

FOSENET
NGO Food Security Network

**Community Assessment of the
Food Situation in Zimbabwe
August / September 2002**

For the executive summary please go to page 15

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 (to be implemented in the next round) 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.**

In this second round, the NGO monitoring piloted in July was implemented on a national scale. Further work on community based monitoring was being done so that this report does not include the evidence from the community monitors. It is thus compiled from reports from NGO monitors located within districts.

The report provides general evidence by province, with some evidence by district where there is consistency between different reports or across districts. District evidence is raised to signal issues for 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 evidence presented

with greater certainty is that reported from a large share of districts. The report for August / September signals broad issues to be addressed in dealing with food security as monitored from community level.

This summary provides the report of the NGO based monitoring for August / September 2002.

Coverage of the data

The NGO reports are presented in this report by district¹. This report is drawn from **62 reports** drawn from **43** districts (74% of districts) across all provinces of Zimbabwe. In some districts more than one report was filed. Districts covered within provinces include

PROVINCE	District covered
Mashonaland East	Chikomba, Hwedza, Marondera rural, Marondera urban, Mudzi, UMP, Seke, Goromonzi
Mashonaland Central	Bindura urban, Bindura rural, Guruve, Mvurwi, Mt Darwin
Mashonaland West	Kariba.
Manicaland	Buhera, Chimanimani, Mutare urban, Mutare rural, Chipinge, Mutasa
Masvingo	Bikita, Masvingo urban, Zaka, Masvingo rural, Chiredzi, Chivi, Mwenezi.
Midlands	Gokwe, Gweru, Shurugwi, Kwekwe rural and urban. Chirumanzu, Zvishavani
Matabeleland North	Binga, , Lupane, Tsholotsho, Bubi, Umguza
Matabeleland South	Gwanda, Matobo, Bulilimamangwe

Notably in this report Mashonaland West is poorly covered as are Harare,. Chitungwisa and Bulawayo. Coverage will be expanded to these areas in future rounds. The data covers the period August 1 to September 30 2002.

Food needs

Population characteristics

In this round the reports focused on particular population and socio-economic characteristics that may make communities more susceptible to food needs.

Vulnerable groups

The most vulnerable groups for food insecurity were identified (by frequency of reporting out of a total of 62 reports) were

➤ Elderly	23
➤ People with disability	17
➤ Orphans and child headed h/holds	13
➤ The sick / HIV/AIDS /TB patients	13
➤ Young children	8
➤ Unemployed / informally employed	1
➤ Former farmworkers	1

Elderly people and people with disability were thus of greatest concern, followed by orphans/children and ill people. People with disability have become a more prominent group

¹ The term 'district' refers to an administrative district

identified as food insecure since the last round of monitoring, possibly indicating that as food scarcities have increased, so food insecurity has intensified in some groups. The consistency with which the plight of the elderly and children is being raised will motivate more specific focus on the difficulties and experience of these groups in future rounds.

While these groups were identified as *most* vulnerable, almost all reports indicated that **whole communities are now becoming vulnerable**. This is attributed to collapse of the harvests, the breakdown of supply through the GMB, the absence of meaningful levels of relief, the scarcity of commercial supplies and political interference and corruption in distribution of scarce supplies. Twenty six (42%) reports noted that supplies into the area have dropped markedly. Communities report distress at the presence amongst them of people like displaced farmworkers and orphan headed households who are in serious need, but are not accessing food assistance (specifically reported in about 8 districts).

“Maize is not coming from the GMB” and “People in this district need food supplies urgently or they will starve” were common reports from districts.

The problem of school children dropping out of school was noted again, but less commonly (much of the reporting period was during the school holidays). There were reports that ways should be found **to ensure school child feeding during the school holidays** to avoid decline during this period (Mat North).

10 preliminary reports were made of deaths that communities suspect were hunger / food shortage related and these will be further investigated and documented.

