

PARLIAMENT OF ZIMBABWE

FIRST SESSION – SIXTH PARLIAMENT

**FIRST REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SERVICE, LABOUR AND
SOCIAL WELFARE**

ON

**THE DROUGHT RELIEF DISTRIBUTION PROGRAMME AND THE HUMANITARIAN
ASSISTANCE**

PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT ON 31 MAY 2006

S.C. 7, 2006

ORDERED IN TERMS OF STANDING ORDER No. 151:

- (1) At the commencement of every session, there shall be as many select committees to be designated according to government portfolios to examine expenditure, administration and policy of government departments and other matters falling under their jurisdictions as the House may by resolution determine and whose members shall be nominated by the Standing Rules and Orders Committee. Such nominations shall take into account the expressed interests, experience or expertise of the members and the political and gender composition of the House.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES S.O 152

'Subject to these Standing Orders a Portfolio Committee shall:

- a) Consider and deal with all Bills and Statutory Instruments which are referred to it by or under resolution of the House or by the Speaker, consider or deal with an appropriation or money bill referred to it by these Standing Orders or by or under resolution of the House; and
- b) Monitor, investigate, enquire into and make recommendations relating to any aspect of the legislative programme, budget, rationalisation, policy formulation or any other matter it may consider relevant of the government department falling within the category of affairs assigned to it, and may for that purpose consult and liaise with such a department.'

On Tuesday, 19th of July 2005, Mr Speaker announced that the Committee On Standing Rules and Orders nominated the following members to serve on the Portfolio Committee on Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare:-

Mr. Baloyi
Chief Charumbira
Mr. Chibaya
Mr. Gwetu
Mr. Kangai
Mr. Maluleke
Mrs. Mawere
Mr. Matutu
Mrs. Maziriri
Ms. Mpariwa
Mr. Mushore
Mr. Shoko

On Thursday, 23 February 2006, The President of the Senate announced that the Committee on Standing Rules and Orders nominated the following Senators to Serve on the Portfolio Committee on Public Service Labour, and Social Welfare:-

Mrs. Gumbura
Mr. Haritatos
Mr. Madiro
Mr. Nyathi

Mrs. Mawere to be Chairperson

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report will detail the findings of the Committee on Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare on its investigation of the Drought Relief Distribution Programme and the Humanitarian Assistance and at the end give recommendations on the way forward.

Your Committee toured Masvingo Province and part of Matebeleland South Province to ascertain the availability and adequacy of maize in the country's dry regions that are grain deficiency areas.

At all the Grain Marketing Board (G.M.B) depots toured, there was either very little grain or no grain at all. The rate at which grain is delivered to the districts is erratic, as it can take as long as four to six months before the next delivery. Maize deliveries have also been slowed down by transport problems, because private transporters have not been willing to move maize for the GMB because it offers low rates.

Transporters prefer to offer their services to Non-Governmental Organisations that pay higher rates.

Your Committee also found out that millers who receive subsidised maize from GMB to mill and sell to the people as part of the Drought Relief effort are now profiteering as they are selling maize-meal at exorbitant prices. It was also noted that due to the difficult terrain found in rural areas, beneficiaries were walking very long distances, to the nearest collecting depots in places like Mwenezi and Chiredzi, which results in them having to fork out millions of dollars on transport costs.

Your Committee proffers a number of recommendations in this report and hopes that the responsible authorities will take them seriously.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Your Committee received overwhelming evidence from various stakeholders, that although the country had received good rains, this year, people living in the drought prone areas like Masvingo and Matebeleland provinces were not going to harvest adequate maize for their consumption and would therefore require assistance from both the government and non-governmental organisations, to survive.
- 1.2. The Portfolio Committee on Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare embarked on a four –day fact – finding mission of Masvingo Province and part of Matebeleland South. The aim was to assess the Drought Relief Distribution Programme and the Humanitarian Assistance rendered to the vulnerable people living in these dry parts of the country. The Committee toured the following areas, Zaka, Chiredzi, Mwenezi, Masvingo urban, Chivi and Beitbridge.

