

**FOSENET**  
**NGO Food Security Network**  
**Community Assessment of the**  
**Food Situation in Zimbabwe**  
**October 2002**

*"People are starving - there is no grain"*  
*Mwenezi*

**For the executive summary please go to page 14**

## **Background**

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 24 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, viz:

- 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.

FOSENET is conscious of the need to ensure and constantly improve on data quality and validity. Data quality is being improved through training, supervision and verification cross checks. Validity is checked through cross reporting from the same district, through

verification from field visits (currently being implemented) and through peer review from those involved with relief work, including the UN, to enable feedback on differences found and follow up verification. **Comment and feedback on this report is welcomed – please send to [fosenet@mweb.co.zw](mailto:fosenet@mweb.co.zw).**

In this third round, both the NGO and community based monitoring was implemented on a national scale. There were some delays in reports from some provinces due to transport difficulties as fuel has become more scarce. The NGO and community monitoring were thus combined which led to more than one report being received from 73% of districts and an average of 2,5 reports per district.

On the basis of the cross verification provided by more than one report per district this round of reporting provides evidence by district. While in most areas the cross validation gives confidence in the data, the report indicates where district evidence requires follow up verification and investigation, through both FOSENET and the wider UN, international and national network of organisations working on food security and relief. FOSENET will actively follow these issues up within these frameworks.

The report of community monitoring of food security for October 2002 signals broad issues to be addressed in dealing with food security as monitored from community level.

## Coverage of the data

The reports are presented in this report by district<sup>1</sup>. This report is drawn from **152 reports** drawn from **52 districts**<sup>2</sup> (90% of districts) across all provinces of Zimbabwe. Districts covered within provinces include

**Table 1: Districts covered by the October monitoring**

PROVINCE	District covered
Mashonaland East	Chikomba Marondera urban, Marondera rural, Goromonzi, Mutoko, Murewa, Seke, Hwedza, UMP, Mudzi
Mashonaland Central	Guruve, Mazowe, Mt Darwin, Bindura, Shamva
Mashonaland West	Chegutu, Chinhoyi, Mhondoro, Hurungwe, Makonde, Kariba
Harare	Tafara, Glen Norah, Highfield, Mufakose, Kambuzuma, Highfield, Budiro, Dzivaresekwa, Glenview, Borrowdale, Epworth, Chitungwiza
Manicaland	Mutare urban, Mutare rural, Makoni, Nyanga, Chipinge, Buhera, Chimanimani, Mutasa
Masvingo	Mwenezi, Masvingo rural, Masvingo urban, Chivi, Bikita, Zaka, Gutu, Chiredzi
Midlands	Mberengwa, Kwekwe
Matabeleland North	Bulawayo, Binga, Bubi, Hwange urban, Lupane, Tsholotsho
Matabeleland South	Umzingwane, Beitbridge, Insiza, Gwanda, Bulilimamangwe, Matobo

<sup>1</sup> The term 'district' refers to an administrative district. Reports by constituency are allocated to districts.

<sup>2</sup> Classifying Harare and Chitungwisa each as one district

Notably in this report Midlands is poorly covered due to late return of reports from this province. The data covers the period October 1 to October 31 2002.

## Change in the food situation

**Food security is reported to have fallen across a majority of districts in October.** Changes in the current situation were reported in 44 districts<sup>3</sup>. In 13 (30%) districts, food *needs* were reported to have increased and in 32 districts (73%) *supply* is reported to have fallen and become erratic. The reports indicate that the fall in GMB supply has been notable. Four district reports (8%) noted that food supplies increased before local council elections but fell thereafter.

*'Food supplies have decreased after the council elections. The situation is becoming worse, with mealie meal not even available from the wholesalers'*

*Mutare north.*

## Food needs

The most vulnerable groups in terms of food **needs** were the same as those identified in previous FOSENET rounds of monitoring, viz Elderly, orphans, children, ill people, people with disability and unemployed or destitute people. **In this round a greater share of districts reported that 'everyone' was now in need**, rising from 0% of districts in September to 40% of districts reporting this October.