Three types of vulnerable groups were identified in this round for closer monitoring of their presence in the district, viz: displaced people, bush boarders and orphan headed households.

PROVINCE	% Districts reported with high levels of displaced people	% Districts reported with high levels of ‘Bush boarders’ ²	% Districts reported with high levels of orphan headed households
Mashonaland East	Marondera urban, Mudzi, UMP (50%)	Mudzi, UMP (33%)	Chikomba, Hwedza, Marondera rural, Marondera urban, Mudzi, UMP, Seke, Goromonzi (100%)
Mashonaland Central	Bindura urban, Bindura rural, Guruve, Mvurwi, Mt Darwin (100%)	Mvurwi, Mt Darwin (40%)	Bindura urban, Bindura rural, Mvurwi, Mt Darwin (80%)
Mashonaland West ³	Not available	Not available	Not available
Manicaland	Chimanimani, Mutare urban, Chipinge (50%)	Chimanimani, Mutare urban, Chipinge (50%)	Buhera, Chimanimani, Mutare urban, Mutare rural, Chipinge, Mutasa (100%)
Masvingo	Bikita, Zaka, Masvngo urban, Chivi, Mwenezi (71%)	Zaka, Bikita, Mwenezi. (43%)	Bikita, Zaka, Masvngo urban, Masvingo rural, Chiredzi, Chivi, Mwenezi. (100%)
Midlands	Kwekwe rural and urban, Zvishavani	Kwekwe rural, Chirumanzu	Gokwe, Kwekwe rural. Chirumanzu, Zvishavani

² Bush Boarders are school children who stay away from home and set up informal settlements near schools for various reasons, such as difficulty in accessing secondary schools from their homes.

³ Information from Mash West excluded as it only comes from one district

	(43%)	(29%)	(57%)
Matabeleland North	Umguza (20%)	Lupane, Tsholotsho (40%)	Binga, , Lupane, Tsholotsho, Bubi, Umguza (100%)
Matabeleland South	Gwanda, Matobo, Bulilimamangwe (100%)	Gwanda, Matobo (67%)	Gwanda, Matobo, Bulilimamangwe (100%)

Orphan headed households are present in almost all districts. The constraints orphans face in accessing food are discussed later.

Bush boarding in school children is reported to be more common in Matabeleland South, Masvingo and Manicaland. This group of children may be inadequately supported by relief mechanisms targeted at households and **food relief programmes in these areas may need to ensure their coverage of such children.**

Population movements

The reports indicate a high level of population movement in and out of districts in August / September, for reasons related to work, land and food. Displaced people were reported at a higher level in Matabeleland south, Masvingo, Mashonaland West ⁴ and Mashonaland Central. The NGO monitors reported higher levels of population movement than in the June/July reports. From reports of movements in and out of districts, Masvingo, Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East and Manicaland had the highest level of reported in migration, and Mashonaland East, Mashonaland Central, and Masvingo the highest levels of out migration. (The figures are too qualitative to judge net migration but it would appear that Manicaland is the one province that seems to have a higher level of net in migration). Matabeleland North had no reported in migration and little reported outmigration.

Migration *into* districts is primarily attributed to people returning after job loss or to seek informal employment (20% of monitor reports), about 40% of these reports relating to farmworkers having lost jobs, but 60% relating to other kinds of job loss. People moving onto land for resettlement was the next most commonly reported cause (13% reports), while in one report it was noted that people who had moved onto resettlement areas were now returning due to food shortages. **Various causes of job loss and job hunting were thus reported as a bigger cause of inward migration than movements for resettlement on acquired land.**

Migration out of districts, in contrast, was primarily driven by people moving to resettlement areas (19% reports). Job loss, and particularly job loss in farmworkers, was the next major reason (11%) and searching for food was a reported cause in 2 cases.