2. Objectives

Your Committee's objectives were

- 2.1. To enable members of the Committee to see, first hand, how grain from Grain Marketing Board is distributed at the district level.
- 2.2. To establish how non-governmental organisations operate in the context of Drought Relief and how NGO's drought relief food is distributed to the vulnerable.
- 2.3. To get an overview of the Drought Relief Distribution Programme.
- 2.4. To establish whether there are any crops, that will be harvested in these dry regions and to ascertain the availability and adequacy of grain.
- 2.5. Your Committee also set out to find out the degree of need for drought relief and humanitarian assistance to enable the Committee to come up with recommendations on the way forward based on the facts on the ground.

3. Methodology

- 3.1. Your Committee held two separate meetings at all the rural district councils visited. Firstly, the Committee met the local task force on maize distribution which comprised the following, the District Administrators, the Chief Executive Officer of the RDC, GMB Managers, Councillors and Headmen, ZRP representatives, Social Welfare officials as well as the local NGO's representatives.
- 3.2. The Committee then, interviewed the beneficiaries in separate meetings at the GMB depots while they were queuing for maize.
- 3.3. Your Committee paid a courtesy call on the governor of Masvingo Province, Hon Chiwewe, who gave the committee valuable information on the status of the Province. The Committee met the Provincial GMB Manager and also received evidence from the Minister of State Security, Lands, Land Reform and Resettlement Hon. D.N.E. Mutasa in his capacity as the Chairman of the Ministerial Taskforce on food security and The Minister of Agriculture Hon. J. Made in his capacity as a member of the National Taskforce on food security.

The discussions with the district task forces and the members of the public were interactive. Members of Parliament asked questions on issues they wished to find out more information and the members of the public were given opportunities to openly air out issues affecting them. Therefore this report is the product of highly interactive and informative discussions between members of Parliament on the one hand and the local communities visited, on the other.

4. Findings

Masvingo Province

4.1. Zaka Jerera

At Zaka R.D.C, your Committee was informed that there are 37 wards which compile lists of the number of beneficiaries and the amounts of grain required. The district offices then advise the province of the monthly requirements of its district. However, the district receives on average 450 bags of grain for distribution in a ward, which is too little and this allocation comes after 4 or 6 months.

- 4.2. Your Committee noted that a 50kg bag of grain costs \$ 65 000 and transport charges are \$ 250 000 per bag for a one-way journey.
- 4.3. Your Committee was informed that there is another food aid programme, which comes under the public works programme. The Committee noted that there are two components of the disbursements which are free cash assistance, targeted at the elderly, chronically ill and disabled persons, who receive free cash allowances monthly and the Public Works component targeted at the able-bodied households who participate in community projects, such as building school blocks, toilets and roads and then receive \$30 000. cash and a 50kg bag of maize per month. The Social Welfare officials reported that due to insufficient supplies of grain, people who engage in the public works programme were now just receiving \$30 000 without the bag of maize.
- 4.4. The beneficiaries, at Zaka Jerera informed your Committee that although a 50kg bag of grain is priced at \$65 000 the grain is no longer delivered to the wards and the transport costs to travel to collect a bag of maize is more expensive than the actual cost of grain. The beneficiaries complained that the 450 bags allocated per ward after 4 months is insufficient as some households remain without purchasing any maize.

5. Chiredzi

- 5.1. Your Committee was told that there are 77 000 drought stricken households in Chiredzi district. The Social Welfare department was allocated funds to buy a total grain input of 502 620 837.70 metric tonnes. At the time of the visits, 131 350 900 had been distributed to wards 16, 17 and 18. The main problems encountered in the district were, non-availability of grain at GMB and the high transport costs. A 30 tonne truck of maize costs about \$70 million to transport to the wards.
- 5.2. The task force in Chiredzi, noted that there are three millers in the district namely Silo which is GMB which distributes to private organisations, commercial farms and sugar estates, Marrow milling and Siyapack milling which distribute to farms and A2 farmers and shops.
- 5.3. Your Committee was informed that a household is allocated a 20kg bag of mealie-meal per month which is by far inadequate, but that is what is available. There are problems of power cuts that affect millers especially Silo, GMB, which reduces the tonnage. The shortage of fuel worsens the high transport costs, which makes the cost of buying the maize higher than the stipulated GMB price.

