

African food aid lifeline cut by rebels

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SALISBURY. — Attacks by Mozambican rebels cut a major lifeline for black Africa's hungry, international aid officials said in Salisbury yesterday.

Mozambique National Resistance rebels attacked road and rail bridges over the Pungwe River near Beira 10 days ago, halting all traffic between landlocked Zimbabwe and the Indian Ocean port.

The rail bridge had been carrying one train a day laden with Zimbabwean maize for World Food Programme (WFP) projects in Africa.

"The shipments have been suspended until the line is open again. We have no idea when that might be," the WFP deputy representative for Zimbabwe, Mr Desmond Taylor, said.

Already the 10-day halt has meant a potential loss of 5 000 tons of supplies. Five hundred tons a day should be rolling to Beira to meet a target of 100 000 tons of Zimbabwean surplus stocks set by the WFP for the end of March.

Mr Taylor said 1 800 tons of maize destined for Somalia was now trapped in the north-western Mozambique railhead town of Vila de Manica.

"We had just begun an operation to ship 7 000 tons of maize to Somalia," he said. Other supplies were due to go to Mali and Senegal.

All were part of a R14 500 000 WFP famine relief programme paid for by Holland, Switzerland, Britain, Norway and the WFP. — Sapa-Reuters.