Displacement and population mobility are one of the most profound features of the August/ September report. The in migration of people who have lost jobs, and of people onto land, poses demands for food security and relief. **Food does not itself appear yet to be a major reported cause for populations moving more permanently in and out of districts.**

Food availability

Almost all districts were reported to produce maize in normal years, and a further 19 districts were reported to produce other grains. This information will be followed up in future monitoring of seed access.

⁴ It is difficult to generalise as this information comes only from one district

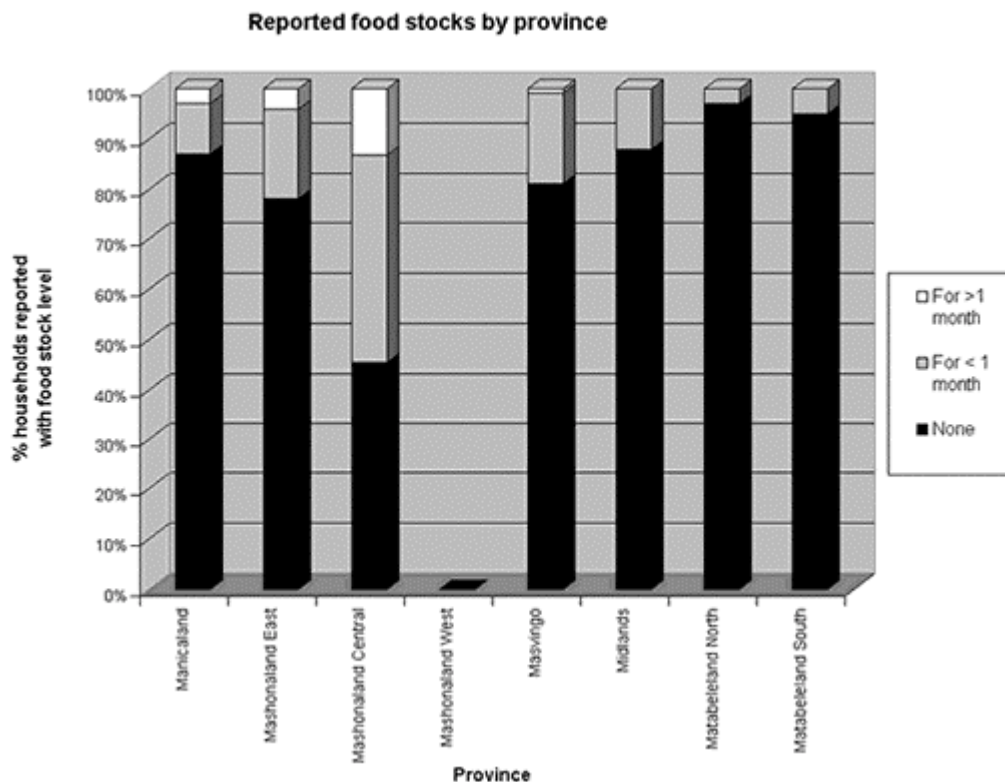
Household food stocks were reported to be extremely low, although variable across provinces. The table and bar chart below indicates the reports from monitors of the share of households with no food stocks, and food stocks estimated to last for less than and more than one month.

All areas are food insecure with stocks of less than one month. The reports suggest three levels of severity however: Mashonaland Central and East with the greater level household food stocks; Masvingo, Midlands and Manicaland with less food stocks and **Matabeleland North and South in the most severe situation.**

Table: Reported Household food stocks by province

Reported household food stocks	% households with No food stocks	% with food for < 1 month	% with food for >1 month
Manicaland	87	10	3
Mashonaland East	78	18	4
Mashonaland Central	45	41	13
Mashonaland West	n.a	n.a	n.a
Masvingo	81	18	1
Midlands	88	12	0
Matabeleland North	97	3	0
Matabeleland South	95	5	0

(Mash West did not have sufficient districts for this)



% of districts reporting food present during august/ September	Maize	Oil	Bread	Sugar
Manicaland	33	83	83	67
Mashonaland East	44	89	67	100
Mashonaland Central	20	60	60	60
Mashonaland West	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Masvingo	0	14	43	29
Midlands	43	29	43	86
Matabeleland North	40	0	0	20
Matabeleland South	0	33	0	0

(Mash West did not have sufficient districts for this)

These findings compare with those produced by the USAID Famine Early Warning System Network (22 Jun 2002) giving some confidence in the reports.

