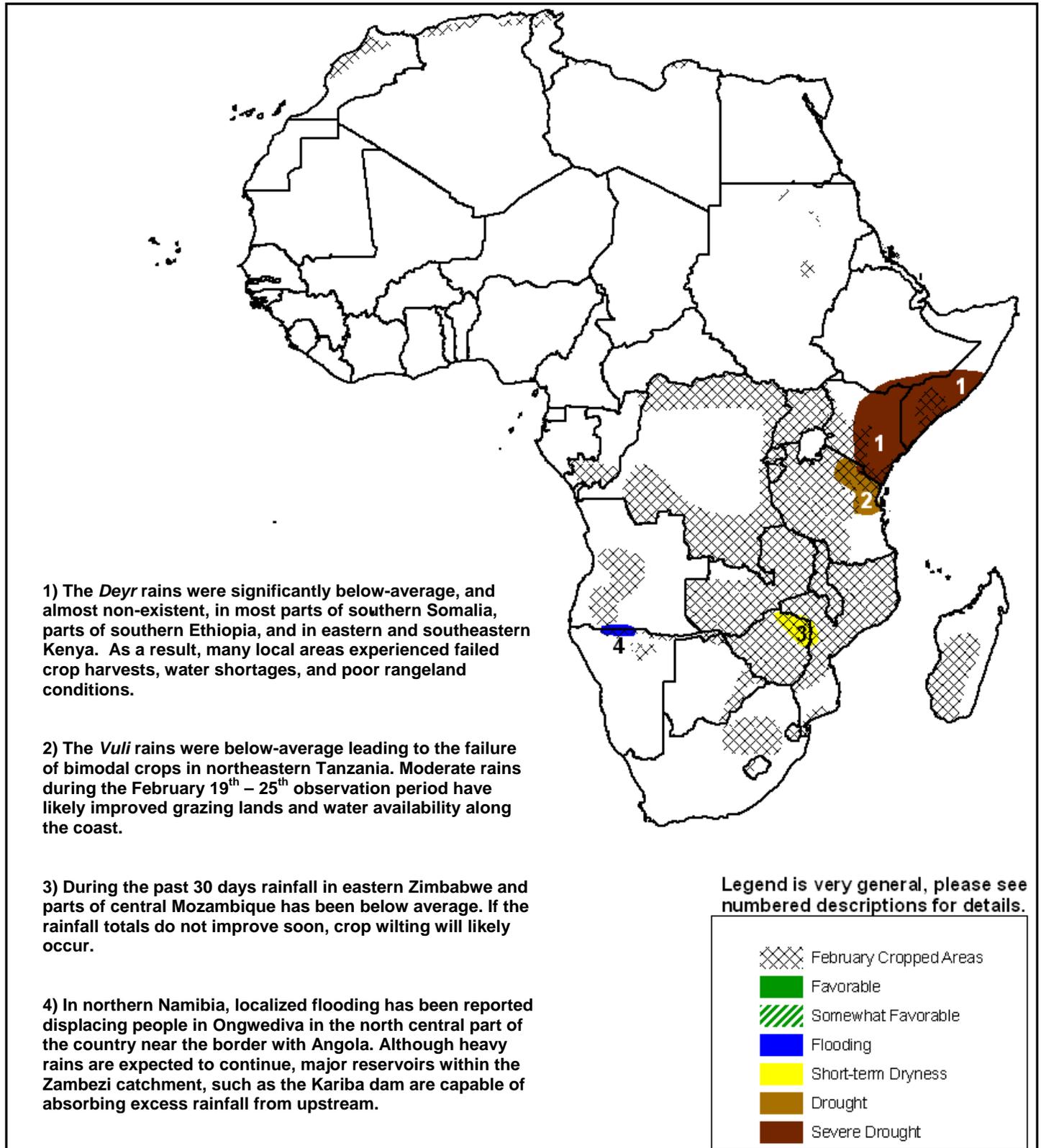


- Below-average rainfall totals begin to improve in central Mozambique persists in Zimbabwe.
- Localized flooding has damaged crops and displaced households in northern Namibia.



Improvement to short-term dryness in central Mozambique and eastern Zimbabwe

During November 2008, central Mozambique and eastern Zimbabwe suffered from dryness as a result of the late start of seasonal rains. Rainfall then improved significantly, leading to flooding along the Zambezi River. In early February, a reversal occurred and the region once again began experiencing below-normal rainfall (**Figure 1**). Ground reports indicated that if additional rainfall did not occur in the near future, permanent wilting could occur in areas with low water holding capacity and high evapotranspiration rates. Other reports stated that the rainy season needed to extend through March to compensate for the late start of rains.

Fortunately, late during the period of February 19th – 25th, the stationary ridge that brought approximately two weeks of dryness to lower Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Botswana began breaking down, allowing seasonal rains to return to the region. Seasonal rainfall totals are near-normal for central Mozambique, but still remain slightly below-average in eastern Zimbabwe. Model forecasts indicate continued improvement in central Mozambique and other areas of southern Africa impacted by the ridge (**Figure 2**).

Potentially poor *Belg* season in Ethiopia

During the month of January, central Ethiopia experienced moderately favorable pre-seasonal rains. The rains improved water availability and grazing land for animals, but the rains were short-lived. Since mid-February rains have slowed and are now leading to poor implications for the *Belg* season. Ground reports from North Wollo zone state that crop conditions are generally poor and if the area does not see a start to seasonal rains within the next week, then the season could be a failure. The Wollo and Shewa zones account for nearly 50 percent of *Belg* harvests. The *Belg* rainy season starts in late February and continues through May with harvest activities taking place during the months of June and July.

At present, there is a weak La Nina taking place. During the La Nina event of 2007 – 2008, the *Belg* producing areas of Ethiopia experienced poor rains which are a common result of La Nina.

