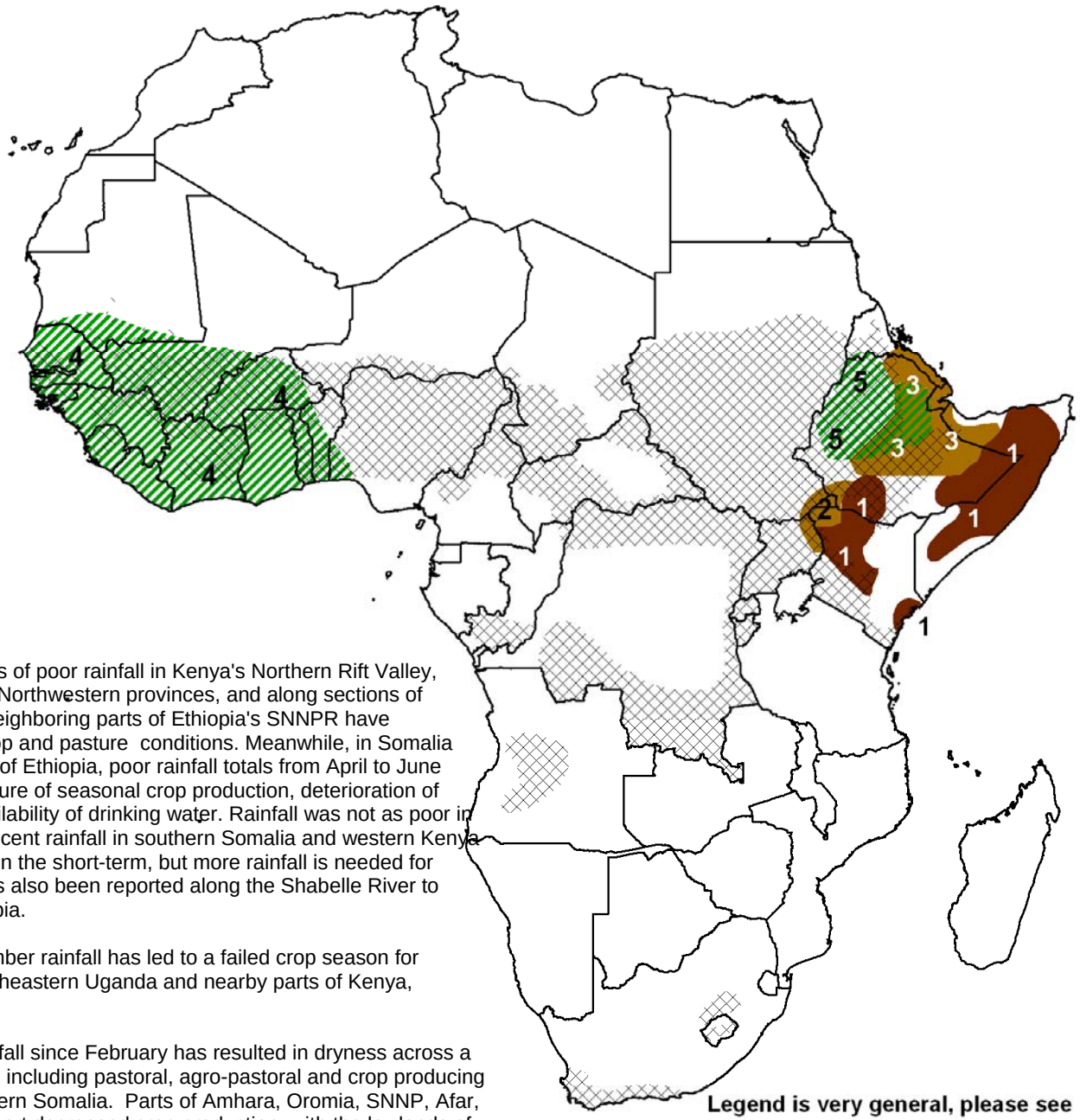
The USAID FEWS NET Weather Hazards Impacts Assessment for Africa
September 11 – 17, 2008

- **Above-average precipitation across western Africa has benefited crops, pastures and water resources; however, it has also resulted in localized flooding and flood-related damage to bridges, roads, railways, and other infrastructure.**

- **Precipitation remains slightly below average in Sudan and Niger**



1) Successive seasons of poor rainfall in Kenya's Northern Rift Valley, Central, Eastern, and Northwestern provinces, and along sections of the coast as well as neighboring parts of Ethiopia's SNNPR have led to deteriorating crop and pasture conditions. Meanwhile, in Somalia and adjacent portions of Ethiopia, poor rainfall totals from April to June 2008 have led to a failure of seasonal crop production, deterioration of pastures, and low availability of drinking water. Rainfall was not as poor in southern Somalia. Recent rainfall in southern Somalia and western Kenya has eased conditions in the short-term, but more rainfall is needed for recovery. Flooding has also been reported along the Shabelle River to heavy rainfall in Ethiopia.

2) Poor March-September rainfall has led to a failed crop season for localized areas of northeastern Uganda and nearby parts of Kenya, Ethiopia and Sudan.

3) Below-average rainfall since February has resulted in dryness across a wide area of Ethiopia, including pastoral, agro-pastoral and crop producing areas in parts of northern Somalia. Parts of Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, Afar, and Tigray regions report decreased crop production, with the lowlands of Oromia, Afar, and Somali regions being the most severely affected. Areas north of the Amar Mountains have seen an increase in rainfall starting in late July.

4) Above-average rainfall since the beginning of July has resulted in increased water resources availability and favorable crop conditions across much of western Africa. However, localized flooding has caused damage to bridges, roads, railways, and other infrastructure and agriculture in throughout the region.

