

CIVIC MONITORING PROGRAMME
integrating the
FOSENET Food Security monitoring



**Community Assessment of Food Security and
the Social Situation in Zimbabwe**

March 2004

For the executive summary please go to page 12

This report is the third of a broader monitoring of food security and social welfare at community level by the Civic Monitoring Programme. Monthly monitoring will be complemented by quarterly monitoring of specific areas of social welfare. The first quarterly report in April 2004 is on health and education. A second quarterly report on incomes and employment will be done in June. Proposals for income and employment issues to monitor are welcomed and should be sent to fsmt2@mweb.co.zw

Background

Civic organizations have through the monitoring Group of the National NGO Food Security Network (FOSENET) been monitoring food security in Zimbabwe since July 2002. The monitoring was implemented to provide a watchdog of the platform of **ethical principles** for relief and food security, viz:

- The right to life with dignity and the duty not to withhold 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 parties nor to further partisan positions;
- The management and distribution of food and other relief with based purely on need and not on partisan grounds, and without adverse distinction of any kind;
- Respect for community values of solidarity, dignity, peace and community culture.

In 2004 this monitoring has been widened to cover other social and economic conditions, recognizing the wide range of conditions influencing social and economic wellbeing. The Civic Monitoring Programme is implemented through NGOs based within districts and community based monitors. Monthly reports from all areas of the country are compiled to provide a monthly situation assessment of food security and social welfare to enhance an ethical, effective and community focussed response to the current situation. Queries and feedback on these reports is welcomed and should be directed to the Civic Monitoring Programme at fsmt2@mweb.co.zw.

This sixteenth round of NGO and community based monitoring nationally covers the month of **March 2004** .

Coverage of the data

The monitoring information is collected from sentinel wards within districts. It is presented by district, using two or more site reports on any indicator.

The March 2004 report is drawn from **150 monitoring reports** from **58 districts** from all provinces of Zimbabwe, with an average of **2.6 reports per district**.

Training has been carried out to increase the reports per district to improve data quality and cross validation of reports across districts. Training will be continued into 2004 to improve both coverage and data quality.

The food situation

There has been an improvement in food availability. While the share of districts reporting poor food security remains relatively constant (59% in March compared to 58% in February), the number of districts reporting an improvement in the food supply situation nearly doubling between February (22%) and March (41%). Poorest food security continues to be reported from Masvingo, Matebeleland North and Matebeleland South provinces. The improvement is attributed to relief and harvested crops.



The improvement in food security is reportedly due to relief food distribution and gradual increases in supplies from own production as communities start harvesting early planted crops. Improvements in food availability are more marked in Midlands and Mashonaland provinces. Community reports from the southern region portrays a different picture, with the three southern provinces of Masvingo, Matebeleland South and North accounting for the largest number of districts reporting a worsening food situation.

Table 1: Districts with sites with worsening food situations, March 2004

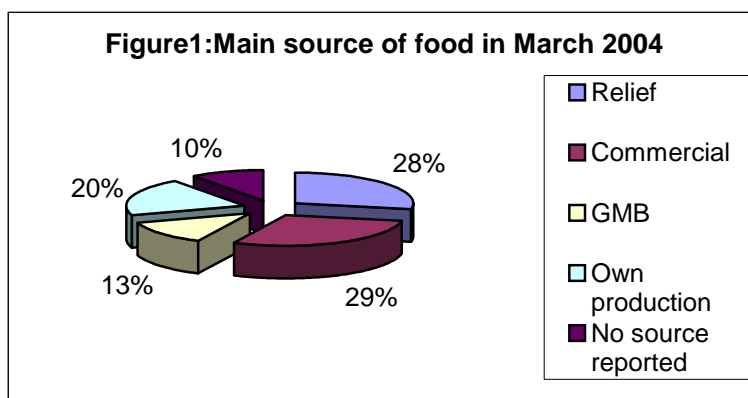
Province	District
Manicaland	Chipinge, Makoni, Mutare rural
Mashonaland East	Chikomba, Mudzi, Seke
Mashonaland Central	Mazowe, Rushinga, Shamva
Mashonaland West	Kadoma, Kariba
Midlands	Chirumhanzu, Gweru
Masvingo	Chiredzi, Chivi, Masvingo rural, Masvingo urban, Zaka, Mwenezi
Matebeleland North	Binga, Hwange, Nkayi, Tsholotsho
Matebeleland South	Bulimamangwe, Filabusi, Gwanda, Insiza, Matobo, Umzingwane, Beitbridge
Cities	Bulawayo, Chitungwiza, Harare