### **The October reports signal a massive expansion in the scale of food needs.**

Vulnerability is primarily attributed to drought, poverty and thus inability to afford inflated food costs, and to scarcity of food supplies. These factors affect whole communities. Within this particular groups such as elderly, disabled and ill people and orphans are reported to face problems accessing what little food is available due to cost, difficulties with covering long distances needed to access food and difficulties with queuing.

**Urban people are frustrated at the fact that they cannot even buy food.** Collapsed food supply to districts as a specific cause of food needs was raised commonly in urban districts: Mutare urban, Marondera urban, Masvingo urban, Bulawayo, Harare and Chitungwisa. Frustration was reported that people wanted to buy food and could not source it; that working people did not have the time to queue for long periods; that the shortages had fuelled a black market with excessive prices and that the level of urban hunger was not being adequately recognised by relief agencies.

Specific follow up was made in October of school children. **The reports signal an increasing level of dropout and absenteeism, and children fainting in school due to hunger.** This was noted in 95% of the 47 districts where reports were made on this. Further to this children are reported to be fainting at school and unable to concentrate due to hunger. Some rural schools in Mashonaland East and Manicaland were reported to be closing early due to poor participation.

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<sup>3</sup> . Reports were not provided on this from Matabeleland south and Midlands monitors.

*"Children are now going to school only twice a week"*

*Murewa*

About a half of reports (47%) noted complete dropout (specifically in Manicaland, Mashonaland East and Matabeleland and a third (36%) reported increased absenteeism. Children are reported to be unable to make the journey to school due to hunger and foraging for food in rural areas and children spending time in queues and being too hungry to go to school in urban areas.

*'Children now spend most of their time in queues to buy mealie meal'*

*Harare*

**Children are thus taking on a significant burden of food insecurity in the country through loss of schooling, activities to source food and through ill health.** The later discussion notes the limited coverage of school feeding programmes relative to the scale of this burden.

The presence of displaced people was noted in 31% of districts (16 / 52). Districts reporting displaced people were

**Table 2: Districts reporting displaced people**

<b>PROVINCE</b>	<b>Districts reporting displaced people</b>
Mashonaland East	Chikomba Marondera urban, Seke, Hwedza, UMP
Mashonaland Central	Mazowe
Mashonaland West	Kariba
Manicaland	Mutare urban, Makoni, Chipinge
Masvingo	Chivi, Bikita, Chiredzi
Midlands	Nil
Matabeleland North	Nil
Matabeleland South	Beitbridge, Insiza, Gwanda, Bulilimamangwe

Displaced people were more commonly reported in Matabeleland South, Masvingo, Mashonaland East and Manicaland. Matabeleland south and Masvingo were reported in August/September as having higher levels of displaced people, while the reported presence of displaced people in the eastern districts appears to have grown.

Three deaths directly attributed to hunger were reported, and one death reported due to a person having being beaten up at a grinding mill. These reports came from eastern districts and will be further investigated. In four districts reports were made that hunger related deaths are occurring without specific information being given.<sup>4</sup>

## Food availability and access

### Household food stocks have fallen to less than one month in all provinces.

In 34 out of 50 districts reporting on this (68%) zero food stocks were reported. Only one district (Mudzi) reported households having food for more than one month. Mashonaland East had more districts reporting food stocks, but all except Mudzi of less than one month.

### October thus appears to signal a qualitative shift towards household dependency nationally on GMB, commercial and relief supplies.

However GMB and commercial supplies were noted to have been low or to have fallen in the month.

### GMB Deliveries

**GMB deliveries were reported to have fallen or to not have been made at all in the month in 53% of the 45 districts reporting on this.** Supplies were reported to have been erratic and not predictable. There was an average of 0,88 deliveries in the wards monitored for the month, with an average of 9,3 tonnes reported to have been delivered to the wards monitored in the month. This indicates little change on the 0,8 deliveries in the wards monitored in August / September and a reduction on the 1,5 deliveries per ward monitored reported in July.

As noted in the August/ September report, it would be useful to have a more objective periodic report by the GMB of its pattern of deliveries across the country to parliament and the public.

There was variability in the frequency of deliveries, with a range of 0-3 GMB deliveries within the month in the same site. In the following districts NO wards reported ANY grain deliveries in the period reviewed.

