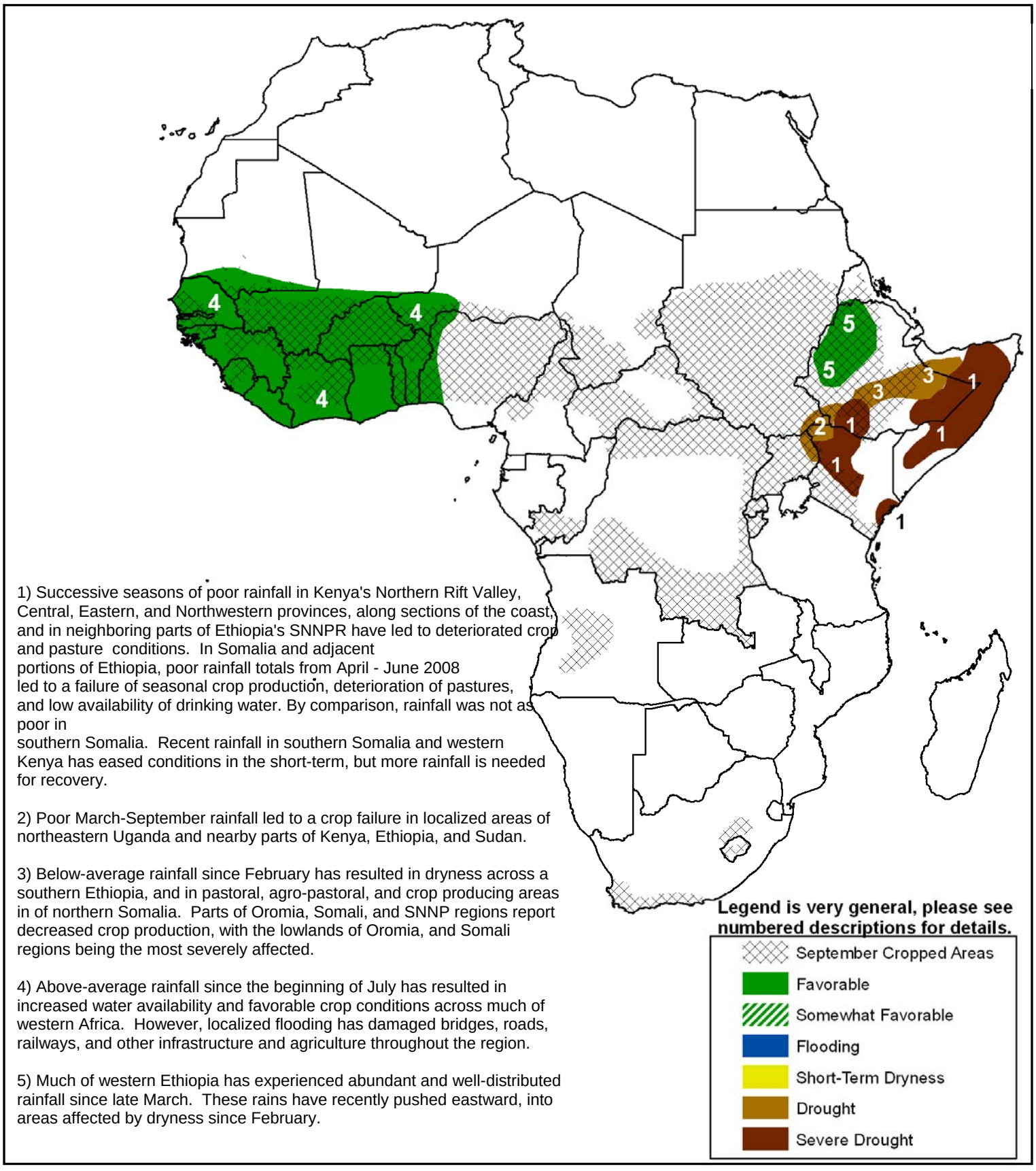
The USAID FEWS NET Weather Hazards Impacts Assessment for Africa
September 25 – 31, 2008

- **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.**

- **Within the next month, it is anticipated that rainfall will return to many areas of East Africa that are currently drought affected. Climate outlooks favor moist conditions across much of Kenya and Uganda during these short rains (October – December).**



1) Successive seasons of poor rainfall in Kenya's Northern Rift Valley, Central, Eastern, and Northwestern provinces, along sections of the coast, and in neighboring parts of Ethiopia's SNNPR have led to deteriorated crop and pasture conditions. In Somalia and adjacent portions of Ethiopia, poor rainfall totals from April - June 2008 led to a failure of seasonal crop production, deterioration of pastures, and low availability of drinking water. By comparison, 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.

2) Poor March-September rainfall led to a crop failure in 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 southern Ethiopia, and in pastoral, agro-pastoral, and crop producing areas in of northern Somalia. Parts of Oromia, Somali, and SNNP regions report decreased crop production, with the lowlands of Oromia, and Somali regions being the most severely affected.

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

Rainfall remains plentiful across West Africa

Precipitation continues to fall across the Gulf of Guinea and Sahel regions. The highest anomalies are in the coastal countries from Benin to Morocco, where rainfall in many places has exceeded 160 percent of the 12-year average. Further inland, across the Sahel anomalies are also significantly positive at 120 percent of the 12-year average across Burkina Faso, southern Mali and western Niger.

