

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

*"All people need food desperately these days. Families are living without food for days.
School children are fainting during lessons"*
Mutare

Lets share fairly the little that we have"
Buhera

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.**

In this fourth round, both the NGO and community based monitoring was implemented on a national scale. There were further delays in reports from some provinces due to intensified transport difficulties with fuel more scarce. The NGO and community monitoring were combined which led to more than one report being received from 58% of districts and an average of 3,1 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 November 2002 signals broad issues to be addressed in dealing with food security as monitored from community level. The report provides some trend comparison on key indicators across the FOSENET reports for July 2002 to November 2002. This is the last report for 2002. The next FOSENET report will be for end January 2003.

Coverage of the data

The reports are presented in this report by district¹. This report is drawn from **166 reports** drawn from **53 districts** (92% 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, Rushinga, Mazowe, Mt Darwin, Bindura, Shamva
Mashonaland West	Chegutu, Chinhoyi, Hurungwe, Zvimba, Makonde, Kariba
Manicaland	Mutare urban, Mutare rural, Makoni, Nyanga, Chipinge, Buhera, Chimanimani, Mutasa, Nyanga
Masvingo	Mwenezi, Masvingo (rural and urban), Chivi, Bikita, Zaka, Gutu, Chiredzi

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

Midlands	Gokwe, Gweru urban, Chirumanzu, Zvishavane, Mberengwa, Kwekwe
Matabeleland North	Binga, Hwange, Lupane, Tsholotsho, Nkayi
Matabeleland South	Umzingwane, Beitbridge, Gwanda
Cities	Chitungwisa, Harare, Bulawayo

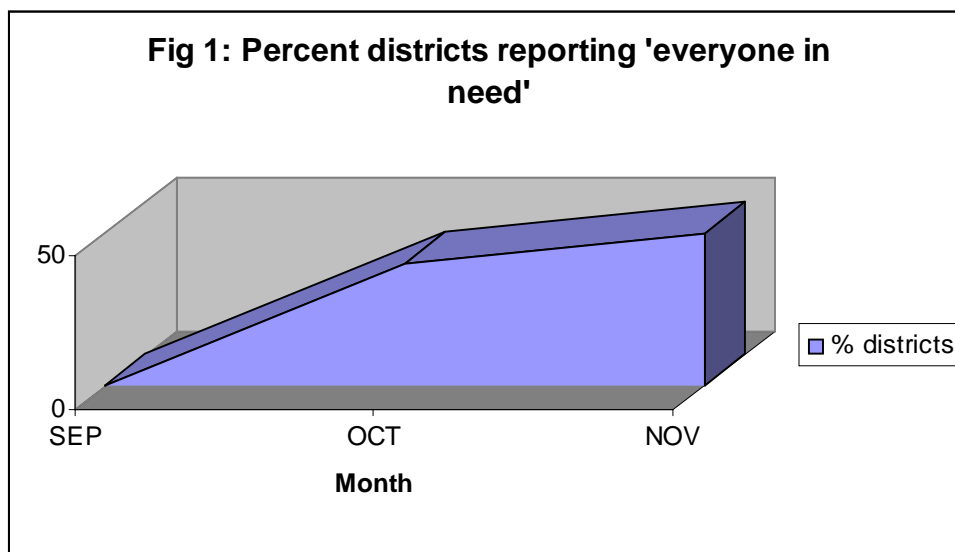
The data covers the period November 1 to November 30 2002. Where relevant comparative information is given in this report for the period July-October 2002.

