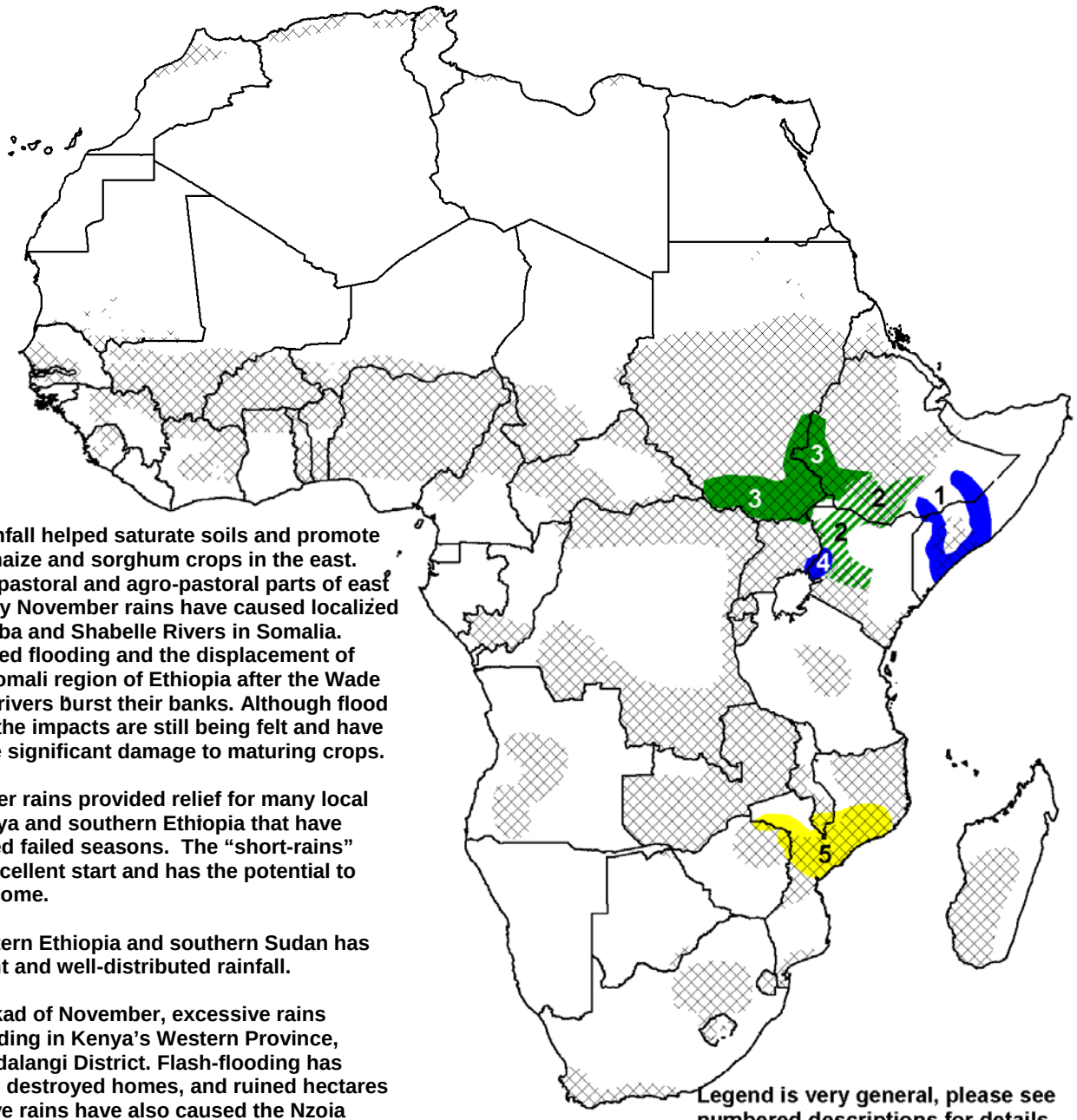
The USAID FEWS NET Weather Hazards Impacts Assessment for Africa
November 27 – December 3, 2008

- **Heavy rains during the first half of November caused the Wade Shabelle and Genale rivers in the Somali region of Ethiopia to burst their banks, displacing thousands of people.**



1) Ample October rainfall helped saturate soils and promote the development of maize and sorghum crops in the east. Though beneficial to pastoral and agro-pastoral parts of east Africa, excessive early November rains have caused localized flooding along the Juba and Shabelle Rivers in Somalia. Rains have also caused flooding and the displacement of over 150,000 in the Somali region of Ethiopia after the Wade Shabelle and Genale rivers burst their banks. Although flood waters are receding, the impacts are still being felt and have the potential to cause significant damage to maturing crops.

2) October – November rains provided relief for many local areas in western Kenya and southern Ethiopia that have suffered from repeated failed seasons. The "short-rains" season is off to an excellent start and has the potential to have a favorable outcome.

3) Much of southwestern Ethiopia and southern Sudan has experienced abundant and well-distributed rainfall.

4) During the first dekad of November, excessive rains caused localized flooding in Kenya's Western Province, particularly in the Budalangi District. Flash-flooding has displaced thousands, destroyed homes, and ruined hectares of farmland. Excessive rains have also caused the Nzoia River to burst its banks.

