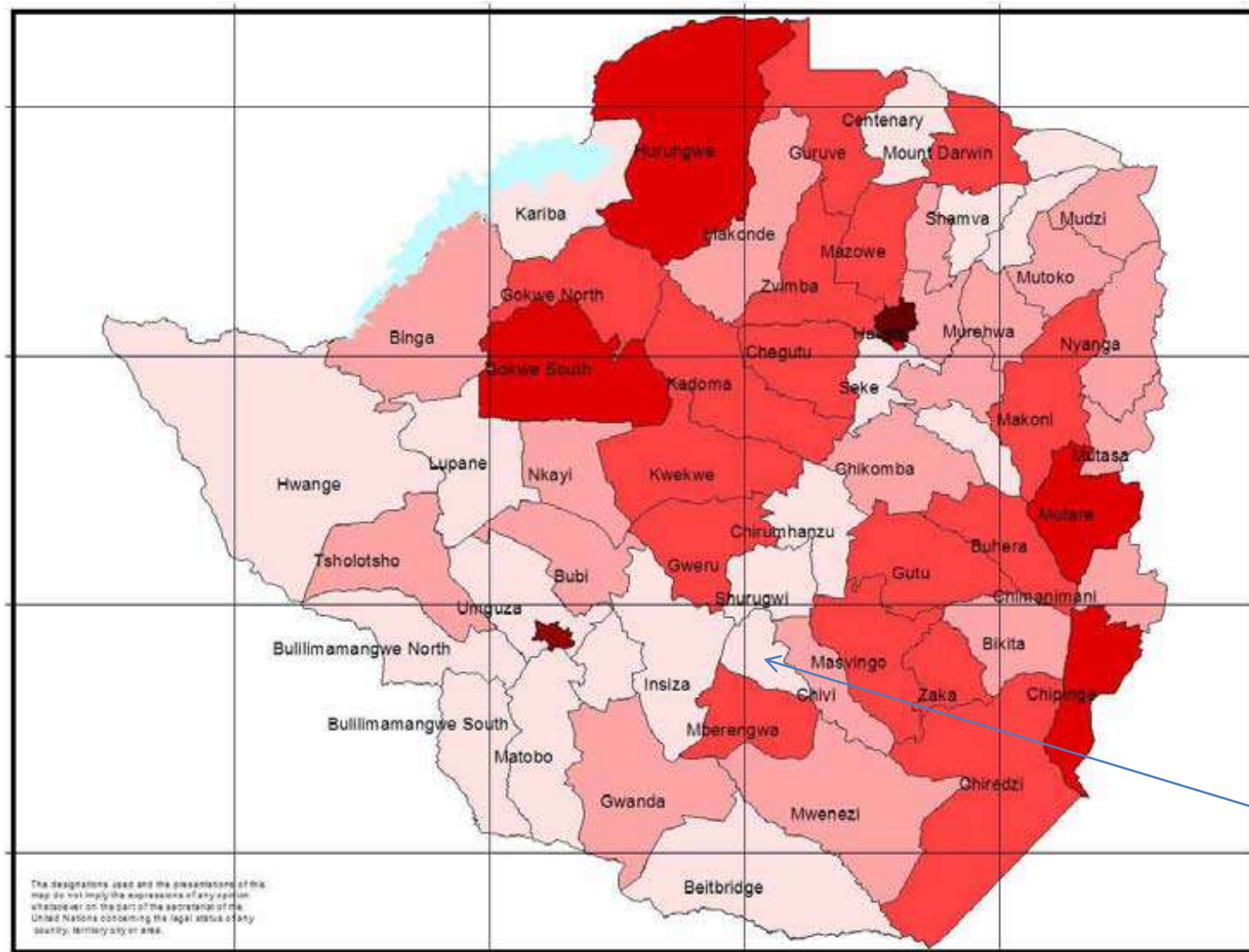


Seasonal Chaos: from risky to uncertain livelihoods in rural Zimbabwe

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Mazvihwa communal area: 1980s – 2000s



STUDY
AREA

Drivers of change: implications for seasonality and responses?