**Table 3: Districts with NO wards reporting any GMB deliveries in the month**

PROVINCE	Districts with no wards reporting any GMB deliveries in the month
Mashonaland East	Nil
Mashonaland Central	Nil
Mashonaland West	Chinoyi
Manicaland	Buhera
Masvingo	Gutu
Midlands	Nil
Matabeleland North	Tsholotsho, Lupane, Binga, Bubi, Hwange Urban,
Matabeleland South	Beitbridge, Umzingwane, Matobo,

The amounts delivered also varied, with significantly low average volumes reported to have been delivered in Matabeleland North and South and Manicaland (See Table 4). As shown

in Figure 2, Matabeleland North and South and Manicaland have had low deliveries now for two rounds of monitoring.

*'We used to get 30 tonnes of maize after 2 weeks. Now its 10 tonnes after 2 weeks'*

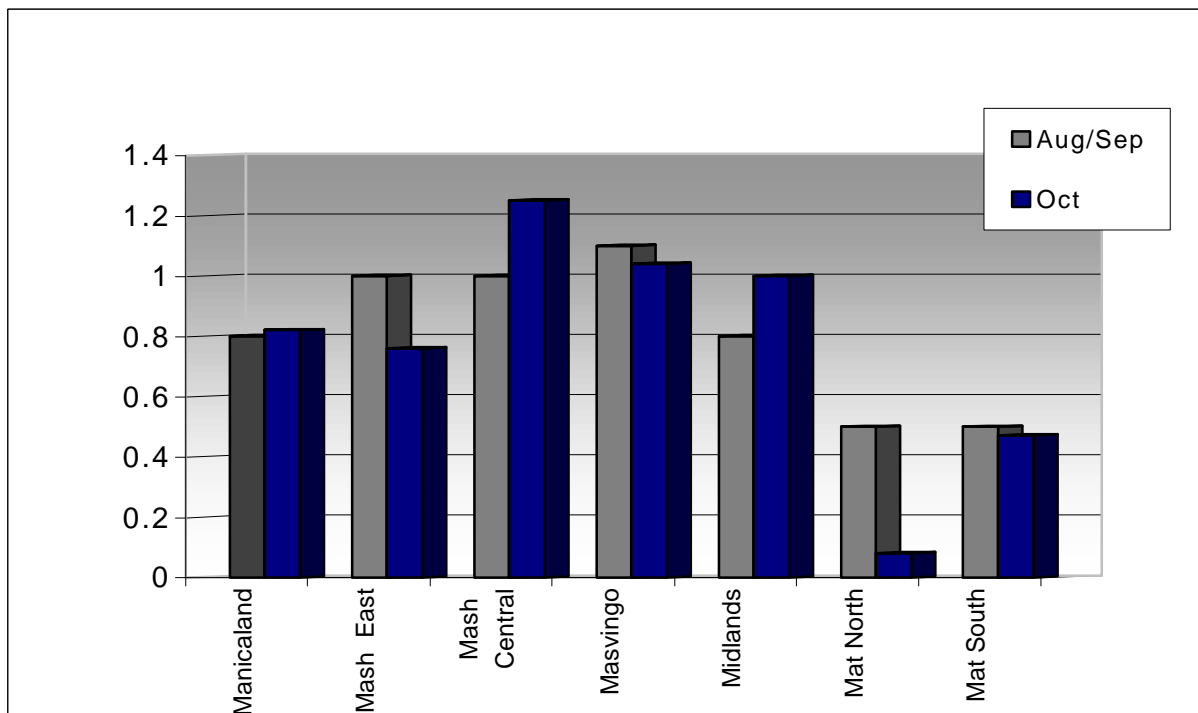
Mudzi

**Table 4: Reported frequency, amounts and costs of GMB maize**

Provinces	Reported average frequency of deliveries per sentinel ward	Estimated Ave tonnes GMB maize delivered/ sentinel ward in past month	Price range in Z\$ / 10kg	Price Inflation over August /Sep
Manicaland	0.82	3.2	110-156	16%
Mashonaland East	0.76	9.4	110-250	84%
Mashonaland Central	1.25	10.5	110-250	127%
Mashonaland West	1.00	9.4	116-172	n.a
Masvingo	1.04	12.8	110-170	6%
Midlands	1.00	15.0	116	nil
Matabeleland North	0.08	0.8	160-190	19%
Matabeleland South	0.47	5.9	112-190	nil

The average tonnes per sentinel area was calculated as an average of the reported amounts delivered by province.