Change in the food situation

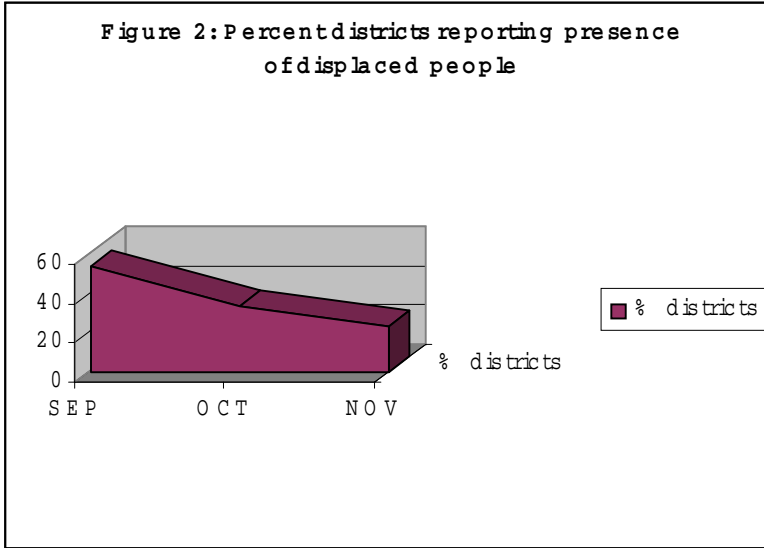
Food security is reported to have fallen further across the majority of districts in November, although with some improvements in supply reported in a small number of districts due to grains distributed by the World Food Programme (WFP). Increased need and reduced supply was reported in 40 districts (73%) with five districts (9%) all in Mashonaland Central or East reporting improved supplies due to WFP grains (Marondera Rural, Hwedza, Mudzi, Mt Darwin and Guruve).

Food needs

The most vulnerable groups in terms of food needs have remained relatively constant across all rounds of FOSENET monitoring since July, viz Elderly, orphans, children, ill people, people with disability and unemployed or destitute people. **The share of districts reported that 'everyone' was now in need has further risen to high levels, rising from 0% of districts in September to 40% of districts reporting this October to 51% in November.**



Vulnerability has in this month as in the previous rounds of monitoring been attributed to poor harvests, poverty, inability to afford inflated food costs, and to scarcity food supplies. Particular groups are identified as specifically disadvantaged: Elderly, disabled, ill people and orphans are reported to be poor and less able to secure their entitlements are political opposition members are reported to be denied access to food in six (11% of) districts.



People who moved into areas for resettlement or as displaced people are not specifically identified as highly vulnerable. They have, however, been noted to face problems accessing foods in previous monitoring reports.

Increased levels of displaced people have been reported in 12 (23% of) districts, particularly Manicaland (4 districts) and Mashonaland East (4 districts). This compares with displacement being observed in 53% of districts in August /

September and 33% in October.

The trend signals a possible decline in new displacement.

Districts that have had consistently high reports of displacement across all three rounds of monitoring since August include

Mashonaland East	Marondera urban, UMP
Manicaland	Mutare urban, Makoni, Chipinge
Masvingo	Chivi

Movement of people is noted in a further six districts due to resettlement or retrenchment. In Manicaland and Mashonaland East would appear to have the highest levels of internal population movements in and out due to displacement, resettlement and retrenchment, while in Matabeleland South people – even children - are reported to have moved out looking for food or work.

“Children have dropped out and gone south (to South Africa) for work”

Beitbridge

Specific follow up was made again in November of school children. **Dropout and absenteeism was high - reported in 43 (81% of) districts in November.** This is less than in 95% of districts reported in October but still extremely high. Children are reported to

be fainting at school and unable to concentrate due to hunger and as in October to be leaving school to stand in queues, search for wild food, look after ill parents

"Parents have left their children to look for food. Some children do not go to school as their parents are ill and they have to look for food for them"

Mazowe

Provision of food at schools was noted to be an incentive for children to attend, but in three districts (Bikita, Tsholotsho and Beitbridge) school feeding was reported to have been interrupted (Bikita) or not enough to encourage children to stay in school.

With school holidays, monitors have in the past noted negative effects of the interruption in school feeding. It is likely that children's involvement in food seeking will intensify in the school holidays. This may also intensify risks of injury in 'queue stampedes', poisoning from eating toxic wild roots and even exposure to pressure for 'sex', all of which have been reported by monitors in the July to November rounds.