Biophysical factors

- Rainfall, climate change
- Land use and population

Agrarian livelihoods

- Cropping patterns, outputs
- Livestock populations
- Land reform

Health and disease

- HIV/AIDS
- Water and sanitation

Social arrangements

- Household structures and relationships

Political economy

- Structural adjustment, economic collapse, political violence, state failure

	1980s: Seasonal Risk	2000s: Seasonal Uncertainty
Biophysical factors	Inter-seasonal variability, cycles of rainfall Predictable contrasts between different ecological zones critical, allowing seasonal adpatation	High intra-season variability, but chaotic pattern Ecological dimensions less significant. Contingent, unpredictable factors.
Agrarian livelihoods	Mix of small grains and maize, with storage of millet/sorghum for food security and smoothing inter/intra seasonal risks. Cattle unevenly distributed, but healthy. Goats important for seasonal distress sales.	Maize dominates, few small grains. Storage minimal. Highly insecure food security for many. Reliance on external sources (remittances, off-farm work) Cattle still unevenly distributed, but unhealthy: lack of vet services. Disposal of goats, few as buffer.
Health and disease	Childhood diseases and wet season impacts of poor sanitation/water supplies.	Investments in WATSAN infrastructure and vaccination resulted in fewer seasonal disease impacts. HIV/AIDS dominates – has seasonal impacts on labour, seasonal infection patterns, but disease burden, mortality pattern not seasonal.
Social relationships	Well established ‘moral economy’ based on sharing relationships at village/cluster level – for draft, labour etc. (traditional work parties etc.), - offsetting seasonal stress for asset-poor	More individual household focus (or smaller clusters). Marketisation of relationships. Fewer communal activities. Restructuring of households, some highly vulnerable.
Political economy	Relatively stable, well-funded state, supporting infrastructure and service development. Employment opportunities high in context of growing economy. Social programmes from government and NGOs offset seasonal impacts.	Non-functioning state and collapsed economy. Lack of services and support. Violence. Retrenchments and urban to rural migrations. Fewer off-farm opportunities. Resort to ‘informal social protection’ measures, including illegal /risky activities (border jumping, gold panning, smuggling, survival sex etc.). Land reform important for some.

	From risk... to uncertainty
<i>Definitions</i>	Known likelihoods, known outcomes	Unknown likelihoods, know outcomes (or ignorance – unknown likelihoods, unknown outcomes...)
<i>Examples</i>	Rainfall in 1980s – and so cropping, storage, food security Diarrhoeal disease, malaria etc.	Rainfall in 2000s – and so food security HIV/AIDS morbidity/mortality
<i>Local responses</i>	Offsetting different risks – diversified farming strategies (storage and small grains), off-farm activities (local economy), migration (remittances) and village-based moral economy.	Opportunistic, chaotic, often desperate and risky. Informal responses, and cluster-based moral economy.
<i>External responses</i>	Standard social welfare/safety net packages (targeted, timed), early warning, insurance systems. Investments to reduce seasonal risk: sanitation, water supplies, health services etc.	Building resilience, robustness, resistance. Contingency plans, agile and adaptive response systems....
<i>Policy framework</i>	Planning and intervention – ‘risk management’	Prevention and preparedness - scenarios and ‘high reliability’...

Implications

- From risk to uncertainty, from predictability to unpredictability
- From planning and intervention to building resilience, robustness and resistance, based on opportunistic and adaptive responses and high reliability

Is this a general challenge (beyond southern Zimbabwe in 2009) requiring a different 'beyond risk' perspective on seasonality?

What implications does this have for the design of programmes and projects for the future?

Would a seasonal 'social protection' programme look different? Is 'social protection' the right focus?