**Figure 2: Reported frequency of GMB Deliveries**



The cost of GMB maize was reported to range from Z\$110-Z\$250 / 10kg. Where there has been an upward creep on (controlled price) GMB maize across most provinces, reported prices were highest in Mashonaland Central and East where inflation on reported prices in September was about 100%. While the significant devaluation of the Z\$ in this period means that the real price of GMB maize has probably fallen, even with these increases, the inflation factor indicates that 'controlled' pricing is not universally applied.

**While the bottom level price of GMB sales was constant at the control price, the reported upper ranges were 120% above the control price.** Districts with reports of GMB maize being sold at over Z\$200/10kg are shown in Table 4 below. More serious is the reported leakage into the informal sector, noted below.

**Table 4: Districts with reports of GMB maize being sold at over \$165 /10kg**

PROVINCE	Districts with reports of GMB maize being sold at over \$165/10kg (50% above control price)
Mashonaland East	Murewa, Mutoko
Mashonaland Central	Bindura, Mt Darwin
Mashonaland West	Chegutu, Mhondoro, Kariba
Manicaland	Nil
Masvingo	Zaka
Midlands	Nil
Matabeleland North	Bulawayo
Matabeleland South	Bulilimangwe

The cost of GMB sales was reported to be a barrier to access in 20 (38%) of districts. However cost is not the major barrier to accessing GMB maize reported. **Reduced supplies, procedural barriers and political bias were the most commonly reported obstacles to accessing GMB grain.** Reduced or no supply was noted to be a major in 25% of districts, while procedures for accessing maize were reported to be a barrier in 33%. These included people jumping queues, demands for ID cards that orphans or children could not satisfy, hoarding and corruption, sales to unregistered millers and back door sales. Teachers and civil servants were noted to face problems in rural areas due to maize being sold while they are working and difficulties in proving residence. Councilors were often noted to have influence in people accessing GMB maize. The most commonly reported source of bias in this round was political bias (reported in 56% of districts) with opposition supporters or people not approved by war veterans reported to be denied grain. This report of political bias is higher than in previous rounds of monitoring. Competition around extremely scarce resources may have also intensified this perceived problem.

*'Food is erratically available .....and at times is used as political bait'* Bulawayo  
*'You vote first, then grain'* Murehwa

**The greatest reported barriers to GMB maize in October were thus political and procedural barriers. The reported situation has worsened on both of these dimensions compared to July, when cost was the major barrier reported.**

## Market supplies

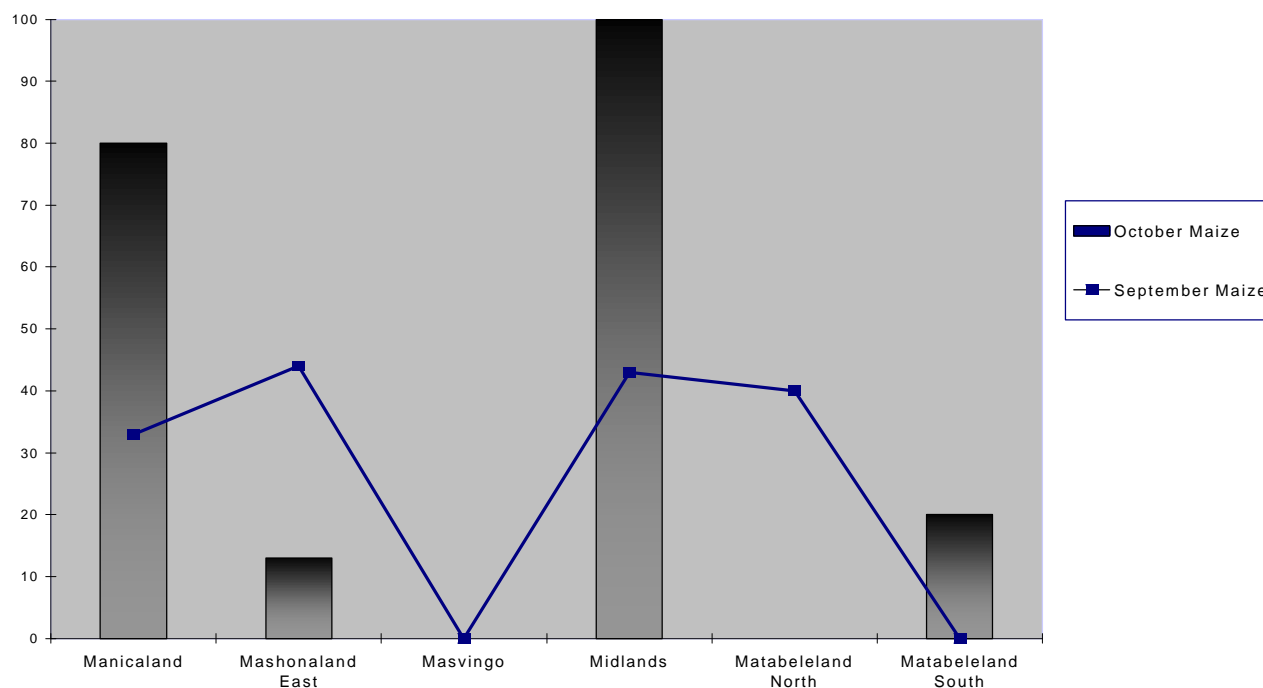
Commercial supplies were low for basic foods, less so for sugar. Maize meal availability was low in all provinces reporting on this, except for Manicaland. (This may relate to maize being accessed from Mozambique). For some provinces maize scarcity has been sustained. As shown in Figure 3, Masvingo and Matabeleland South are reported to have experienced sustained low availability for the three months August to October.