In addition, above-average rainfall has also been well distributed. Breaks in the rain were limited, and when they did occur, lasted for only a few days. This has benefited crops, pastures, and water supplies (Figures 1 and 2).

All this moisture, however, has come at a price. The rains have been heavy at times, leading to localized flooding damaging infrastructure, such as homes, roads, and rail lines. Flooding has also allowed for the limited spread of water borne disease.

Negative impacts of the heavy rainfall have been spatially limited, and the overall extra rainfall has provided for a favorable wet season in the Gulf of Guinea and the Sahel.

Figure 1: Water Requirements Satisfaction Index September 20th, 2008

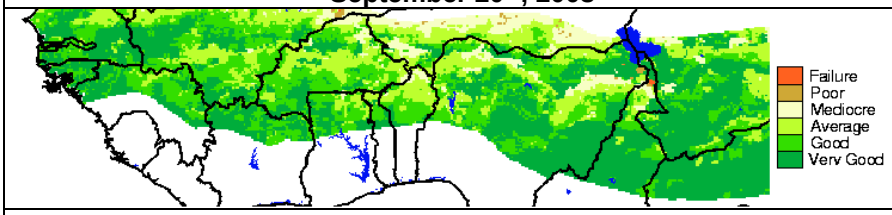
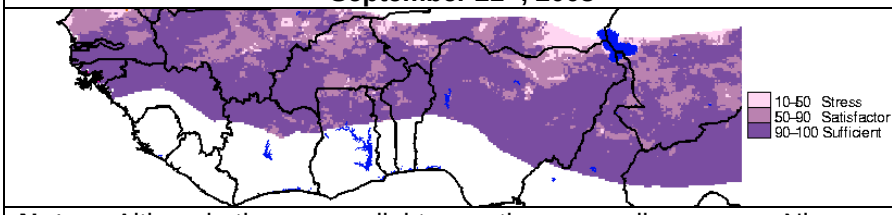


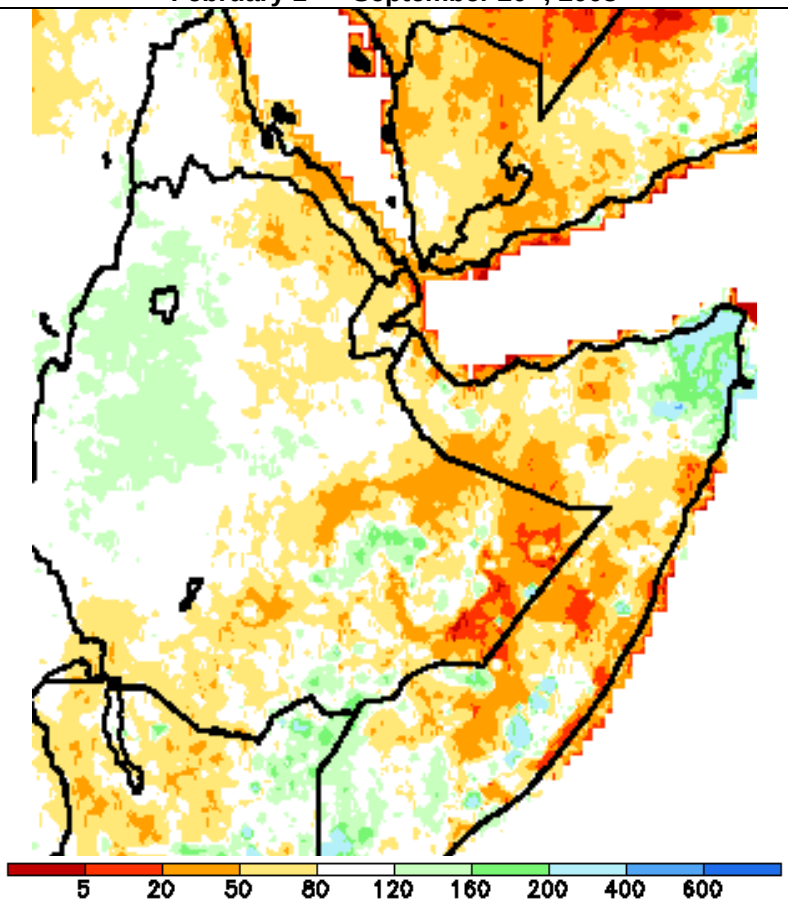
Figure 2: Soil Water Index September 21th, 2008



Note: Although there are slight negative anomalies across Niger and areas of nearby countries, these anomalies are neither large, nor widespread. They have also been shrinking over the last few weeks.

Source: FEWS/USGS

Figure 3: Satellite Rainfall Percent of Average February 1st – September 20th, 2008



Note: Rainfall continues to reduce negative anomalies across Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Somalia.

Source: FEWS/NOAA

Rainfall brings some improvement to parts of east Africa

Although rainfall has been lighter during the past week, the rapid improvement in Ethiopia's Afar region and nearby areas of Djibouti and Eritrea, has continued. Rainfall typically begins tapering off in these areas in late September and eventually comes to a close during October (Figure 3).

In northern Somalia light rainfall continues to ease rainfall deficits in this area. Light but seasonable precipitation with the occasional downpour began falling in the area in August. Central and southern Somalia received an unexpected rainfall event a few weeks ago, as unseasonable moisture made its way across the region. Some of the heavier rains in the Ahmar Mountains have resulted in heavy runoff in the Shabelle River. This caused some flooding around Mogadishu during the last month.