There were no deaths directly attributed to hunger alone reported by monitors in November, although NGO monitors noted that in many deaths malnutrition is evident. Monitors have noted that separating out hunger related deaths in an environment where there is a lot of illness due to HIV/AIDS is difficult. It is not clear how far hunger is associated with these deaths where other causes are implicated. Food related deaths that have been reported in previous rounds of monitoring relate to toxic poisoning from wild roots or physical violence from stampeding food queues, or assault around food related disputes.

Food availability and access

For the second month in a row household food stocks were reported at less than one month in all provinces.

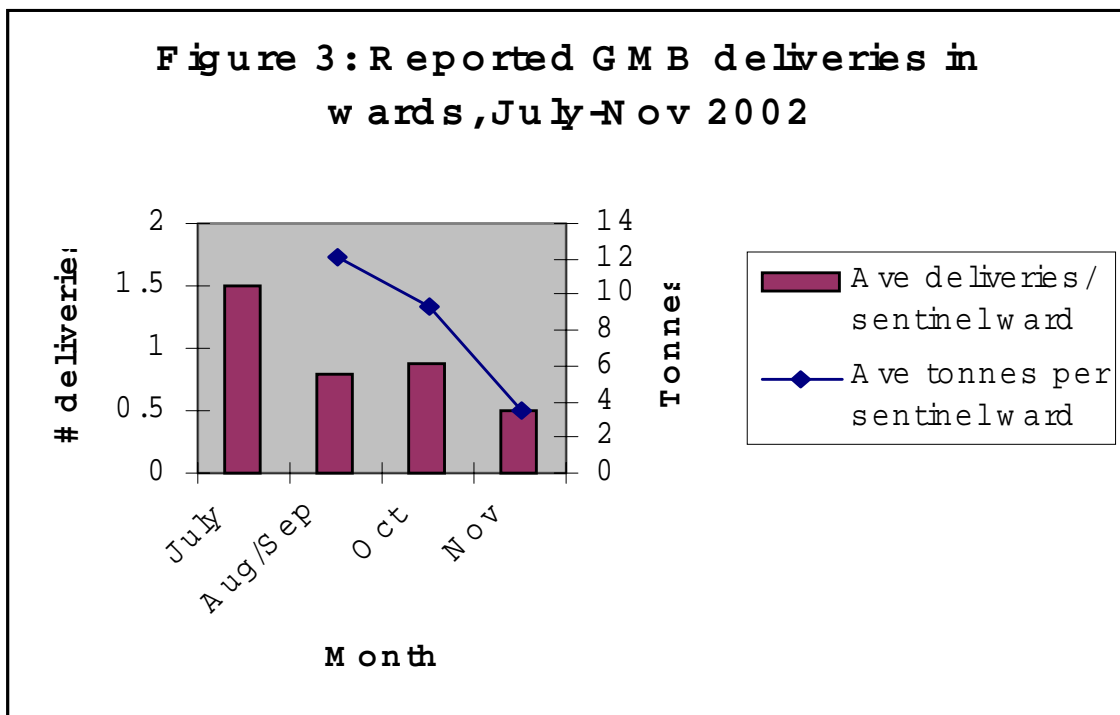
Only five districts had any households with food stocks of more than one month (Chivi, Zaka, Marondera urban, Hwedza and Chikomba).

Almost all households in Zimbabwe thus now depend on GMB, commercial or relief supplies.

Falling, erratic and unpredictable GMB and commercial supplies were noted again in November across the majority of districts. Two areas of improvement were observed: Increased deliveries were reported of World Food Programme (WFP) maize and improvements in GMB supplies were noted in Marondera Rural, Makoni, Mudzi, Bindura, Zvishavane, Zaka, Chitungwisa and with respect to yellow maize, in Bulawayo.