**Table 5: Availability of basic foods**

% Total districts reporting food type present during October	Maize	Oil	Bread	Sugar
Manicaland	80	60	100	40
Mashonaland East	13	75	88	88
Masvingo	0	20	20	40
Matabeleland North	0	33	33	66
Matabeleland South	20	50	50	50

(NB: Excluding provinces with < 3 districts reporting)

**Figure 3 Maize meal availability: August/September and October: % districts in province reporting maize meal available in the month**



In 13 districts (25%) commercial supplies of maize meal were noted to have fallen, while in a further 11 (21%) they were noted to be erratic or absent. **In nearly half of the districts (46%) commercial maize meal supplies were erratic or falling during the month.**



Cost and scarcity are the major reported barriers to this food. While formal market maize meal prices were noted to follow similar price ranges per 10kg as GMB sales (although with higher upper limits of up to \$1000 per 10kg) (See Table 7), supplies to formal shops were noted to be scarce with long queues, backdoor sales and non-transparent procedures for access reported in 12 districts (23%). Informal market prices are much higher, as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6: Maize meal costs in informal market**

District	Cost Z\$/10kg
<b>Manicaland</b>	
Mutare urban	200-800
Mutare rural	800-1500
Makoni	600-2000
Nyanga	147
Chipingwe	1250-1500
Chimanimani	750-1000
Mutasa	1000
Buhera	1250
<b>Mash East</b>	
Chikomba	360
Marondera	600
Marondera rural	1200
Mudzi	750-1200
Goromonzi	n.a
Mutoko	900-1400
Murewa	1000-1750
Seke	1000-1800
Hwedza	750-1500
UMP	600-900
<b>Mash Central</b>	
Guruve	340-1000
Mazowe	320-500
Mt Darwin	750
Bindura	1300
Shamva	100-750
<b>Mash West</b>	
Chegutu	180
Chinhoyi	1200
Mhondoro	180
Hurungwe	\$900.00
Makonde	n.a
Kariba	n.a

District	Cost Z\$/10kg
<b>Masvingo</b>	
Mwenezi	750
Masvingo	600-1000
Chivi	500
Bikita	500-700
Zaka	500-750
Gutu	360
Chiredzi	400
<b>Mat. North</b>	
Bulawayo	400-1000
Binga	500
Bubi	n.a
Hwange urban	1400
Lupane	n.a
Tsholotsho	1000
<b>Mat. South</b>	
Beitbridge	1000
Bulilimangwe	1500
Insiza	n.a
Gwanda	700
Umzingwane	1200
Matobo	n.a
<b>Midlands</b>	
Mberengwa	1330
Kwekwe	1000
Chitungwiza	700-1250
Harare	600-2 200

**The reported price in the informal market / 10kg maize meal ranged in October from Z\$147 to Z\$2000, or nearly twenty times the controlled price.**

The range of informal market prices are wide. **As scarcities have widened, inflation on informal market prices (of over ten times the control price) have spread to all provinces, compared to September monitoring.** Added to this are the transport costs taking into account distances of between 3-150km to access grain. The highest prices were reported in Manicaland.

