



Assessment of the Food Situation in Zimbabwe

November 2008

Five years ago, in March 2002, a number of National NGOs viewed the growing food crisis with concern, and formed a network to share experience, views and resources on a response. This National NGO Food Security Network (FOSENET) involves 17 organisations that collectively cover ALL districts of Zimbabwe, and all types of communities.

FOSENET members subscribe that food distribution in Zimbabwe must be based on a platform of ethical principles that derive from international humanitarian law:

- The right to life with dignity and the duty not to withhold or frustrate the provision of life saving assistance;
- The obligation of states and other parties to agree to the provision of humanitarian and impartial assistance when the civilian population lacks essential supplies;
- Relief not to bring unintended advantage to one or more parties nor to further any partisan position;
- The management and distribution of food and other relief with based purely on criteria of need and not on partisan grounds, and without adverse distinction of any kind;
- Respect for community values of solidarity, dignity and peace and of community culture.

FOSENET Monitoring

As one of its functions FOSENET is monitoring food needs, availability and access through NGOs based within districts and through community based monitors. Monthly reports from all areas of the country are compiled by FOSENET to provide a monthly situation assessment of food security and access to enhance an ethical, effective and community focused response to the food situation.

This is an assessment of the food security situation and covers NGO and community based monitoring nationally for the period NOVEMBER 2008. This report outlines information drawn from monitoring reports from 142 monitoring reports from 58 districts from all provinces of Zimbabwe, with an average of 2.4 reports per district.

This round of monitoring includes information related to food access, security-poverty links, coping strategies and production outputs. Input from Fosenet NGOs is acknowledged.

FOSENET welcomes feedback and contributions on these reports. Follow up queries and feedback to FOSENET, fosenet@mweb.co.zw or kathy_manase@yahoo.com or call 263-4-722427 / 0912370542 This report has been produced with the generous support of ACTION AID INTERNATIONAL

Executive Summary

Availability

Two thirds of districts report a worsening food supply situation, a small reduction from October 2008, with the improvement primarily due to relief supplies.

The pattern of vulnerability has remained the same, viz: The elderly, the unemployed, people living with AIDS, displaced farm workers and orphans. Fertilizer availability has improved over the past month but largely on the informal market. Maize seed supply also improved as 28% of districts report seed availability. Some seed distribution activities are reported to be taking place in districts. Inadequate supplies, high demand and inflation continue, however, to push the fertilizer and maize seed prices up. Commercial food availability is better than it was at the same period last year, using maize meal and cooking oil as indicator foods. Escalating prices continue to be the major problem in accessing commercial food. The parallel market is reportedly serving as a major source of food as well as a source of income for urban residents.

Affordability

Food prices in the formal and parallel market continue to rise beyond the reach of many. People are reported to be hungry even when the staple foods are available on the market. GMB food, which is relatively more affordable, is widely reported to be scarce.

Access

Relief was reported to have resumed in thirty six districts (62% of districts). Relief activities are now widely reported in major per-urban areas. Lack of relief in resettlement areas was noted in reports.

Coping Strategies

In and out migration has been reported in 47% of the districts. This represents a slight decrease from the 53% reported in October. The reports indicate that the increase in costs of travel have affected movements, including for food.

Reports of asset sales to raise money to buy food were made from twenty six districts (45%), equal to that reported in October.

FOOD SECURITY MONITOR

FOOD AVAILABILITY

Change in the food situation

Two thirds of districts report a worsening food supply situation, a small reduction from October 2008 and primarily due to relief supplies.

About 9% of the districts reported an improvement in food supplies to the sentinel wards, this was an insignificant rise from the 7% reported in October. The slight increase in food availability is reported to be due to the resumption of relief activities in both rural and urban communities. Over two thirds (68%) of the districts report a worsening food supply situation compared to (75%) reported in October and (74%) in September. The number of districts reporting no change has increased as a fall in own stocks is replenished by relief supplies.