GMB Deliveries

GMB deliveries were reported to have fallen or to not have been made at all in the month in 66% of districts. Supplies were reported to have been erratic. Despite the improvement in the 8 districts noted above, the average number of reported deliveries to wards has fallen from 0,88 deliveries in the wards monitored for October to 0,51 deliveries in the wards monitored in November. The average volume of deliveries is also reported to have fallen from an average of 9,3 tonnes reported to have been delivered to the wards monitored in October to 3,44 tonnes in November. As shown in Figure 3 below the frequency and volume of deliveries from GMB are reported to have fallen since July. These trends would need to be verified against actual GMB deliveries received in wards (vs recorded deliveries) to avoid any errors due to leakages.



In November, districts with NO wards reporting ANY grain deliveries in the period reviewed are shown in the table below, with further information on districts with similar reporting in Oct and Sep. The table indicates that for most provinces the districts reporting NO grain deliveries in sentinel wards have varied across time so that there seems to be some degree of spread in this burden. However within this:

- Matabeleland North and South have had consistent reporting of more districts with no deliveries
- Buhera, Binga, Tsholotsho, Umzingwane, Matobo have reported wards with two consecutive months of no deliveries and Lupane *three consecutive months* of no deliveries.

This would seem to merit a more focused attention on access to GMB maize in these specific areas.

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

PROVINCE	Nov	Oct	Aug/Sep
Mashonaland East	Nil	Nil	Marondera Rural
Mashonaland Central	Rushinga	Nil	Mount Darwin
Mashonaland West	Hurungwe	Chinoyi	n.a
Manicaland	Buhera, Chimanimani	Buhera	Mutasa
Masvingo	Nil	Gutu	Masvingo urban
Midlands	Nil	Nil	Gokwe, Chirumanzu
Matabeleland North	Nkayi, Lupane	Tsholotsho, Lupane, Binga, Bubi, Hwange Urban,	Tsholotsho, Lupane, Binga, Umguza
Matabeleland South	Umzingwane	Beitbridge, Umzingwane, Matobo,	Bulilimamangwe, Matobo, Gwanda

There has been a small upward movement in the lower range prices for grain sales from GMB and there is a price difference of up to Z\$21 across provinces in the lower range process. Given the high rate of inflation in Zimbabwe over the period this implies a fall in the real price of grain, as this is a controlled price. The upper ranges have varied rather widely, and indicate some differences in procedures around access and pricing across time periods and areas that is outside the price control mechanism. **The upper price range in November of Z\$202 is 74% above the controlled price.** Districts with highly inflated reported prices of over Z\$150/10kg in November are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Reported costs of GMB maize, Z\$/10kg

Provinces	Price range in Z\$ / 10kg NOV	Price range in Z\$ / 10kg OCT	Price range in Z\$ / 10kg AUG/SEP	Districts reporting GMB prices above \$150/10kg in November
Manicaland	116-202	110-156	110-135	Nyanga, Mutasa
Mashonaland East	95-122	110-250	110-136	Nil
Mashonaland Central	109-118	110-250	110-110	Nil
Mashonaland West	112-130	116-172	N.A	Nil
Masvingo	116-200	110-170	110-160	Masvingo, Chivi
Midlands	112-160	116	110-119	Gokwe
Matabeleland North	116	160-190	110-160	Nil
Matabeleland South	116-120	112-190	110-190	Nil

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

A number of the monitors reported the reduced supply to individual households from GMB as supplies have fallen, and as competition has grown over access by millers to available supplies. In Manicaland there seems to have been heightened tension over which

businesses are accessing GMB supplies– both between large, medium and small millers and within local millers.