Also fuel shortages hamper the efficient delivery of grain. The other problems encountered in Chiredzi, are inadequate maize – the district gets at least 3 trucks (120 tonnes) per week. Requirement is at least 1 500 tonnes per week.

- 5.4. Your Committee was informed by Agricultural Research and extension services officer that Chiredzi would not harvest anything, because although there was a very good

crop in December and January, at the end of January the entire crop had wilted due to the dry spell experienced shortly afterwards.

- 5.5. The beneficiaries informed your Committee that the supplies of grain are inadequate. A ward gets 100 bags of maize to be shared amongst 6 000 people. Your Committee was told that people walk very long distances to the nearest collecting depot and that the transport costs in these areas are very high. The beneficiaries were uncertain about the future of grain allocations. They highlighted that the few grinding mills were of small capacity and incapable of milling for the whole district's huge demands and as a result people in Chiredzi were starving. Your Committee was told that a lot of money is wasted as people travel to GMB depots in vain due to the erratic supplies of grain.

6. Mwenezi

- 6.1. Your Committee found out that like in the other districts toured, grain was inadequate due to the erratic supply by GMB. It was noted that it was very difficult to move grain to the far lying areas in the district due to the difficult terrain, therefore many people were walking very long distances to buy maize at the GMB depots. Maize deliveries had also been slowed down by transport problems. Most transporters have not been willing to transport maize for the GMB because the rates paid by the parastatal are low.
- 6.2. The Committee was informed that NGOs namely Red Cross, Care and Plan International assist in the drought relief by giving food handouts to the vulnerable people in the districts.
- 6.3. Arex officials informed your Committee that Mwenezi is a perpetual grain deficiency area and no matter how much rain it receives, it can never produce what is required. There should be supplementary feeding schemes and mechanisms to ensure that every year GMB sells grain to Mwenezi because it is a disaster area.
- 6.4. Beneficiaries at Mwenezi told your Committee that grain is not available at GMB. They also informed your Committee that some people who had worked the previous year (2005) for the public works programme had not received either the \$30 000 or the bag of maize.

7. Provincial Governor Masvingo

- 7.1. Your Committee paid a courtesy call on the governor of Masvingo, who informed the Committee that initially his province was receiving its maize from Bulawayo and Chegutu yet it used to come from Beitbridge and Rutenga. The 50kg bag of maize which costs \$165 000 ended up being sold for \$700 000 to cover transport costs of between \$71 million and \$78 million from Bulawayo to Masvingo. Due to the intervention of the governor, maize for Masvingo is now being retained in Masvingo at Rutenga.
- 7.2. The governor of Masvingo Province informed the Committee that since maize had started coming from National Silos, it was delivered straight to the wards, which made it difficult for the provincial taskforce to monitor the movement of grain from ward to ward so much that one ward could receive grain twice before another receives for the first time.

8. Masvingo G.M.B Depot.

Provincial Depot Manager

- 8.1. Your Committee was informed that there are 7 districts in the province and all the districts had been affected by the drought for the past 4 years. There has been very low harvests in the province, which were too little to carry the demand in the province. The province is receiving maize from Rutenga, which is the life support of the province

as well as from Mvurwi directly to the depots throughout the districts. The responsibility of GMB is to make available the maize that is received. In terms of mealie-meal, there are 3 milling plants that are operational at Masvingo, Gutu and Chiredzi depots. Bikita milling plant was completed but it is not yet functional while Chivi milling plant still needs to be roofed and ZESA has already connected electricity.