Table 1: Districts with sites with worsening food situations, November 2008

Province	District
Manicaland	Buhera, Mutare urban, Mutare rural, Chimanimani
Mashonaland East	Marondera rural, Goromonzi, Mudzi, Mutoko, Murehwa, Hwedza, UMP
Mashonaland Central	Mt Darwin, Mazoe, Guruve
Mashonaland West	Chinhoyi, Kariba, Makonde, Norton
Midlands	Chirumhanzu, Gweru Rural, Gokwe, Zvishavane
Masvingo	Chivi, Chiredzi, Masvingo rural, gutu
Matebeleland North	Binga, Lupane, Hwange, Tsholotsho, Victoria Falls, Nkayi
Matebeleland South	Bulilimangwe, Matobo, Gwanda urban, Gwanda rural, Insiza
Cities	Bulawayo, Harare, Chitungwiza

Food Needs

The pattern of vulnerability has remained the same, viz: The elderly, the unemployed, people living with AIDS, displaced farm workers and orphans. *People are now leaving for rural areas where relief food is distributed*

In and out migration has been reported in 47% of the districts. This represents a slight decrease from the 53% reported in October. The reports indicate that the increase in costs of travel have affected movements, including for food. People are reported to be moving from rural to urban areas to seek employment, and from urban to rural areas due to the high cost of living. Rural-urban movements are also reported to be taking place as people look for rural maize to sell on the parallel market in urban areas. Some migration from urban to rural areas is also reported to be due to movements for gold panning (see Table 2).

Table 2: Districts reporting food related migration in November 2008

Province	District	Reason
Manicaland	Buhera, Chimanimani, Mutare rural, Mutare urban, Makoni	From rural to urban areas to look for employment, to sell food on the parallel market, to stay with relatives because of rural food shortages. Urban to rural areas after losing jobs, to look for food , to grow own food.
Mashonaland East	Murehwa, Mutoko	From urban to rural areas because of cost of living. Rural to urban areas to look for employment.
Mashonaland Central	Mazoe	People leaving rural areas because of food shortages,
Mashonaland	Zvimba, Norton	From urban areas to rural after losing jobs and

West		running away from the high cost of living
Midlands	Chirumhanzu, Gokwe, Kwekwe rural, Zvishavane, Gweru urban	From towns to rural areas to look for food and for gold panning. From resettlement to urban and rural areas to look for relief food. To urban areas for employment, including some female migration for commercial sex work because of food shortages.
Masvingo	Gutu	People from town coming to look for maize
Matebeleland North	Hwange rural, Lupane, Nkayi, Binga, Victoria falls, Tsholotsho	From rural to urban areas seek jobs. Moving up and down looking for food. Some looking for fertile soils to grow crops
Matebeleland south	Insiza, Umzingwane, Gwanda	Women who had been living in towns coming back home. Out to South Africa to look for employment. Orphans from rural areas to towns to look for food.
Cities	Bulawayo, Harare	Out of Zimbabwe to South Africa and Botswana because of unemployment. Urban to rural areas to access food aid.

Difficulties with transport continue to be reported in 40% of districts. This is an improvement over the 55% reported in October and 83% in September, and is reported to be due to improved access to fuel supplies. Spare parts are now reported to be limiting factor in transport availability, together with high fares for transport.

Seed and fertilizer availability

Communities continue to report that seed and fertilizer is widely unavailable across all provinces, at the onset of the planting season. Shortages of seed and fertilizer compounded by massive price increases make access to farm inputs a likely critical constraint to future food security that needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. While draught power is a constraint (See Table 2) it does not match the severity of shortfall in inputs. Communities themselves repeatedly warn that food shortages will persist well into 2009 and beyond even with adequate rains unless an input support scheme is urgently introduced.

Many people have resorted to planting grain from their granaries that had been saved for seed. Reports from districts indicate that little or no tillage has taken place. Many households are practicing conservation farming.

Table 2: Household access to tillage /draught power, seed, fertilizer September 2008

Province	Average % households with access to tillage/draught power	% Districts reporting NO availability of seed	% Districts reporting NO availability of fertilizer
Manicaland	30	50	100
Mashonaland East	50	75	75
Mashonaland Central	70	86	43
Mashonaland West	n.a	67	67
Midlands	46	90	100
Masvingo	40	100	63
Matebeleland North	37	100	100
Matebeleland South	n.a	n.a	n.a

n.a = less than two reports per district

Given the findings reported in previous monitoring rounds, household asset sales for food and the poverty induced by HIV/AIDS, the rising cost of farm inputs presents a significant threat to food security in these households. Given the increased poverty induced by food insecurity, this threatens to drive such households out of production completely. Aggregate production data masks this effect in the poorest households.

AFFORDABILITY

People have used some of the maize they had harvested for seed and they are now in need of maize for consumption. Generally people are facing difficulties to afford the rapidly increasing prices in food.

Food prices in the formal and parallel market continue to rise beyond the reach of many. People are reported to be hungry even when the staple foods are available on the market. GMB food that is relatively more affordable is widely reported to be scarce.