As shown from the table above, this pattern held generally for availability of a number of food types with some variability. Generally food availability was reported to be best in Mashonaland East and worst in Matabeleland North and south. In respect of maize Masvingo, Matabeleland South and Mashonaland Central reported lowest availability.

GMB Deliveries

One of the most important sources of food is maize coming from GMB.

'The GMB is failing to supply' 'The GMB is not delivering food anymore' were common reports. When made they imply significant food insecurity in a district.

GMB deliveries are reported to be made to communities or obtained through the depots. **GMB deliveries were reported to be infrequent and inadequate**, with an average of 0,8 deliveries in the wards monitored per district in the month. (The July FOSENET report found an average of 1,5 deliveries in the wards covered by constituency in the past month). There was variability in the frequency of deliveries, with a range of 0-5 GMB deliveries within the month in the same site. The **reported reduction in GMB deliveries in August – September compared to July 2002** needs to be further investigated.

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.

The following districts were reported to have wards that had not received any grain deliveries in the period reviewed.

PROVINCE	Districts identified as having wards that had not received any GMB deliveries in the past month
Mashonaland East	Marondera rural
Mashonaland Central	Mount Darwin
Manicaland	Mutasa
Masvingo	Masvingo urban
Midlands	Gokwe, Chirumanzu
Matabeleland North	Tsholotsho, Lupane, Binga, Umguza
Matabeleland South	Bulilimamangwe, Matobo, Gwanda

The amounts delivered also varied, with Mashonaland East having the greatest average tonnage reported delivered and Matabeleland South the least. Notably the price range in Mat South was also high, with the greatest price reported of Z\$190/10kg.

While the bottom level price of GMB sales was constant at the control price of Z\$110/10kg, the upper ranges on varied up to Z\$190/10kg or 73% above the control price.

Table: Reported frequency, amounts and costs of GMB maize

Amount and cost of food delivered	Reported average frequency of deliveries per sentinel ward	Estimated Average tonnes of GMB maize delivered per sentinel ward during the past month	Price range in Z\$ / 10kg
Manicaland	0.8	13	110-135
Mashonaland East	1.0	18	110-136
Mashonaland Central	1.0	7	110-110
Mashonaland West	n.a	n.a	n.a
Masvingo	1.1	15	110-160
Midlands	0.8	8	110-119
Matabeleland North	0.5	12	110-160
Matabeleland South	0.5	4	110-190

(Mash West did not have sufficient districts for this)

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

Market supplies

As noted earlier formal and informal market supplies are patchy with less than 50% of districts covered reporting maize availability and supply of bread and oil also at low levels. Sugar availability appears to have improved somewhat since the last round of monitoring, but not in Masvingo or Matabeleland. The cost of both formal and informal market foods has already been noted in the previous FOSENET monitoring report to be prohibitive. The table below indicates prices reported for each source per 10kg/ Maize.

Table: Reported frequency, amounts and costs of GMB maize

Price ranges of maize suppliers	Formal markets Z\$/10kg	Informal markets Z\$/10kg	GMB Z\$ / 10kg
Manicaland	Not sold	650-900	110-135
Mashonaland East	136	350-900	110-136
Mashonaland Central	Not sold	270-500	110-110
Mashonaland West	Not sold	700	n.a
Masvingo	800-850	500-1000	110-160
Midlands	110	500-880	110-119
Matabeleland North	111	240-750	110-160
Matabeleland South	300	500-1200	110-190

(Mash West did not have sufficient districts for this)

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

The range of market prices are wide. **The worst inflation on prices (over ten times the control price) is found in the area of greatest scarcity of both household stocks and GMB deliveries: Matabeleland South.** There is less price distortion in areas where food stocks are higher and GMB food more available (Mashonaland East and Central).