**Table 7: Commercial (formal and informal) and GMB costs of maize meal**

Price ranges of maize suppliers	Formal markets Z\$/10kg	Informal markets Z\$/10kg	GMB Z\$ / 10kg	Distance to access grain
Manicaland	116-250	147-2000	110-156	3-50km
Mashonaland East	110-1000	360-1800	110-250	3-80km
Mashonaland Central	116-400	180-1200	110-250	3-115km
Mashonaland West	120-180	180-1200	116-172	4-12km
Masvingo	116-500	360-1000	110-170	1-150km
Midlands	n.a	500-880	116	n.a
Matabeleland North	100-400	240-750	160-190	n.a
Matabeleland South	n.a	500-1200	116-190	n.a

Maize meal is becoming more unaffordable in informal markets but so too are the alternatives. Bread is an expensive option.

*'Bread is hard to come by and is sold well above \$150 /loaf'*

*Mberengwa*

**Leakages of controlled price foods to informal markets are potentially yielding super-profits for some.** If reports from a number of districts of backdoor sales, sales to unlicensed millers, favouritism in sales etc are correct, the price differentials found in the monitoring would indicate that those benefiting are making huge profits. The cost differences yield a profit margin of up to Z\$1 800/ 10kg. Not surprisingly there is a high level of resentment about the level of influence and non transparency taking place around controlled price foods in those who cannot afford or access.

*'Some access the commodity to resell to consumers at very high prices, at \$750/10kg instead of \$250'*

*Harare*

**Informal market price inflation is skyrocketing.** The increase from \$1200 / 10 kg of maize found in September and \$2000 / 10kg in October is a 67% inflation in one month. How are people surviving this? The monitoring reports indicate a range of survival strategies, chiefly

- Foraging for wild fruits and roots (18 districts)
- Eating vegetables without sadza (maize meal) (14 districts)
- Reducing meals to one a day or one in two days (10 districts)

- Substituting maize meal with bread, rice, sweet potatoes (9 districts)
- Raising funds to buy from informal traders (selling vegetables, bartering household assets, livestock, gold panning, begging) (5 districts)
- Travelling longer distances for food (2 districts) and
- Relying on relief (6 districts)

**Wild fruits and roots, cutting grains from the diet and cutting meals are the most commonly reported strategies for survival.**

*People are going to die, especially in the coming two months'*

UMP

*'Houses are being raised at night by people looking for maize'*

Mashonaland East

People also raised their demand for seed to produce. October was the last month before the rains: Seed was reported to be needed by all districts except one (Bindura), primarily maize (particularly the short season variety), but also raised were groundnuts (11 districts), beans (7 districts), sorghum, cotton and bambara nuts (4 districts), roundnuts (2 districts), wheat and millet (1 district). **Seed was noted to be available commercially and through the GMB, with cost a barrier to the poor.** The November monitoring will follow up on this issue to monitor access.

## Relief food

If household, GMB and commercial supplies have declined, have relief supplies increased? The reports indicate some increase in relief supplies in Manicaland and Masvingo, while some areas note supplies to have stopped (Chivi, Chiredzi, Bubi). Relief information is available from FOSENET by district. This report presents a summary by province.