5) Much of western Ethiopia has experienced abundant and well-distributed rainfall since late March. These rains have recently pushed eastward, into areas affected by dryness since February.

Heavy rainfall batters northern Ethiopia, western Eritrea

A week of heavy rainfall in northern Ethiopia and nearby portions of Eritrea has caused localized flooding and damage to infrastructure in the area (Figure 1). Rainfall has been triggering localized flooding across northern and western Ethiopia since late July, but this was the heaviest rainfall event thus far. Week long precipitation totals exceed 200 mm in some locations.

This incident is likely to increase the UN estimate of 118,000 people impacted by this year's heavy rainfall. The government has described the flooding as "the worst in a generation". Along with the destruction, water-borne diseases, such as cholera, are now a concern. The excess water is also likely to provide mosquitoes with additional places to breed, raising concerns about malaria.

The coming week will bring additional rain to already saturated portions of Ethiopia, however it will not be as heavy as last week's rainfall.

Unseasonable precipitation across Somalia

Precipitation does not usually return to southern Somalia for another month, however unexpected relief has made its way across some areas of the drought affected region. (Figure1) This rainfall may help crops and pastures, and will allow people living in the region to replenish water supplies. Some of the rainfall was heavy, and flooding has been reported near Mogadishu.

Rainfall was also heavier than normal across northern Somalia and Ethiopia's Somali region. Similar to the areas further south, this rainfall will allow people living in the region to replenish drinking water supplies, and it may provide a slight boost to crops. The rains here have resulted in some flooding along the Shabelle River.

The unexpected rainfall has already ended, and is not expected to return during the coming week. Significant rainfall typically begins falling in this region in October.

Moisture sufficient, although inconsistent over Niger

Rainfall has been slightly below average across Niger, and nearby areas of Nigeria and Benin. (Figure 2). At the current time, however the crops have generally not been severely impacted, due to reasonably well distributed rainfall. Continued consistent rainfall through the end of September will result in a reasonably close to normal harvest.

Last week, light to moderate rainfall remained in place across the country and similar conditions are expected to continue into the coming week.

Satellite Rainfall Totals
September 1st – 7th, 2008

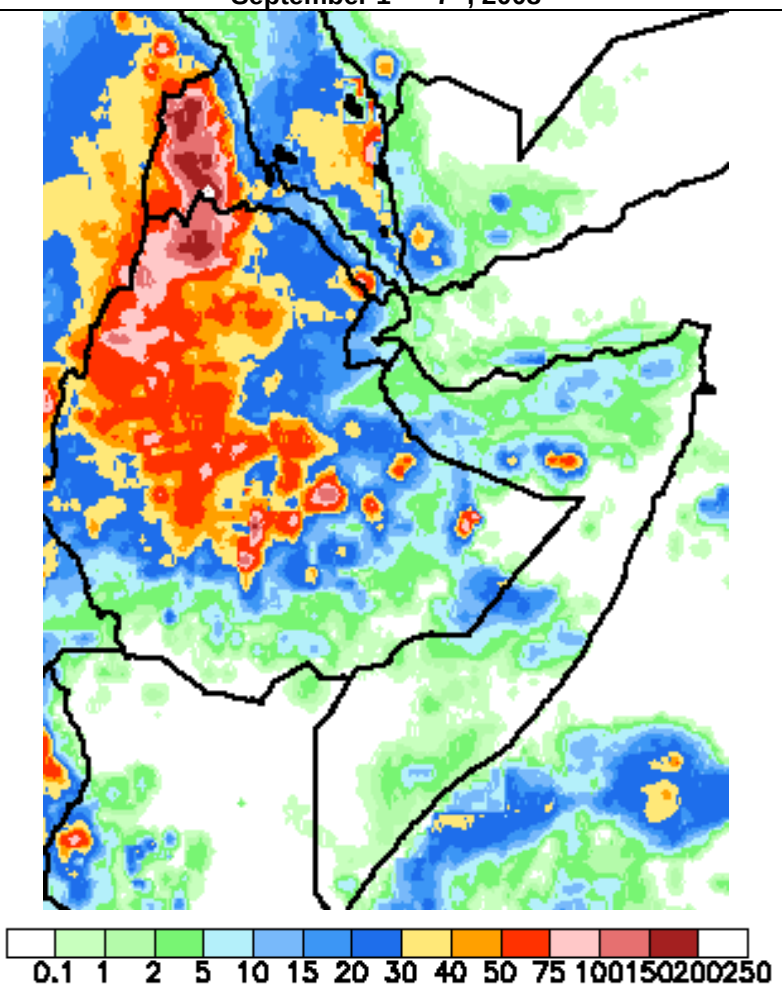


Figure 1: Heavy rainfall continues to pound western Ethiopia and western Eritrea. Lighter precipitation falls across Somalia.

Source: FEWS/NOAA

Water Requirements Satisfaction Index Anomaly
September 1st, 2008

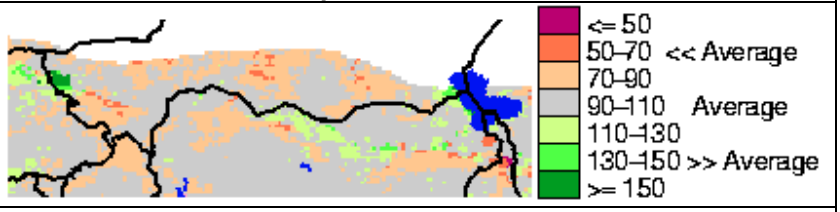


Figure 2: Although there are slight negative anomalies across Niger and areas of nearby countries, these anomalies are neither large, nor widespread.

Source: FEWS/USGS