Control of speculation on food prices is not succeeding. It would seem from these reports that informal speculation thrives in an environment where is the lack of choice due to lack of household stores, weak deliveries of controlled price food and no formal market sales. The similarities in upper limits between neighbouring provinces signals that people are moving across provinces to buy food⁵.

Costs of up to \$1200 per 10 kg of maize are beyond the means of poor households. What assets sales or sacrifices are people making to deal with such prices?

'Two families nowadays share a 50kg bag and can only buy again after 2 months' (Mutare rural)

Relief Deliveries

The areas reporting relief activities were:

PROVINCE	Areas identified as having relief food (and agencies named)
Mashonaland West	None
Mashonaland East	Chikomba (through hospital); Mudzi (World Vision)
Mashonaland Central	None
Manicaland	Mutare Urban (churches); Chipinge (FOST, Plan Int and Christian care), Mutasa (Plan Int)
Masvingo	Zaka (Care); Chivi (Care); Mwenezi (World Vision) Chiredzi (FACT) Masvingo urban (Care, Rudo, Red cross, FACT, AIDS levy fund, CADEC)
Midlands	Kwekwe (Plan Int, FCTZ)
Matabeleland North	Tsholotsho (Plan Int); Lupane (CADEC); Umguzu (CADEC); Bubi (World Vision); Binga (Churches)
Matabeleland South	Bulilimangwe (Care; World Vision; CADEC) Gwanda (World Vision)

These programmes are generally reported to target children under 5 years (in 67% of cited programmes), schoolchildren grade 1-7 (67%); pregnant women (7%), the elderly (19%), orphans (19%), patients (15%) disabled people (7%) and households (25%).

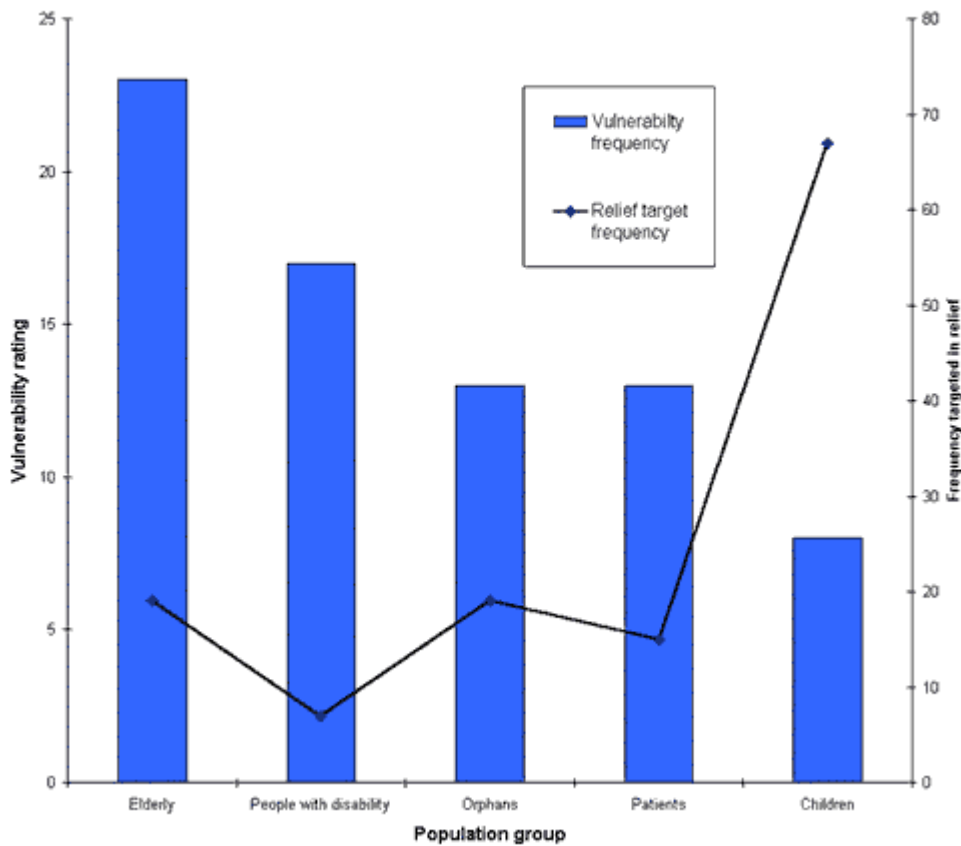
There is some degree of poor match between the targets of relief and the groups identified as vulnerable (See figure below). **People with disabilities and the elderly seem to be relatively less well covered by relief.**

