

Zimbabwe: insight into the humanitarian crisis and food politics

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2002-03, Zimbabwe was the epicentre of the so-called Southern Africa 'food crisis' with over six million people declared in need of emergency food aid. The crisis was triggered by a drought and compounded by the consequences of the economic decline, notably the poor availability and high prices of agricultural inputs. The Fast Track land reform programme started in 2000 also greatly contributed to the crisis, by reducing food production and compounding economical difficulties.

Despite some improvements in 2004, economical difficulties, including low food production, hyperinflation, shortage of basic commodities and rising unemployment, have continued since 2002, threatening livelihoods of millions. Fortunately, international assistance, including a massive food relief intervention, along with the subsidised sales implemented by the Government, have played a great role in preventing hunger over these past few years: malnutrition level in Zimbabwe has remained one of the lowest in Africa, and reported cases are actually mainly due to diseases and primarily HIV/AIDS.

Indeed, the words famine and starvation have been often misused to describe the situation of the country, as emergency responses by the Government and relief agencies have prevented such a disaster to happen. As a matter of fact, the decline of social and health services combined with the HIV/AIDS pandemic constitute far more immediate threats to lives and livelihoods: the life expectancy of Zimbabweans has dropped from 61 to 34 years over the past 15 years. This dramatic 27 years drop confirms that, so far, treatment has not been accessible for most of the affected people: out of 295,000 people in need of antiretroviral treatment, only about 9,000 receive it today. As a result, in this country of 12 million people, 170,000 die every year of the disease¹.

Epicentre of the Southern Africa food crisis, Zimbabwe is often looked at throughout a regional lens, and it is true that one can find a lot in common with other countries in the region, including similar agricultural patterns and agro-ecological conditions

and a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS. Yet, Zimbabwe has faced a very unique situation over the past few years: the land reform and the resulting tense relations with some western countries have not only influenced the causes of the crisis but also shaped the way responses have been provided.

The human rights violations and political tensions around the land reform have often obliterated the fact that a meaningful land redistribution, accompanied with relevant financial and technical support to resettled farmers, was essential to eliminate poverty and food insecurity in a country suffering from a highly skewed land repartition. Such support, necessary to the adaptation of large scale commercial farms into smaller units requires significant levels of investment and management, which have been lacking so far.

Consequently, the land reform has resulted in a dramatic drop in food production and export earnings, which have induced food shortages and reduced Government's financial capacity to address them through commercial imports. 40% of the cereals were produced by the large scale commercial farms and the newly resettled farmers haven't been able to restore significantly former production levels. Reduced exports earnings may have limited the ability of the Government to import food, though the Grain Marketing Board² was still able to import more than 1 million tons of cereals over the past few years, i.e. between 50 and 75% of the total food requirement, the remaining being imported by relief agencies.

Another critical effect of the land reform is the serious deterioration of the Government's relationship with some western countries and consecutive restrictions to foreign aid. Indeed, whereas targeted sanctions were taken against Zimbabwe and direct support provided to some opposition movements, some major donors and financial institutions have restricted their assistance in different ways after 2000:

- most of their cooperation and development funding to the country has been curtailed and the assistance been concentrated on emergency relief,

1. Although recent data from Zimbabwe's national HIV sentinel surveillance system, collected from women attending antenatal clinics for routine check-ups, indicate that HIV prevalence may have started to decline in the country. In Evidence for HIV decline in Zimbabwe: a comprehensive review of the epidemiological data, UNAIDS Report November 30th, 2005.

2. Grain Marketing Board – GMB: state body in charge of the subsidized redistribution of grain and seeds.

mostly HIV/AIDS, food aid, water & sanitation and only later on agriculture.

- the resettlement areas are excluded from the main aid packages whereas they have a greater agricultural potential due to more favourable agro-ecological conditions and the larger size of the land holdings.
- all assistance is channelled through international organisations, which prevents any institutional support to Government services.
- in spite of one of the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence and death toll in the world, the health sector, and primarily HIV/AIDS, remains largely under funded compared to other countries in the region.

In a context of high political tensions and strong criticism over the way the land reform has been conducted, food and agriculture have been politically charged in Zimbabwe: the Government is on the one hand held responsible for the food shortages and on the other hand accused of not addressing them properly because of inefficiency, politicisation and discrimination of the public food distribution system and Government's obstructions to foreign aid. This criticism was strongly voiced by an increasing part of the international community and the opposition movements during the past electoral year.

Today, relief agencies find themselves trapped in this political arena:

- the overstated famine situation described by some of them has been extensively used to criticise Government's policy and interventions.
- similarly, the high estimates of food aid needs determined by relief agencies have generally overlooked the fact that the extent of these needs actually depended on Government's financial resources to import food and to proceed to subsidised sales.