*The lives of people have slightly improved due to the early crop that is ripening.
Nyanga.*

An increasing proportion of community reports note households relying on own produce as their main source of food as harvest yields begin to come in. Despite this 84% of households are reported to have food stocks of a month or less.

Though some areas report improvement in food supplies due to harvests, sentinel wards report that on average 45% of households in districts do not have any food stocks and 39% have stocks to last only one month.

Community reports show that households continued to be dependent on relief and commercial food in March with 28% and 29% of the wards reporting relief and commercial food as their main sources of food respectively. Own produce and GMB accounted for 20% and 13% respectively. (see fig 1. below)



Vulnerable groups across the provinces have remained much the same as in previous reports, these being the unemployed, the aged, orphans, former farm workers, AIDS and TB patients. **Former farm workers are increasingly being noted as vulnerable in reports from Mashonaland Central.**

Production of food

Due to good rains this season people are harvesting maize cultivated in small portions of land therefore there is something to eat for the community.

Norton

Fertiliser and seed availability has remained constant since February with nearly half the districts reporting maize seed and fertilizer available. In March 48% of districts reported fertilizer available compared to the 42% in February. 43% of

districts in March noted maize seed available a slight decrease from the 47% reported in February.

Prices reported in March show a marked downward trend in fertilizer prices but a continued increase in maize seed prices in both formal and parallel markets. (See Figures 2-2b below).

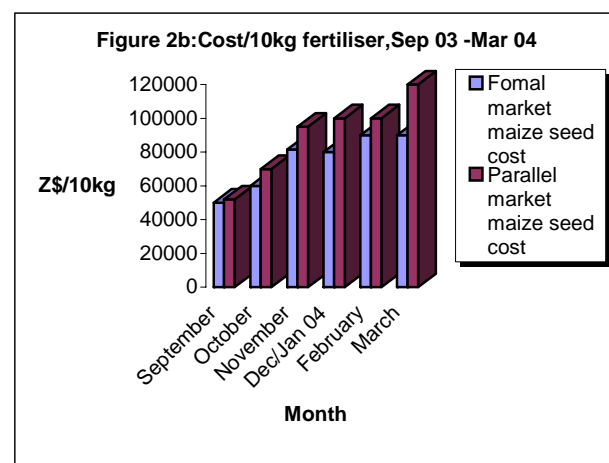
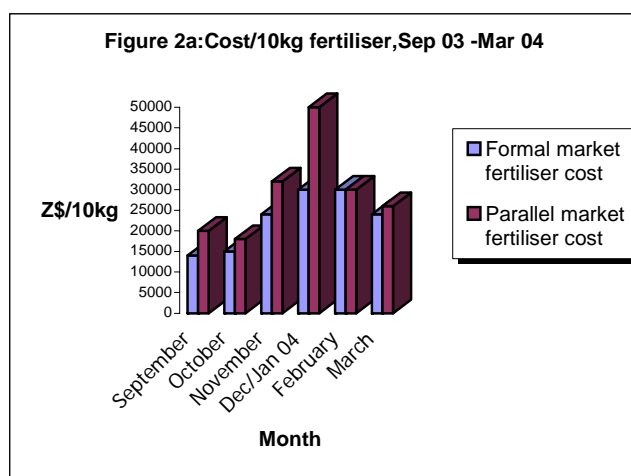
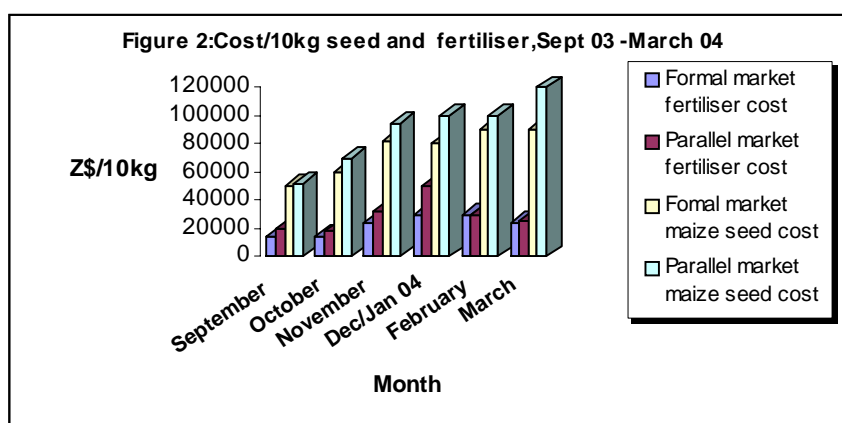