Cash for work was reported to be operating in all districts monitored except Mwenezi. In only 12 districts did it operate as food, *with* cash, for work. The amounts earned ranged from Z\$100/week to Z\$750/week with relatively large variations within provinces.

The reports indicate that the payment rates in the cash for work programme are not applied in a standardised manner.

⁵ Is the Mat South cost inflated by prices in neighbouring South Africa?

Comparison between vulnerability rating and relief targeting



Food access

While food availability is limited, with some considerable variation in different parts of the country, food access is even further limited. There were a range of barriers reported across different food sources:

Formal / Informal markets

Cost was identified as the major barrier to access food from markets, primarily affected poor and vulnerable groups.

Maize is reported to be sold openly across the counter and from informal vending points, including people’s homes. The greatest barrier to access to this food was noted to be the cost. Vulnerable groups (elderly, children, orphans and the poor) are not able to afford such food. What is less clear is the source of the food sold in informal markets. Previous FOSENET reports have found speculation in control price foods. Reports from 10% of districts in this round indicated **possible leakages of GMB foods into informal markets.**

GMB sales

Accessing GMB foods was reported to be done through the councilor (40% of reports), or through the ruling party (15% of reports) in the latter case with proof of a national ID card and a party card. Food was also reported to be accessed directly from the GMB (13% reports) (in some cases with the requirement of showing a national ID card) and in 6% of cases to require some sort of advance payment.

The current system of access to GMB foods is reported to marginalise the elderly, ill, disabled and orphans and those perceived as opposition supporters.

The reports indicated a range of groups to be marginalised:

- The elderly, ill, disabled and orphans are noted to be unable to raise sufficient funds to buy the food or to be able to stand in queues for a long time and so do not access
- People not cleared by the ruling party or opposition supporters are reported to face political blocks to accessing the food
- Orphans, elderly and young people are not able to produce National Ids to access the food
- Those living at some distance from the depots are unable to afford the transport to get to the depots or to spend enough time at the depots to get maize from the queues
- Workers (such as civil servants) are not able to get the time to stand in queues to access the food.
- Farmworkers are told to get food from their employers, but this is not always possible due to shutdowns.

Cost, political and transport barriers continue to be reported as impeding GMB food access.

Relief food

To access relief food people were reported to be required to

- Register children through schools or clinics or elderly through old people's homes (18% reports)
- Register with the councilor or village head (10% reports)
- Register directly with the relief agency (5% reports)
- Produce birth and death certificates (2% reports)

Groups reported to be facing difficulty with relief procedures or in accessing relief foods were reported to be out of school children, people with illnesses and disability and orphan headed households:

The reports noted specific problems for each group:

- Children who have dropped out of school face problems as not enough provision has been made for out of school feeding points (10%)
- People with illnesses or disability face barriers in mobility to reach feeding points (6% reports)
- Orphan headed households are marginalised from institutions and lack formal documents (3%)

The cash for work programme was somewhat different. Access was almost universally reported to be through the councilor. In 10% of cases ruling party approval was also reported as required. It was noted in 8% of reports that only one person per household could register, while in the rest no limit was specified. The target group was reported to be variable across districts: household heads in some, the elderly, widows, anyone able to work, unemployed mothers and those without cattle.