The vulnerable people of Zimbabwe are the direct victims of these tensions: the debates around the humanitarian situation are so politically charged that it has become increasingly difficult to assess objectively people's needs and to design appropriate

interventions. The mutual mistrust between the Government and the international community limits funding by donors, but also results in increased bureaucratic and practical restrictions by the government to the work of humanitarian organisations and in a reduced collaboration between them and Government services.

In May 2002, the British Foreign Minister, Clare Short stated that "People must not be punished because their government is corrupt". Yet the Director of UNICEF noted in March 2005 that "despite the world's fourth highest rate of HIV infection and the greatest rise in child mortality in any nation, Zimbabweans receive just a fraction of donor funding compared to other countries in the region" and appealed to donors "to look beyond politics and to differentiate between the politics and the people of Zimbabwe".

Indeed, HIV/AIDS and other diseases kill today far more than malnutrition which has remained in Zimbabwe at one of the lowest levels in Africa. Yet, most media and NGOs keep focusing on food issues, the bulk of the assistance remains food aid, and a silent embargo is maintained on HIV/AIDS and institutional support funding for health services.

It seems essential today for NGOs to depoliticize humanitarian issues in Zimbabwe. NGOs interventions may aim not only at bringing assistance to the people but also at improving the working environment in the country; this should include the promotion of a shared understanding of the challenges faced by the communities and of the priorities of the assistance.

In order to do so, it is paramount to reject and to fight any form of discrimination in the assistance, whether it comes from the Government or from donors. It is also essential to produce and disseminate objective information and analysis on livelihood situations in order to generate adequate funding and to promote appropriate relief and recovery interventions that will benefit to the vulnerable people of Zimbabwe.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

• To the international community:

Western governments shall not impose sanctions to the government that adversely affect the vulnerable people of the country, already strongly impacted by the economic crisis and the climate constraints. They shall rather promote a non-discriminatory approach of the assistance programmes.

• To the donors:

Rather than focusing on a political approach of the issues faced by the people's of Zimbabwe, the donors' strategies shall integrate a socio-economical analysis and avoid any form of discrimination in the assistance.

The community of donors shall promote humanitarian programmes and recovery activities aiming at improving living conditions, so as to find sustainable solutions for the vulnerable people of Zimbabwe.

• To the NGOs:

Relief agencies shall strive to get out of the political arena and give priority to relief, assistance and recovery activities. This can be achieved through the compliance with the humanitarian principles such as non-discrimination and impartiality, and through sharing information and analysis related to livelihoods situations.

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THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF THE CRISIS IN ZIMBABWE

ALTHOUGH THE MASSIVE FOOD SHORTAGES affecting the country have not resulted yet in any significant increase in acute malnutrition (Global Acute Malnutrition has remained close to 3% in all nutritional surveys), the fresh crop failure is surely going to contribute to a further deterioration in the livelihood for a large part of the population of Zimbabwe.

If food and agriculture are at the centre of the crisis faced by Zimbabwe, they are not the only causes of worry for the country; indeed, the economic decline, the collapse of social and health services combined with the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic represent serious threats to the livelihood of many. Their combination makes Zimbabwe one of the most acute crises in the world today.

1. The food crisis

In 2002-03, Zimbabwe was the epicentre of the so-called Southern Africa 'food crisis', which WFP considered as one of the most severe in decades, with more than 12 million people in six countries "facing the threat of starvation"¹. Half of this figure, over six million people out of a population of around twelve millions were declared in need of emergency food aid for Zimbabwe alone.

The food crisis was triggered by a drought, but the unfavourable rainfall patterns were compounded by the economic decline, and its consequence on the poor availability and high prices of inputs (fertilisers, seeds, tillage). The Fast Track land reform programme started in 2000 also greatly contributed to the crisis, as it has resulted in reduced food production and compounded the economic difficulties. As a result, the 2001/02 harvest was the worst in the decade since the 1991/92 drought.

From 2002 to 2004, a massive relief operation was set up in the country, with the arrival of a number of international NGOs and the delivery of over 700,000 MT of relief food by WFP and NGOs to address food shortages.

After what was described as a bumper harvest and the improvement of some economic indicators, in spring 2004, the Government declared that the country did not need anymore international food

assistance. Food aid programmes shrunk to the targeted feeding of 1,2 million vulnerable people in the course of 2004 and early 2005.

Unfortunately, the just completed 2004-2005 agricultural season² was another serious failure, comparable to the 2002 harvest. Only about 500,000 MT of cereals have been harvested this year against a requirement of 1,8 million MT for domestic consumption. Reasons are a mid season drought combined with late planting and shortage of inputs (fertilizer, tillage). A vulnerability assessment² was published in November 2005 to analyze the food security status of the population for the 2005-2006 marketing year.

This vulnerability assessment shows a need of 225,455 MT of maize in order to feed 2.9 million people during the hunger gap period (from January 2006 to the next harvest).

Although the massive food shortages affecting the country have not resulted yet in any significant increase in acute malnutrition (Global Acute Malnutrition has remained close to 3% in all nutritional surveys), the fresh crop failure is surely going to contribute to a further deterioration in the livelihood for a large part of the population of Zimbabwe. Many in Zimbabwe are already severely affected by several years of poor harvests, and struggle for food in a daily challenge.