Table 2: Reported prices of maize seed and fertilizer, October 03 to March 04

Month	Fertiliser Cost Z\$/10kg		Maize seed Cost Z\$/10/kg	
	Formal market	Parallel Market	Formal market	Parallel Market
Price range September	4600 – 14000	5000 - 20000	20000 - 50000	20000–52000
Price range October	7400 - 15000	9000 - 18000	30000 - 60000	35000- 70000
Price range November	7800 - 24000	9000 - 32000	40000 - 81500	40000 - 95000
Price range January 04	10400 - 30000	14000-50000	20000- 80000	35000-100000
Price range February 04	9000 - 30000	13000-30000	29000- 90000	40000-100000
Price range March 04	12000- 24000	14000-26000	38000-90000	45000-120000

The UN Food security brief for January 2004 attribute the decline in the area planted with maize to the high costs of maize seed and availability constraints particularly in the rural areas. They note that many farmers used sorghum seed to compensate for the unavailability of maize seed, contributing to a 300% increase in the area planted with sorghum.

Future food security reports will thus need to ensure that information on sorghum harvests are included in household assessments. Generally however household food sticks in this monitoring are assessed as all grains combined.

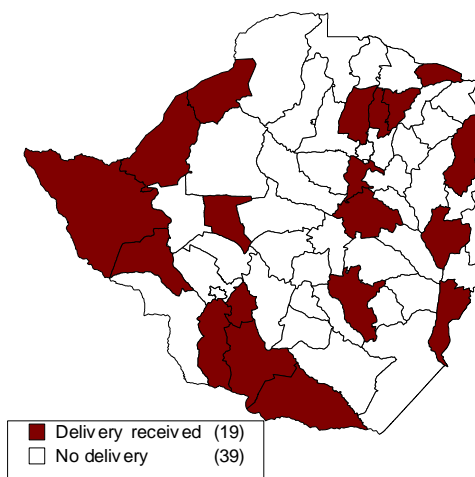
GMB food deliveries

The responsible authorities are not helping people in rural areas get maize from G.M.B.

Kadoma.

GMB deliveries, after showing an improvement in supplies in February, plateaued in coverage in March and showed a decline in reported frequency and delivery volume.(see figure 3)

Figure 3: Frequency of GMB Deliveries January 2004



Nineteen districts(33%) reported GMB deliveries, no change from the 33% also reported in February 2004 with an average 0.4 deliveries per ward. Community reports noted an average delivery volume of 3.5 tonnes per sentinel site, a notable decrease from the 7.05 tonnes reported in February 2004.

Problems of bias in the distribution of GMB food continue to be reported but to a much lesser extent in March with the fewer districts covered by GMB deliveries. Problems in deliveries were reported from six districts (Makonde, Norton, Makoni, Kadoma, Chivi and Mwenezi) in March and were reported to largely be due to Non availability of maize at GMB

Prices of GMB maize did not show any significant variance from those reported in February 2004 (See Table 3). **Prices of GMB maize are reported to be unaffordable for the unemployed and the vulnerable groups not covered by relief programmes,** as these groups are reported to be unable to access GMB maize

because of prohibitive price levels in seven districts (Seke, Mutare Rural, Binga, Hwange, Nkayi, Harare, Chipinge) . Prices as high as \$7000/10kg continue to be reported. (see table 5). **These prices are buffered by the availability of grain from harvests at present but will become a more critical constraint when grain from harvests is not available, particularly for those households who were not able to earn a surplus from harvests.**