9. Chivi

- 9.1. Your Committee was informed that during the period from September 2005 to March 2006 the district received and distributed 28 520-50kgs bags of maize. The number of households requiring food relief in the District's 30 wards is estimated at 31 469.
- 9.2. The Committee noted that like all the other districts toured, the major problems encountered in the distribution of drought relief is the inadequacy of grain delivered to the district 31 469 households require food relief, which means 1 573,45 tones of maize is required every month so as to be able to assist every needy family at least once every month. However, this was not possible as the tonnage received over the last seven months has not been enough even to satisfy the requirements for a single month.
- 9.3. Your Committee heard that maize deliveries have been slowed down by transport problems. Most transporters have not been willing to move maize for the GMB because the rates paid by the Parastatals are not attractive.
- 9.4. Millers in the district received subsidised maize from the GMB and sell to the people as part of the Drought Relief effort. However, the Millers are now profiteering as they are selling mealie-meal at exorbitant prices. This has proved very difficult to control in the absence of any clear pricing guidelines from GMB.
- 9.5. Under Public Works Programme, the last disbursement of grain and cash was made in June 2005. The cash payments had not been made to beneficiaries of the programme at the time of the visits, as the grain allocated has not been delivered to the district. Cash payments are supposed to be made together with grain.
- 9.6. The challenges encountered by GMB are failure by the GMB to deliver maize on time. More often than not, sales orders have expired before the maize paid for is delivered.
- 9.7. The Committee was informed that, the major players in this area, are Care International and Dananai Child Care and Red Cross. These assist by giving food hand outs which comprise, 10kg of maize per person per month, beans 1,8kg per person per month and cooking oil 0.5kg per person per month.

Arex officials informed your Committee that, there was a critical shortage of draught power when the season started. Maize seed was received a little bit late and people failed to start planting on time. Then there was the problem of water logging and due to the lack of fertilizers; crops such as maize did not do well.

10. Matebeleland South

10.1. Beitbridge

Your Committee was informed that Beitbridge was one of the vulnerable districts in the province. The district received 100 tonnes for the Drought Relief Programme. The District requested 256.75 metric tones of maize to cover the whole district but received 100 tonnes.

The Committee was informed that, beneficiaries have transport problems. GMB should establish depots in the rural areas closer to where the people live because it is now expensive to go to and from the GMB Depot in Beitbridge which cost more than \$ 1million at the time of the visits. The headmen who go to buy the maize on behalf of

their villages complained that they travel from their wards, to put up at the GMB depot for 3 to 4 days waiting for the maize to come with no food and sleep outside at bus stops. They also complained of high transport costs involved in moving grain from GMB to the wards. The Committee was informed that it cost an average of \$40 million to hire trucks in order to get the maize to the wards. Those who remain in the villages contribute the money for the up keep. A bag of maize costs \$60 000 at GMB, however, the beneficiaries are made to pay \$500 000 for the transportation of one 50kg bag of maize. There are some people who can afford to buy the grain but cannot afford to meet the transport costs. As a result, the bag is sold to someone else who can afford to meet the transport costs.

- 10.2. Mr Speaker Sir, your Committee noted that in all the districts toured it never came across reports that anyone had died of starvation.

11. Ministerial taskforce on Food Security

- 11.1. The Minister of State Security, Lands, Land Reform and Resettlement Hon D.N.E. Mutasa concurred with the Committee that the areas it had visited were indeed grain deficiency areas that require food relief as they lie in the dry regions of the country. The Minister informed your Committee that the responsibility of the ministerial taskforce on food security was to procure maize from both within and outside the country for the consumption of the nation. Your Committee was informed that most of the imported maize comes from South Africa by road, rail and ship.
- 11.2. The Minister also confirmed that the taskforce was facing transport problems, which created delays in delivering maize to the districts throughout the country.

12. Conclusion

- 12.1. Your Committee observed that there was either no grain or very little grain at all the depots toured. The rate at which grain is delivered to districts is erratic; it can take as long as five to six months before the next grain delivered. Your Committee is of the considered view that in order to attain the millennium development goal no.1 which is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger in Zimbabwe, there is need to harness efforts in the agricultural sector to ensure that we become the bread basket of Southern Africa again.

13. Recommendations

- i) Your Committee recommends that as soon as maize is procured, it should with immediate effect be dispatched to the respective Grain Marketing Board depots throughout the country with a view to have it accessed by the beneficiaries.
- ii) CMED should provide transport top ferry maize to the wards or alternatively government should make available resources to meet the private transporter's rates.
- iii) In view of the current harvests, taking place throughout the country the Grain Marketing Board should increase collection points in A-2 farming areas so that maize is stored in national silos for the benefit of the whole country.
- iv) Your Committee recommends that the \$30 000 paid in respect of the public works program be reviewed upward to at least \$100 000.
- v) Finally, your Committee also recommends that there be milling plants in every district.