It would appear that the procedures for targeting cash for work are not standardised and the decision making latitude given to the councilor is wide.

Groups not accessing the cash for work scheme are reported to be

- Groups vulnerable to food insecurity - the elderly, orphans, disabled and ill (31% of reports)
- Those not approved by the ruling party and opposition party supporters (15% of reports)
- Former farmworkers (3% of reports).

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:

- The groups identified as *most* vulnerable in terms of food needs are also those that appear to have least access to *all* sources of food, including relief food.
- Household food stocks are generally at less than one months supply, GMB deliveries are inadequate, food in formal markets almost absent and in informal markets unaffordable.
- The provinces that seem to have lowest household food stocks also appear to have least access to controlled price food deliveries from the state and face the largest markups on private markets, further undermining their food security.
- Speculation on food, largely through informal markets, is not being controlled and may be partly feeding from leakages from distorted access to controlled price food. Formal market food sales have dwindled substantially.
- The poorest have least resources to shift between (dwindling) alternative food sources and even GMB sales have become unaffordable to some.
- Political bias continues to be reported in food access.

Not explored in this report but a focus of the next round will be security of food production and access to seed and fertiliser.

Summary

Reports from 62 NGO field monitors from 43 districts of Zimbabwe for August and September 2002 indicate that:

1. Food needs are higher than in the July round. Almost all areas are reported to have less than one months food stocks, some provinces (Matabeleland North and South) have none while others (Masvingo, Midlands and Manicaland) are approaching this situation.
2. Food supplies are reported to be falling. The frequency of GMB deliveries is less than in the July round and least in provinces with least household food stocks. Reported GMB prices reached an upper range of 73% above the control price at up to Z\$190/10kg.
3. Formal market supplies are low, especially for maize, oil and bread, although reported sugar supplies seem to be improved. Informal market supplies continue but with significant cost inflation at over 10 times the control price, at up to Z\$1200/10kg particularly in provinces where both household stocks and GMB deliveries (and thus alternative food sources) are lowest.
4. Elderly people, people with disabilities, orphans, patients and young children were most commonly identified as vulnerable. These groups faced specific reported barriers in access to *all* sources of food, including relief food.
5. People with disabilities and the elderly were reported to be relatively poorly catered for by relief programmes relative to their identified vulnerability. Barriers in access to relief food due to procedures, mobility and school drop out were reported in children who have dropped out of school, people with illness or disability and orphan headed households.
6. The cash for work programme was reported to have variable levels of payment and target groups across districts indicating a wide latitude of decision making given to councilors on these issues or weak standardisation of procedures.
7. There has been a high level of population movement during August/ September with migration into districts primarily due to people returning after job loss or for informal trade and then moving onto resettlement land, and out migration primarily reported to be due to people moving out to seek resettlement land or farmworkers losing jobs. Few reports were obtained of permanent movements for food. More frequent reports of displaced populations came from Matabeleland South, Masvingo, Mashonaland West and Mashonaland Central.

Several issues emerge from this report as fundamental to food security and food access:

- The groups identified as *most* vulnerable in terms of food needs are also those that appear to have least access to *all* sources of food, including relief food.
- Household food stocks are generally at less than one months supply, GMB deliveries are inadequate, food in formal markets almost absent and in informal markets unaffordable.
- The provinces that seem to have lowest household food stocks also appear to have least access to controlled price food deliveries from the state and face the largest markups on private markets, further undermining their food security.
- Speculation on food, largely through informal markets, is not being controlled and may be partly feeding from leakages from distorted access to controlled price food. Formal market food sales have dwindled substantially.
- The poorest have least resources to shift between (dwindling) alternative food sources and even GMB sales have become unaffordable to some.
- Political bias continues to be reported in food access.

FOSENET welcomes feedback on these reports.
Follow up queries and feedback to
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