Table 3: Reported costs of GMB maize, Z\$/10kg

Province	Price range in Z\$/10kg		
	March 04	February 04	March 03
Manicaland	1600 - 2000	1600 – 5200	116-250
Mashonaland East	4400 - 7000	1800 – 7000	110-174
Mashonaland central	1700 - 6400	3000 – 5000	116-150
Mashonaland West	1600 - 4400	n.a	112-260
Midlands	1600 - 4600	1600 – 5000	112-160
Masvingo	2600 - 4000	2400 – 4000	116-250
Matabeleland North	1200 - 5400	1200 – 5400	100-116
Matabeleland South	1300 - 2000	1700 – 5000	116-120
Cities; Harare and Bulawayo	2200 - 2400	n.a	250-300

Most people in the ward say they have stopped going to the G.M.B since they are already starting to feed from their own fields.

Buhera

Commercial food sources

People are finding it hard to cope with living costs e.g housing, food, school fees and clothing, very expensive.

Bulawayo

Some women are resorting to prostitution to raise money for food and for clothes.

Mudzi.

Commercial availability of basic food stuffs (maize meal, oil, sugar and bread) is reported to be much higher in March 2004 than it was at the same period in 2003. Currently price rather than availability is a critical barrier to access to these foods.(see table 3)

Table 3 : Reported market availability of foods, March 03 and March 04

% of districts reporting food present	Maize meal		Oil	
	March 04	March 03	March 04	March 03
Manicaland	86	50	57	25
Mashonaland East	50	n.a	80	n.a
Mashonaland Central	43	n.a	43	n.a
Mashonaland West	67	13	40	13
Masvingo	38	33	63	33
Midlands	43	n.a	43	n.a
Matabeleland North	75	40	75	60
Matabeleland South	29	60	57	60

The type of living conditions in the area has changed to worse since most of the basic commodities are very expensive beyond the reach of the ordinary people.

Mutare.

The price of maize meal also appears to have remained stable during the period February to March 2004, with median prices of \$20000 per 10kg in the formal market and \$25000 per 10kg on the parallel market reported.

Table 4: Upper prices of maize meal in parallel markets March 03 and March 04

Province	Upper prices of Maize meal in commercial and parallel markets Z\$/10kg		
	March 2004	Feb 2004	March 2003
Manicaland	20000	27000	2500
Mashonaland East	21000	20000	4000
Mashonaland central	20000	25000	4000
Mashonaland West	20000	20000	3000
Midlands	18000	20000	8000
Masvingo	12000	18000	6000
Matebeleland North	15000	20000	4000
Matebeleland South	25000	20000	n.a
Cities; Harare and Bulawayo	21000	20000	5000

n.a = not available

They cannot afford to eat the three meals they used to have some years back.

Bindura

Price barriers are an obstacle to maize meal access for the poorest households. In more than a quarter of monitoring reports, a half or more of households in the wards were reported to be unable to afford maize meal prices.

As found in UN surveys, those who can not afford maize meal prices are reported to be working for others for food , engaging in petty trading, waiting for food relief and some sell their assets to raise money to buy maize meal.

People are working for settlers who have not delivered their maize to G.M.B hence a person will only get 15kg of maize after weeding a portion of about 1 acre.

Mazowe

Districts where people are reported to be working for other households for food are Chikomba, Mazowe, Bindura rural, Murehwa, Seke, UMP, Shamva, Guruve, Masvingo rural Mwenezi and Nyanga. **The UN Zimbabwe CHS Round 1** Report for October 2003 implemented by the World Food Programme noted that 14% of households were involved in work for food in other peoples fields. This work is of limited duration and

these households are likely to face scarcities after harvest periods if they cannot find alternative employment.