**Table 8: Relief agencies and targets within provinces**

PROVINCE	Relief Agencies in province	Relief targets (#districts)
Mashonaland West	6 districts have no relief reported	Nil
Mashonaland East	Local hospital, Save The Children Fund, World Vision 7 districts have no relief reported	Pregnant women (1) New settler h/holds (1) <5's (1)
Harare	Council, Churches, NGOs, Mashambanzou, National Aids Council, Sunrise, World Vision	Households (1) Orphans 4) Elderly (2) Gr 1-7 (1) <5s (1) AIDS patients (3) Widows (2)
Mashonaland Central	MP; Christian Care, Farm Community Trust, Church, SOS Maizeland; 1 district has no relief reported	Elderly (1) <5s (3), Gr 1-7s (2) Church members (1)
Manicaland	WFP, CADEC, Flag, PLAN Int, Christian Care, Care Int, FOST, UBC development, MP 1 district has no relief reported	Pregnant women (3) Households (4), Elderly (3) Orphans (2), <5s, (3) Gr 1-7 (2), Disabled people (1)
Masvingo	CARE, Church, Council, Cadec. Rudo 1 district has no relief reported	Households (6) Ill patients (2) Elderly (4) <5s (1), Grade 1-7 (1)

		Orphans (1)
Midlands	Care International <b>1</b> district has no relief reported	Gr 1-7 (1) Households (1)
Matabeleland North	CADEC, Plan International <b>4</b> districts have no relief reported	Gr 1-7s (2), <5s (1)
Matabeleland South	Orap, Cadec, World vision Lutheran, church <b>2</b> districts have no relief reported	<5s (2) , Grade 1-7 (3) Households (2) Pregnant women (2)

NB: <5s = children under 5, Gr 1-7s = primary school age children

35 districts (55% of the total) have relief activities within specific wards. Those districts with wards reporting no relief are shown in Table 9. Mashonaland West and East and Matabeleland North are reported to be less well covered with relief. **Given the low food stocks and low food deliveries in Matabeleland North and the higher level of displaced people reported in Mashonaland East the relatively lower relief cover reported in these two provinces would seem to merit attention.**

*'The government must allow NGO's to improve food supplies to avoid deaths from hunger'*  
Muzarabani.

**Table 9: Districts with wards reporting no relief**

PROVINCE	Districts with wards reporting no relief
Mashonaland East	Marondera urban, Goromonzi, Mutoko, Murewa, Seke, Hwedza, UMP
Mashonaland Central	Mt Darwin
Mashonaland West	Chegutu, Chinhoyi, Mhondoro, Hurungwe, Makonde, Kariba
Manicaland	Nyanga
Masvingo	Gutu
Midlands	Kwekwe
Matabeleland North	Bulawayo, Bubi, Hwange urban
Matabeleland South	Umzingwane, Insiza

Of districts with relief the distribution of targets is:

Households	63%
Primary school children:	37%
Children under five:	31%
Orphans:	20%
Pregnant women:	14%
AIDs patients:	11%

**A relatively low rate of directing relief at children was reported. Given the problems reported earlier of child dropout and children now involved in household food procurement this area of relief seems to need greater focus.**

The reports noted specific problems in accessing relief:

- Lack of access by sick, elderly or disabled (Mutare, Chipinge, Makoni, Shamva, Mwenezi, Chiredzi, Zaka, Gwanda, Harare)
- School age children not accessing relief (Mutare, Mutasa, Lupane, Tsholotsho)

- Interference in relief by party politics (Mutare rural, Chipinge, Guruve, Mazowe, Chivi, Zaka, Harare).

**The October round notes an increase in political interference in relief, together with concern for lack of relief to schoolchildren, and poor access in the elderly, sick or disabled.**

Included in the relief assessment was the cash for work programme which was reported to be operating in 63% of districts. The amounts earned were reported to range from Z\$1000 to Z\$1500 per month. **The range of payments in the cash for work programme in October was less variable than in September and there seemed to have been an improvement in the reported standardisation of payments.**

Payment levels were not reported to be a problem in October but other issues were: In 35% of districts it was noted to exclude the elderly, ill, child orphans who are too weak to work but need the support. In 13% of districts it was reported to exclude opposition supporters, highlighting concern on how the **decision making latitude given to the councilor in the cash for work programme** is applied, raised also in the September report.

The issues and problems raised in this report all need further monitoring and follow up. Follow up investigation and review is needed to follow up on certain trends or relationships and to get a better understanding of the process or causes that are underlying barriers to supply and access reported.