The prices of maize grain and maize meal are becoming more and more expensive AND very few people are managing to buy the food. People have changed their feeding habits so that the little they can afford will last longer. The majority can not afford commodities such as bread.

The parallel market is reportedly serving as a major source of food as well as a source of income for urban residents. In rural areas people who are denied access to GMB maize have been noted to resort to the parallel market to buy maize grain supplied by local political and traditional leaders at high prices.

Table 3 : Price trends for basic commodities for the month of November 2008 beginning 3 November to 29 November 2008. (prices in Zimbabwe dollars)

Commodity	Week 1 (3-7)	Week 2 (10-14)	Week 3(17-21)	Week 4 (24-29)	\$USD
Bread	50 000	800 000	1 000 000	2 000 000	1- 1.50
Mealie Meal/10kg	350 000	5 000 000	9 000 000	17 000 000	10
Cooking oil/ 2lt	200 000	3 000 000	6 000 000	10 200 000	6-8
Sugar / 2kg	120 000	2 500 000	3000 000	5 100 000	2.50- 3.15
Salt / kg	50 000	500 000	8 00 000	3 000 000	1.00
Soap / 2kg	150 000	600 000	1 500 000	6 000 000	2.00

ACCESS

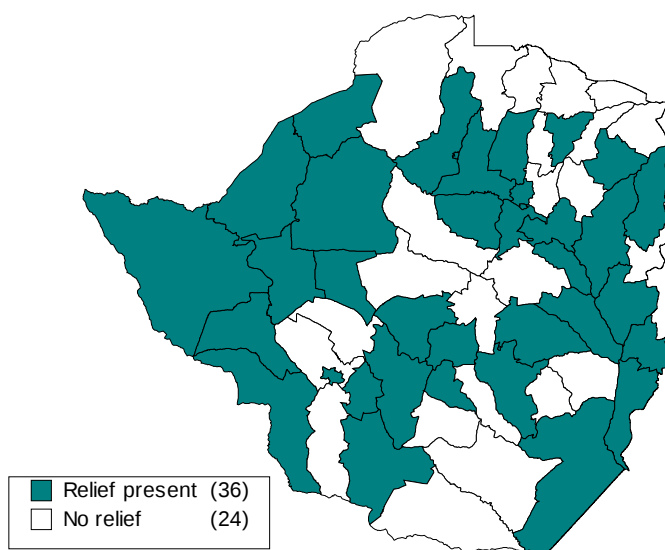
Relief food

Relief was reported to have resumed in thirty six districts (62% of districts). Relief activities are now widely reported in major per--urban areas. Lack of relief in resettlement areas was noted in reports. Communities are reported to have welcomed the urban school child feeding programmes. The reports indicate that relief organizations are now increasing their operations in the districts with more wards being serviced (See Figure 3).

Districts reporting relief activities were:

Manicaland:	Buhera, Chimanimani, Mutare rural, Makoni, Mutare urban
Mashonaland East:	Marondera urban, Marondera rural, Seke, Hwedza, Mutoko
Mashonaland Central:	Mazoe
Mash West:	Kariba, Makonde, Mhondoro
Midlands:	Gokwe, Gweru rural, Gweru urban, Shurugwi, Zvishavane,
Masvingo:	Masvingo rural, Masvinogo urban, Gutu, Chiredzi
Matebeleland north:	Binga, Hwange ,Tsholotsho, Lupane, Victoria Falls, Nkayi
Matebeleland south:	Gwanda, Bulilimamangwe, Umzingwane, Insiza, Gwanda
Cities:	Bulawayo, Harare

Figure 3: Districts reporting relief activities



COMMUNITY COPING STRATEGIES

Reports of asset sales to raise money to buy food were made from twenty six districts (45%), equal to that reported in October. Asset sales include household goods, particularly electrical goods, furniture, clothes and livestock. The impact of these sales, the trends on school access, particularly with rising fee levels, and the impact on wider household social welfare and poverty will be explored in more detail in the January monitoring.

The food security monitoring has highlighted that household and community food security are directly linked to wider economic and social factors, with economic inflation, poverty, AIDS and ill health, transport costs, social and political marginalisation undermining food security, and some food seeking activities undermining health, education access, household assets and leading to deepening poverty.

CHOLERA ALERT !!!!

DRINK WATER FROM SAFE SOURCES, TAP BOREHOLE, PROTECTED WELL OR SPRING. TREAT ALL WATER BY BOILING OR USING AQUATAB. WASH ALL FRIUT AND VEGETABLES BEFORE CONSUMPTION!!!!