Humanitarian Relief

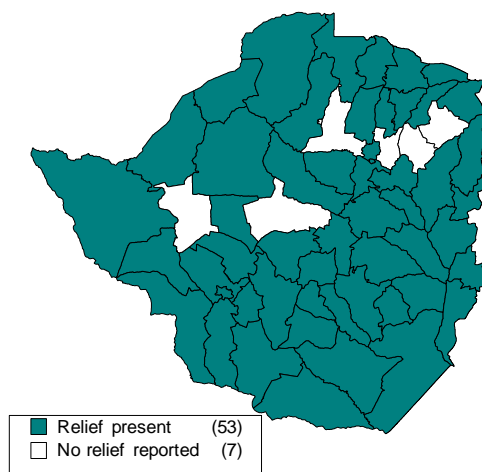
The **government cash for work programme** was reported to be operational in 48% of the districts compared to the 53% in February 2004. The trend towards reduced coverage was reported to be due to shortage of funds leading to the discontinuation of the programme in some districts. Communities also noted that some people were no longer willing to participate in the programme because the \$5000 they are receiving as payment is too little. Bias in access to the programme or in selection of beneficiaries, including on political ground, was reported from (17%) of the districts including Chipinge, Mutare rural, Guruve, Mazowe, Shamva, Chegutu, Gokwe, Gweru urban, Chiredzi and Harare.

Generally the cash for work stopped last year in the middle of the year as there was fraud because the workers could work without getting paid as promised.

Shurugwi

Non government and UN Relief programmes were reported to be present in fifty three districts (91% of districts) in both urban and rural areas. These programmes are reported to now largely limit themselves to school children, HIV/AIDS patients, the elderly and orphans and general food distribution to households was reported in only ten districts (17% of the districts). The increase in districts reporting the presence of relief programmes is reported to be due to an increase in school child feeding activities in March by national and international organisations.

Figure 3: Districts reporting relief activities



People are still trying to make ends meet and their only hope is relief food.

Gwanda.

A range of problems pertaining to NGO relief food were reported. These included reports of those distributing the food taking food for themselves at the expense of intended beneficiaries; kraal heads playing leading roles in beneficiary identification making political judgments on who should be included and inadequacy of relief supplies relative to need.

**Table 6: Reported problems in accessing relief in districts,
March 2004**

AREA	TYPE OF RELIEF AGENCY	REPORTED PROBLEM
Chipinge	Church	Bias in the selection of beneficiaries
Mutare rural	UN	Bias in beneficiary selection
Mutare Urban	UN	Bias in the selection of beneficiaries
Makoni	Ind NGO	Quantities issued have been reduced
Marondera urban	Ind NGO	Bias in beneficiary selection
UMP	UN	No food coming to some wards in the district and bias in distribution.
Seke	UN	Bias in distribution of food
Bindura urban	Ind NGO	Bias in beneficiary selection and distribution of food.
Guruve	UN	Inadequate supplies
Mazowe	UN	Authorities sometimes do not allow relief agencies to operate in the wards
Shamva	Ind NGO	Most people cannot access the relief food
Rushinga		No relief food in the wards
Makonde	Ind NGO	No relief food in the wards
Kadoma	Ind NGO	Former farm workers being barred from accessing relief food.
Gokwe	UN	Reduced quantities and bias in distribution
Gweru urban	UN	Supplies are erratic
Mberengwa	UN	Inconsistent supplies
Shurugwi	UN	Beneficiaries selling the food
Zvishavane	UN	Reduced quantities
Bikita	UN	Obstruction of NGOs distributing relief. Deserving cases left out.
Chiredzi	Ind NGO	Undeserving people getting the food ahead of the needy.
Chivi	Ind NGO	Favoritism in beneficiary registration
Gutu	Ind NGO	Inconsistent supplies
Masvingo urban	Ind NGO	Urban poor not being assisted.
Zaka	UN	Programme is for school children only. Many people without food have no access
Mwenezi	Church	Bias in the selection of beneficiaries
Binga	Ind NGO	Some wards no longer getting supplies
Hwange	UN	Committee and NGO workers diverting the food
Filabusi	UN	Distribution not fair
Insiza	UN	Inadequate supplies being delivered
Umzingwane	UN	Inadequate supplies being delivered
Bulawayo	Ind NGO	Inadequate supplies very few people receiving the food.
Harare	Church	Only officials and church members benefiting.