'The big supermarkets are finding it hard because they get their supplies from big millers who are getting very little supplied. GMB officials are saying they want to promote black business and are giving the grain to local millers'

Mutare

The cost of GMB sales was reported to be a barrier to access in 12 (22%) of districts, less than the 38% reported in October, while reduced supplies was a barrier in 17% of districts. In One district deliveries to wards was noted to have stopped due to transport problems. More of concern is the reported increase in **procedural barriers and political bias as obstacles to accessing GMB grain**. Problems of political bias and unfair access of particular groups in accessing maize were reported to be a barrier in 38% of districts, an increase from 15% in August September and 33% in October. Party political people were reported to directly control or interfere in GMB grain sales in 5 districts, while in a further 12 districts grain is reported to either be preferentially sold to officials, card holders of or holders of letters from Zanu(PF) or opposition party supporters denied access. The main victims of these practices are opposition party (MDC) supporters who are reported to face difficulties accessing GMB food in these districts.

'War vets have authority over the distribution of maize'

Makoni

'It was going to be better if food distribution was not done by political people'

Chipinge

Political and procedural bias has superceded cost as the major barrier to access since July 2002.

Seed supplies and access

In November, given the short predicted period of rains and the need for production to avoid poor harvests being a cause for continued food insecurity, monitors were asked to report on access to seed and fertilizer. This, and the changes in food produced and stored will be monitored in the coming months as a critical determinant of food security.

Seed was reported to be needed by all districts, primarily maize (particularly the short season variety), but also raised were groundnuts (15 districts), sunflower (6 districts) cotton (5 districts) beans (4 districts), sorghum, bambara nuts, roundnuts, wheat and millet (<4 districts). Seed was noted to be available commercially, through seed-co and through the GMB.

Seed availability information was not collected in this round from all districts but the districts covered with this information will be increased over future rounds. The information collected is shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Reported seed and fertilizer availability in selected districts

PROVINCE	District	% Households with seeds	Type of seeds	% Households with fertiliser	cost of fertiliser \$/ 50kg
Manicaland	Chipinge	25%	maize	10%	4,800
	Chipinge	30%	maize, sorghum	15%	4,000
	Rusape - makoni	5%	maize	0%	
	Mutare urban	30%	maize	1%	4,800
	Mutare rural	10%	maize		
	Nyanga	10%	maize	0%	
Mashonaland East	Chikomba	5%	maize	0%	
	UMP	25%	maize	5%	5,000
	Mudzi	30%	maize	2%	4,800
Mashonaland West	Chinhoyi	10%	maize	0%	5,000
	Kariba	30%	maize	5%	4,500
Midlands	Mberengwa	10%	maize	5%	4,800
Masvingo	Zaka	20%	maize	1%	4,800
	Chivi	20%	maize	3%	4,000
	Chivi	5%	maize	5%	4,500
	Mwenezi	10%	maize	5%	5,000
Matebeleland North	Lupane	25%	maize, sorghum	0%	4,900
Matebeleland South	Gwanda	30%	maize	2%	4,800
	Beitbridge	10%	maize	5%	5,000
AVERAGE		18%		4%	4,713

The extremely low reported extent to which households have been able to access adequate seed and fertiliser is a matter of some concern, particularly given the short predicted rains.

If indeed only an average of 18% of households have been able to access adequate seed and 4% to access fertilizer then production shortfalls can be anticipated in 2003. In one district (Gwanda) it was reported that households received seed through the relief programme, but in the majority GMB and commercial sources were the primary supplier.

'People have no money to purchase maize seed'

Chikomba

With an average price of Z\$4 713 per 50kg fertilizer and the pressure discussed later to sell assets to buy food, the cost barriers to improved yields are likely to be significant for poor households.

Market supplies

Commercial supplies were low for basic foods in some areas, and better stocked in others. Maize meal was the worst in terms of availability. As noted earlier the majority of districts reported a fall in GMB supplies, while improvements in commercial supplies were only noted in 3 districts during November, the rest reporting falling and erratic supplies and increasing costs.