5) Below-average rainfall totals for the start of the October – May rainy season in parts of northeastern Zimbabwe and central Mozambique have led to concerns of insufficient water availability for crop production. Although the rainy season continues through May, the Southern Africa Regional Climate Outlook Forum states that there is an increased chance that January – March rainfall for this area will be below-average. It is still very early in the season. During the week of November 27th – December 3rd abundant rainfall is expected in northern Mozambique.

Favorable rains throughout most of southern Africa, however, possible poor implications for harvests in areas

Since the start of November, rainfall has been improving trending towards improvement throughout most of southern Africa. There were even been reports of localized flooding in South Africa between November 19th and the 24th. However some localized areas in southern Africa, specifically northeastern Zimbabwe and central Mozambique, are still observing below-average rainfall totals **(Figure 1)**. At present, planting in these areas is only one dekad late, a delay which is not necessarily expected to negatively impact cropping activities because seeds can be sown through January and rains have the potential to improve in the interim. However, if the rains do not improve significantly or do not coincide with the peak cropping period (which occurs in late-December to January), the upcoming harvests could be affected. In northeastern Zimbabwe and southern Mozambique, there is an increased chance that rainfall totals will be at or below-normal for the January – March 2009 period.

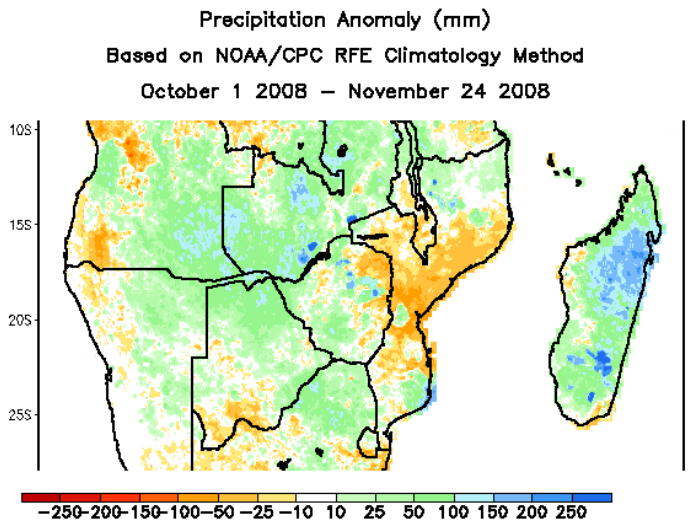
Excessive rainfall in early November causes flooding in localized areas in east Africa

Though the first rains of the October - December season in eastern Africa were below-normal, precipitation in recent weeks has reversed negative anomalies in many areas and has been beneficial for crop germination and pasture regrowth. During early November, abundant, and in some areas excessive, rainfall fell in the region. This has caused localized flooding along the Genale, Juba and Shabelle river basins, near Lake Victoria, and in parts of southern Sudan. Flooding may negatively impact maturing crops in southern Ethiopia and has displaced people throughout the region. Flood waters have begun to recede, but impacts are still being felt on the ground.

Respite in rains in the east may be worsening conditions for short-season crops in southern Somalia

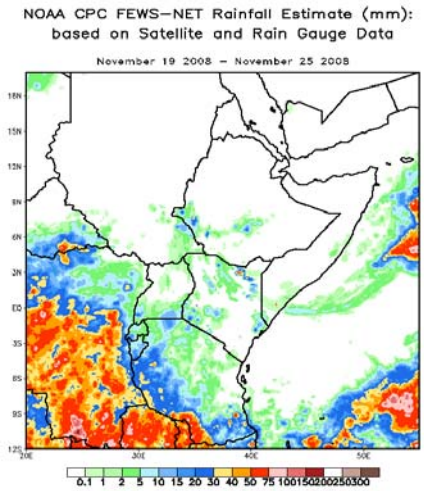
Despite the excessive rains in early November, the respite during the last two weeks in the east may be worsening conditions for short-season crops in southern Somalia. During the week of November 19th – 25th Somalia's rainfall totals did not exceed 5 mm **(Figure 2)**. The inconsistent frequency in rainfall occurrence is attributing to the weakening crop conditions. This is following successive failed seasons throughout 2007 and 2008. According to model outputs, much of the Bay region is experiencing either a late start to regular cropping activities or is migrating towards crop failure **(Figure 3)**. During the observation period of November 27th – December 3rd approximately 5 mm of rainfall is expected in southern Somalia, with areas more in-land having the potential to receive up to 15 mm.

Figure 1: October – May Season Rainfall Anomalies As of November 24, 2008



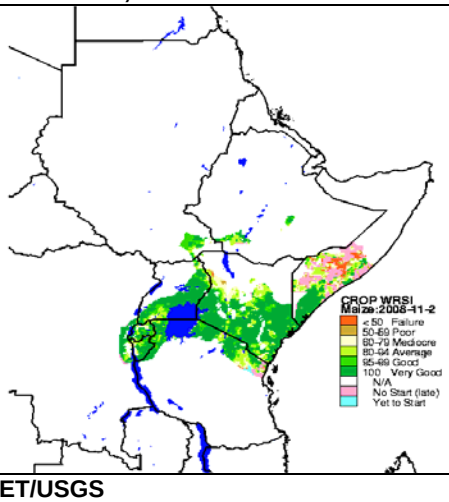
Source: NOAA/CPC

Figure 2: RFE Rainfall Totals in mm As of November 19th – 25th, 2008



Source: NOAA/CPC

Figure 3: Maize Crop Water Requirement Satisfaction Index As of November Dekad 2, 2008



Source: FEWS NET/USGS