Key: Ind NGO = reported relief from Independent NGO UN = Reported relief from WFP implementing partner

They are no longer distributing the relief food to the people the reason we do not know
Binga

Reports continue to be made of people going to other areas in order to access relief food . People are reported to be moving from urban areas to rural areas or from resettlement areas to former homes in communal wards to access relief food. Eleven districts (19% of districts) reported people coming into wards to receive relief food.

Social Conditions

Inward and outward population migration was reported in 33% of the districts, a significant decrease compared to the 50% reported in February 2004. People are reported to be moving in and out of districts because of various reasons. This includes former farm workers looking for pieces of land in communal areas to build homes, movement for gold panning because of the high unemployment levels and movement out of urban areas because of high cost of living. The last form of movement has been worsened by the recent hikes in rents and the increase in informal settlements around cities. Reports of farm workers displacements due to takeover of farm enterprises were received from Manicaland. Reports were made of people moving into districts with better harvests seeking to work for food in Midlands and Masvingo provinces. People are also reported to be moving out of Mashonaland Central due to political harassment.

The living conditions are so poor because of high rates so people are forced to go to live in the shacks and some move to rural areas.

Masvingo

Survival strategies

Household goods are being sold for a number of reasons but mainly for food.

Harare.

A wide range of coping strategies have been reported from across all provinces, including:

- **Working for food in other peoples fields/farms(Manicaland, Mash east, Masvingo)**
- **Reducing the number of meals (Midlands, Matabeleland South and North, Cities)**
- **Households making contributions to buy a bag of maize meal then share(Cities, Manicaland, Mashonaland East)**
- **Sale of household goods/livestock to raise money for food (Cities, Mashonaland East, Matabeleland North)**
- **Engaging in gold panning (Mashonaland Central , Mashonaland West, Midlands)**

The Government should strictly regulate the prices of the basic commodities so that a good number of people would be able to buy the necessary goods. Also the distribution should be done by independent people not partisan politicians.

Chipinge

Household asset sales were reported from thirty one districts (53% of districts), a sharp increase from the 26% in February. Assets reported to be sold included household furniture and clothing in urban areas, while rural sales were mainly reported to be of livestock. Some household furniture was reportedly taken over by money lenders after failure by households to repay loans taken last year to buy food (Masvingo urban). Gold panning is reportedly on the increase as an alternative to raise money for food.

Some people or guardians are failing to afford fees, they cannot find help from NGOs because the children have no birth certificates.

Chiredzi.

Social Services

People in my area are now living without bathing and washing their clothes because they do not have the money to buy soap since the prices of soap have gone up at an alarming rate.

Mt. Darwin

Reports indicate improved drug availability, but also report increased cost barriers to use of services.

Community reports indicate improved availability of antibiotics at local clinics, with 62% of the districts reporting availability compared to 42% in February. Chloroquin was also reported to be available at clinics in 74% of the districts, up from the 47% reported in February..

People go to the local clinic and pay consultation fees which is \$26000 but the fees for medicine depends on the illness so others will go home without medicine

Marondera

Clinic fees of as high as Z\$26 000 were reported from sentinel wards. When drugs are not available in public clinics and hospitals communities report that many patients are not able to buy the prescribed drugs because of high drug prices in the commercial market.

People do not get medicine from the clinic so some people have poor health.

Masvingo

District reports from forty districts (69% of districts) noted failure to pay fees by parents or guardians as the major reason behind school drop outs. Groups reported to be mostly affected are children of unemployed parents, orphans as guardians with children of their own are overburdened especially after the rounds of hikes in fees and levies. Lack of clear guidance and information on the Government BEAM programme is reported to have led to eligible people not benefiting from the scheme. Fees as high as Z\$100 000 for an ordinary day school were reported. Reports from Chipinge noted that some children had left school to go and work so as to be able to buy food.

Women have resorted to vending to supplement the little their husbands bring from work.