Table 6: Availability of basic foods, November 2002

% Total districts reporting food type present during October	Maize	Oil	Bread	Sugar
Manicaland	30	66	44	78
Mashonaland East	50	50	100	50
Mashonaland West	0	50	50	0
Masvingo	25	100	25	40
Matabeleland North	0	20	20	20
Matabeleland South	40	60	60	60

(NB: Excluding provinces with <2 districts reporting)

As shown in Table 7, there are no clear trends across all provinces on reported maize meal availability in the period July to November. Supplies appear to have improved in Mashonaland East, Masvingo and Matabeleland South, and declined in Mashonaland West and Manicaland, while Matabeleland North appears to have had sustained low levels throughout the period.

Table 7: Availability of basic maize meal July-November 2002

% Total districts reporting maize meal present	November	October	August / Sep
Manicaland	30	80	80
Mashonaland East	50	13	13
Mashonaland West	0	50	50
Masvingo	25	0	0
Matabeleland North	0	0	0
Matabeleland South	40	20	20

(NB: Excluding provinces with < 3 districts reporting)

Maize meal supplies continue to be reported as erratic or falling during the month.

Cost, reduced supply, and favouritism in non transparent backdoor sales were the major reported barriers to commercially supplied food. Cost was a reported

barrier in 10 districts, political interference in sales in 5 districts and backdoor sales and black market transactions were reported in 8 districts.

'Vendors are buying large stocks for resale'

Hurungwe

In Harare, specific mention was made in a number of ward reports of political bias in food distribution.

'The ruling party is sourcing mealie meal and selling it to party supporters only, on conditions that people chant slogans and produce an ID to match the party card'.

Harare

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 \$1200 per 10kg), informal market prices are reported to be much higher.

Table 6: Maize meal costs reported in informal markets November 2002

District	Cost Z\$/10kg
Manicaland	
Mutare rural	500-1250
Makoni	800-1250
Mutasa	1000
Mash East	
Chikomba	560-1000
Marondera	600-1400
Mudzi	750-1200
Goromonzi	1250
Mutoko	800-1800
Seke	1250
Hwedza	750
Mash Central	
Guruve	600-1250
Mazowe	1250
Mt Darwin	2000
Bindura	600-1150
Mash West	
Chegutu	1000
Chinhoyi	1000
Makonde	880
Hurungwe	600

District	Cost Z\$/10kg
Masvingo	
Mwenezi	750
Masvingo	400-600
Chivi	800-1500
Bikita	500-1200
Zaka	600-750
Gutu	700
Mat. North	
Bulawayo	500-1500
Binga	1000
Hwange	1000-1500
Lupane	1800
Tsholotsho	1200
Mat. South	
Beitbridge	600-1250
Insiza	n.a
Gwanda	250-480
Midlands	
Gokwe	500-1250
chirumanzu	900
Gweru urban	600-1500
Mberengwa	1000
Kwekwe	1800
Chitungwiza	
Chitungwiza	1000-1400
Harare	800-1500

The reported price in the informal market / 10kg maize meal ranged in November from Z\$250-Z\$2 000, comparable to October prices and nearly twenty times the controlled price.

Informal markets are explicitly reported to be linked to leakages of controlled price food in six districts, with profit margins of up to \$1884 / 10kg in grain sold.

The upper limit on informal market prices in the July 2002 FOSENET monitoring was Z\$600 indicating that over the 4 month period July-November 2002 there has been an increase of 233% in the informal market price. The real value of the Z\$ has fallen in the period so this price increase in real terms is not as high, but it represents a significant cost escalation for poor people and a growing profit margin if informal markets are applying such markups to grain leaking from controlled price GMB sales. Price difference between GMB sales and informal market sales has widened from \$490 /10 kg in July to \$1 884 in November. In six districts (Bindura, Rushinga, Bikita, Mazowe, Bulawayo and Harare) explicit report was made of people on-selling of GMB grain through informal markets. Reports of individuals getting preferential access to GMB grain in a further six districts (Zvishavane, Gutu, Chitungwisa, Gutu, Shamva, Hwedza) indicates that the problem may be wider.

Between July and November there has thus been an increase of 279% in the potential surplus to be made in sales of leakages into informal markets of controlled price maize meal.