**There are however some strong and worrying trends that need attention:**

- Food security has fallen markedly as household have collapsed, and supply from GMB and formal commercial sources fallen.
- Vulnerability has widened with the fall in supply. Some provinces (Matabeleland and Manicaland) have had sustained low reported supplies for three months.
- The collapse in supply has produced huge reported burdens for the poorest, but super-profits for some. Children are taking on a significant burden through loss of schooling and activities to source food, with inadequate measures to protect them. Elderly, disabled and ill people continue to be reported to have less access to all sources of food, including relief. Poor communities are forced to spend more time, transport costs, and sell assets to source wild or market foods. At the same time reported super-profits of Z\$1800/10kg maize can be made through informal sales of leakages from or inequitable access to control price foods.
- With supply scarcities, urban people with money have not been able to buy maize meal, and informal market price increases have escalated rapidly as other sources fall.
- The reported increase in relief does not seem to be of a scale to match this widening of vulnerability.
- There has been an increase in reported political interference in access to GMB and relief supplies in the month.

## Summary

Reports from 152 field monitors from 52 districts of Zimbabwe for October 2002 indicate that:

- **Food security has fallen markedly in the country.** Household stocks have fallen to zero or less than one month in all districts except one. Food supply from GMB and formal commercial sources is reported to have fallen, after a brief reported increase in some areas during local council elections.
- **Vulnerability has widened.** Nearly half of the districts report that 'everyone' is now in need, (up from 0% in September). This increase is mainly due to the fall in supply. Reports of displaced people is higher, more in Matabeleland South, Masvingo, Mashonaland East and Manicaland.
- **Children are taking on a significant burden of food insecurity in the country** through dropout, absenteeism from and inability to concentrate in school, and through activities to source food. Despite this, **only a third of relief activities currently include school children.**
- **GMB deliveries are reported to have fallen** or to not have been made at all in half of the district sites in October. Matabeleland North and South and Manicaland have now had low reported deliveries for three months. While the bottom level price of GMB sales was constant at the control price, the reported upper ranges of GMB sales were 120% above the control price.
- **Procedural barriers, political bias and reduced supplies** were the most commonly reported obstacles to accessing GMB grain. These have increased compared to July, when cost was the major barrier reported.
- **Commercial maize meal supplies are also reported to have fallen.** Supplies to formal shops were noted to be scarce with long queues, backdoor sales and non transparent procedures for access. Urban frustration at not being able to buy food was more commonly reported.
- **Informal market supplies are present but significantly inflated** at reported upper price ranges of \$2000/ 10kg maize meal, nearly twenty times the controlled price and 67% above reported September prices. Reported leakages of controlled price foods to informal markets potentially yield profit margins of up to Z\$1 800/ 10kg – superprofits for those who access them.
- People are reported to be surviving on wild fruits and roots, cutting maize meal from their diet, cutting meals and on relief. Maize and groundnuts were commonly raised seed needed now for production for the short rains anticipated.
- **Relief supplies are reported to have increased.** Matabeleland North and Mashonaland East appear to be underserved given the very low food deliveries in the former and the higher reported level of displaced people in the latter.

- **There was an increase in reported political interference in relief, together with continuing problems of access in the elderly, sick or disabled.** Improved standardisation of payments in the cash for work programme was reported, but with continuing concern reported over the latitude given to councilors in deciding beneficiaries and operation of the programme.

**This indicates strong and worrying trends that need attention:**

- Food security has fallen markedly as household stocks have collapsed, and supply from GMB and formal commercial sources fallen.
- Vulnerability has widened with the fall in supply. Some provinces (Matabeleland and Manicaland) have had sustained low reported supplies for three months.
- The collapse in supply has produced huge reported burdens for the poorest, but super-profits for some. Children are taking on a significant burden through loss of schooling and activities to source food, with inadequate measures to protect them. Elderly, disabled and ill people continue to be reported to have less access to all sources of food, including relief. Poor communities are forced to spend more time, transport costs, and sell assets to source wild or market foods. At the same time reported super-profits of Z\$1800/10kg maize can be made through informal sales of leakages from or inequitable access to control price foods.
- With supply scarcities, urban people with money have not been able to buy maize meal, and informal market price increases have escalated rapidly as other sources fall.
- The reported increase in relief does not seem to be of a scale to match this widening of vulnerability.
- There has been an increase in reported political interference in access to GMB and relief supplies in the month.

FOSENET welcomes feedback on these reports.

Follow up queries and feedback to  
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