Community actions

Reports from sentinel wards noted a sharp increase in meetings with MPs and councilors during March, with 72% districts reporting this compared to 15% in January. In January 15% of districts reported meeting their MP/councilor, in February 2004 58% of districts reported MP communities meeting and in March 72% of districts reported communities meeting their MPs and or councilors. **The meetings reportedly covered food , health and the 2005 elections.**

The level of community support for social needs is still low, particularly as households battle with poverty and other social problems. **The main form of community support is the family, and wider networks of support are poorly resourced or scattered.** Fifteen districts (26% of districts) reported that communities are assisting their local underprivileged members through churches, with cash and donations in kind being distributed to groups in need in the community. Most reports note however that community members themselves do not have enough resources to cater for orphans and the ill, except to offer home based care services organized at village level. Households and families are primarily responsible for looking after their ill and destitute.

Information for social and economic activity appears to come from a range of sources. A third (39%) of sentinel wards noted that households got relevant information from the media, 26% from meetings and friends and 29% directly from traders.

Summary

The March 2004 report is drawn from 150 monitoring reports from 58 districts from all provinces of Zimbabwe, with an average of 2.6 reports per district.

There has been an improvement in food availability in March. While the share of districts reporting poor food security remains relatively constant, the number of districts reporting an improvement in the food supply situation has nearly doubled since February, attributed to relief and harvested crops. Poorest food security continues to be reported from Masvingo, Matebeleland North and Matebeleland South provinces.

An increasing proportion of community reports note households are relying on own produce as their main source of food as harvest yields begin to come in. Despite this 84% of households are reported to have food stocks of a month or less. Vulnerable groups continue to be the unemployed, the aged, orphans, AIDS and TB patients and former farm workers, for the latter particularly in Mashonaland Central.

Fertiliser and seed availability has remained constant since February with nearly half the districts reporting maize seed and fertilizer available. Prices reported in March show a marked downward trend in fertilizer prices but a continued increase in maize seed prices in both formal and parallel markets. The Increased maize seed price has been attributed in other reports by the UN to have resulted in a reduced area planted with

maize and a substantial shift to sorghum planting to compensate for the unavailability of maize seed.

GMB deliveries, after showing an improvement in supplies in February, plateaued in terms of coverage in March and showed a decline in reported frequency and delivery volume. Prices of GMB maize are reported to be unaffordable for the unemployed and the vulnerable groups not covered by relief programmes. These prices are buffered by the availability of grain from harvests at present but are likely to become a more critical constraint when grain from harvests is not available, particularly for those households who were not able to earn a surplus from harvests.

The price of maize meal also appears to have remained stable during the period February to March 2004, with median prices of \$20000 per 10kg in the formal market and \$25000 per 10kg on the parallel market reported. In more than a quarter of monitoring reports, a half or more of households in the wards were reported to be unable to afford maize meal prices.

Those who can not afford maize meal prices are reported to be working for others for food, engaging in petty trading, waiting for food relief and selling assets to raise money to buy maize meal.

The government cash for work programme was reported to have fallen slightly in districts covered, and that people felt the payments of \$5000 as too little to assist with food security. UN and NGO relief programmes continue to be widespread but largely limited to feeding of school children and targeted vulnerable groups. Reports were made of people going to other areas to access relief food, particularly from urban to rural areas or from resettlement areas to former homes in communal wards.

Inward and outward population migration has fallen from 50% of districts reporting this in February to 33% in March. Reasons for movement include former farm workers looking for pieces of land in communal areas to build homes, movement for gold panning and movement out of urban areas because of high cost of living. Reports were also made of people moving into districts with better harvests seeking to work for food.

A wide range of coping strategies thus continue to be used to secure food:

- Working for food in other peoples fields/farms
- Reducing the number of meals
- Households collectively contributing to buy a bag of maize meal
- Sale of household goods/livestock to raise money for food
- Engaging in gold panning

While asset sales are similar to those reported in previous months some household assets are now being confiscated by moneylenders after failure by households to repay loans taken last year to buy food.

Reports indicate improved drug availability, but also report increased cost barriers to use of health services. School drop outs are also reported to occur primarily due to failure to pay fees, with children most affected reported to be children of unemployed parents and orphans.

The main form of community support for social needs and caring is reported to be the family, and wider networks of support are poorly resourced or scattered. Many poor households are reported to be poorly informed on social funds for education assistance. These issues appear to be discussed at community level, with a significant increase reported in meetings with MPs and councilors. These meetings reportedly covered food , health and the 2005 elections. During March 72% of districts reported this compared to 15% in January.