'Scarcity has led to the mushrooming of the black market'

Mutasa

As reported in October, limited and biased access to state grain sources and significant inflation on market prices has left many households dependent on relief or local alternatives. The monitoring reports indicate a range of survival strategies.

In seven districts (13%) people are reported to be selling household assets – livestock, goods- to buy food. This asset stripping for food further pushes households into poverty. It has increased in reported frequency since the October report and will be more closely monitored.

Other survival strategies are reported:

- Foraging for wild fruits and roots (19 districts)
- Eating vegetables without sadza (maize meal) (11 districts)
- Gold panning, picking wheat and trading to fundraise to buy food from informal traders (11 districts)
- Reducing meals to one a day or one in two days (9 districts)
- Substituting maize meal with bread, rice, sweet potatoes (8 districts)

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

In Mashonaland Central and West a greater range of informal employment or trading options are reported (gold panning, picking wheat harvested from commercial farms, commercial trading) than in other provinces.

Relief food

The reports indicate some increase in relief supplies and a fall in districts where no relief is reported. However, in seven districts relief supplies are reported to have stopped –or been stopped.

Table 8: Relief agencies and targets within provinces

PROVINCE	Relief Agencies in province	Relief targets (#districts)
Mashonaland West	CADEC (once), Church 4 districts have no relief reported	Nil
Mashonaland East	Africare, World Vision, National AIDS council 6 districts have no relief reported <i>In Mudzi relief was reported to have stopped in some wards due to the political situation</i>	Pregnant women; New settler h/holds; <5's
Harare	Council, Churches, NGOs, Mashambanzou, National Aids Council, Sunrise, World Vision	H/holds, Orphans, <5s; Elderly; Gr 1-7; patients
Mashonaland Central	Christian Care, Farm Community Trust, Church, World Food Prg; World Vision 3 districts have no relief reported <i>Relief reported to have been cancelled in some wards of Guruve</i>	
Manicaland	WFP, CADEC, PLAN Int, Christian Care, World Vision, SCF Norway; FOST, UBA development, 2 districts have no relief reported <i>Relief in Makoni reported to have been stopped in some wards for political reasons</i> <i>In Buhera no relief reported to have been delivered</i>	<5s, Gr 1-7s, Households
Masvingo	CARE, Cadec. Rudo 1 district has no relief reported <i>Masvingo, Zaka relief supplies reported to have stopped</i> <i>Chivi supplies reported to have increased</i> <i>Bikita access to relief reported to have been a problem for some</i>	<5s; Grade 1-7;
Midlands	Care International, Lutheran World Fed; World Vision 2 districts have no relief reported	<5s, Gr 1-7s, Households
Matabeleland North	ORAP, Min of Health; CADEC, SCF UK 0 districts have no relief reported <i>Binga SCF UK relief reported to have been stopped</i>	Gr 1-7s, <5s
Matabeleland South	Orap, World vision. Red Cross, Mission hospital 1 district has no relief reported <i>Beitbridge seeds reported to be distributed instead of food</i>	Gr 1-7s, <5s

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

The coverage and targets of relief remain somewhat similar to the October round with some increase in relief cover in Mashonaland East. **The more worrying trend reported in November is the reported cessation of relief in wards in 7 districts** (see Table 8). This is an increase over previous months. While each of these specific cases merits further investigation to clarify the circumstances, in two districts the reports indicate that the political situation was a factor.

As in all previous rounds since July, this round of monitoring identifies the elderly, sick or disabled as being the primary grouping having difficulty with accessing relief. As this has been a consistent feature across all FOSENET reports in 2002, in 2003 follow up work will be done to more systematically assess this problem and what can be done about it.

The cash for work programme was separately reported on. It was reported to be operating in 42% of districts. The amounts earned were reported to range from ZZ\$1500 to Z\$2000 per month, (\$500 more than in October). Since July there has been an improvement in the reported standardisation of payments in this programme. The programme was noted to exclude the elderly, ill and child orphans, as these groups are not able to work although they do need the support.

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.

The November round indicates some positive trends in increased WFP and relief food coverage and improved standardization of cash for work payouts. However it also notes worsening trends in vulnerability, in cost inflation and political bias in GMB and market supplies. **Of serious concern** is the consistent shortfall in GMB and commercial maize in Matabeleland North and South for several months, the reported increase in sale of household assets to buy food, , biased access to controlled price foods fuelling speculation in informal markets and the low reported level of access to seed and fertilizer in all areas. **The latter factors send a threat of chronic food insecurity and deepened poverty.**

Summary

Reports from 166 reports from 53 districts of Zimbabwe for November 2002 indicate that:

- **Food security has fallen again across most districts in November, with 5 districts reporting improved supply from World Food Programme.**
- **Vulnerability has widened** . The share of districts reporting 'everyone' is in need of food has risen from 0% in September to 40% in October and 51% in November.
- **Reports of displaced people have fallen** from 53% districts in August/September, to 23% in November. Manicaland and Mashonaland East have had consistently high levels of displaced people reported throughout the period.

- **A majority (81%) of districts report school dropout** due to hunger, food seeking and care of the ill by school children. Provision of food at schools was noted to be an incentive for children to attend and interruption or inadequacy of school feeding in three districts reported to be associated with absenteeism.
- **Falling, erratic GMB and commercial supplies** were reported in November across the majority of districts, although with increased deliveries of World Food Programme maize and improvements in GMB supplies noted in 8 districts. The reported frequency and volume of GMB deliveries fell consistently from July to November, with Matabeleland North and South consistently reporting more districts, in some cases with no deliveries for two months.
- The upper price range reported of GMB grain of Z\$202 is 74% above the controlled price. **Political barriers and supply constraints to GMB** grain have been reported from an increasing share of districts between July and November and have superseded cost as the major barrier to access.
- **An extremely low reported share of households were able to access adequate seed (18%) and fertiliser (4%).** Poor access to seed and thus crops planted in a short rainfall season can exacerbate household food insecurity.
- Commercial supplies of basic foods were reported as low, erratic and increasingly costly. Supplies have been variable, improving between July and November in Mashonaland East, Masvingo and Matabeleland South, but staying at low levels in Matabeleland North. **Cost, reduced supply, and non transparent sales were the major reported barriers to commercially supplied food.**
- **Reported informal market prices / 10kg maize meal ranged from Z\$250-Z\$2 000, nearly twenty times the controlled price,** and in increase of 233% in the reported informal market price between July-November 2002. **Informal markets are explicitly reported to be linked to leakages of controlled price food in six districts in November,** with profit margins of sale price over control price of up to 279% or \$1884 / 10kg in grain sold.
- Wild fruits and roots, cutting grains from the diet and cutting meals are the most commonly reported strategies for survival. In 13% of districts people are reported to be selling household assets – livestock, goods- to buy food. **Asset stripping for food, which pushes households further into poverty, has increased in reported frequency in the last two rounds of monitoring.**
- **Reported relief supplies have increased, although with supplies stopped in wards in 7 districts,** in two of these due to political circumstances. Elderly, sick or disabled people have been consistently identified for four rounds of monitoring as the primary grouping having difficulty accessing relief.

The November round indicates some positive trends in increased WFP and relief food coverage and improved standardization of cash for work payouts. However it also notes worsening trends in vulnerability, in cost inflation and political bias in GMB and market supplies.

Of serious concern is the consistent shortfall in GMB and commercial maize in Matabeleland North and South for several months, the reported increase in sale of household assets to buy food, biased access to controlled price foods fuelling speculation in informal markets and the low reported level of access to seed and fertilizer in all areas.

The latter factors send a threat of chronic food insecurity and deepened poverty.

FOSENET welcomes feedback on these reports. Follow up queries and feedback to FOSENET, fosenet@mweb.co.zw