1. WFP Annual Report 2002
2. ZIMVAC 2005: Zimbabwe rural food security and vulnerability assessments report carried out in June 2005 in collaboration between the government and UN bodies. The first assessment report was published in August 2002.

2. The economic decline

The economical difficulties of Zimbabwe started in the 1980s, when the Government sought to promote development and reduce inequities through intensified economic controls and increased social expenditures. A massive redistribution of social expenditures particularly on health and education led to significant improvements in social indicators. This resulted in social progress but at the expense of rising public deficits and low growth. An Economic and Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) started in 1991 aimed at accelerating growth through better fiscal management and market liberalization.

As a result of this programme, the average agricultural growth rose to 4 % per annum in the 1990s, but the World Bank observed the simultaneous rise of extreme poverty, from 26% in 1990 to 35% in 1995, affecting mainly small scale farmers communities in rural areas. The World Bank explains this evolution by the fact that agricultural growth was not broad based but rather was skewed in favour of large scale commercial farmers and not giving enough attention to small land holders: "the relevance of the strategy throughout the 1990s was modest with respect to the Bank's mandate to reduce poverty and the country's objective to reduce inequality, mainly because there was no strategy for land reform, despite glaring inequalities"³.

Besides, the ESAP deregulated the labour market and reduced public expenditures, which led to a decline in employment in manufacturing and in public administration. Agriculture benefited from exchange rate adjustment and marketing deregulation but as said earlier this benefited mainly the commercial, exporting, sector.

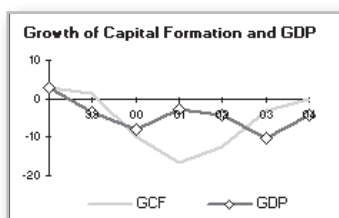
Rising poverty and unemployment, the persistence of a highly dualistic economic structure, the high inequality in the distribution of assets and the limited achievements of the first attempts of land redistribution undermined support for this policy and fuelled social discontent and political pressure for land reform.

As a result, this policy was abandoned and by 1997, the Government back tracked on price and trade liberalization, drastically increased public expenditures in various sectors, including an expensive military operation in Congo, and brought back land reform as a priority for the country.

This reversal of policy reforms did not result in any improvement in economical conditions, which continued to worsen in the following years. The economic decline turned into a crisis in early 2000s,

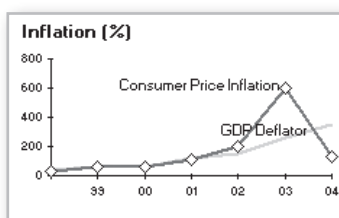
after the Fast Track land reform programme and its consequences on the economy:

- many factories and business have closed due to dwindling confidence in the investment environment.
- this together with a severe reduction in foreign exchange earnings from sales of tobacco, gold and cotton, has led to a decline in foreign currency reserves to extremely low levels.
- the country's economy has contracted sharply since the second half of the 1990s: real gross domestic product (GDP) has declined by 30% in the last five years. Economic growth in 2004 is estimated at - 4.8%, and a rate of -1.6 % is projected for 2005⁴.



Source : World Bank, 2005

- formal employment dropped by up to 75% while employment on commercial farms reduced by over 330,000 (25% of the formally employed workforce) to a current estimate of 50,000. Unemployment is estimated at over 70% and an estimated 3,4 million people have left the country in the past few years⁵.
- exports have fallen from US\$2.3 billion in 2000 to around US\$1.2 billion in 2003⁶.
- the country's average annual inflation has been climbing since 2000 when it stood at 55.9%, reaching 133.2% in 2002, soaring to 623% in January 2004 and being at 502% in November 2005⁷.



Source : World Bank, 2005

- the general shortage of basic commodities –including sugar, maize-meal, flour, cooking oil, fuel– has created a burgeoning parallel market, which is limiting access to basic items for most of the poor because of extremely high prices.
- the shortage of agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizers and tillage.) and their lack of affordability to many

HIV/AIDS
has been exacerbating poverty levels and economic decline through its impact on all sectors of the economy and all segments of the society, such as the loss of skills and knowledge, loss of manpower and human resources, increased burden for the State and the communities to deal with orphans and sick people as well as funerals.

3. Report No. 29058, Zimbabwe Country Assistance Country Assistance Evaluation, May 21, 2004, Operations Evaluation Department, World Bank.
4. World bank, Interim Strategy Note for Zimbabwe, August 31st, 2005.
5. Central Bank Advisory board, cited by Dianna Games in Zimbabwe: A pre-election overview and recovery scenarios, South African Institute of International Affairs, March 2005.
6. Dianna Games.
7. Central Statistic Office (CSO) in Zimbabwe.

- further aggravated the situation, impairing recovery in production.
- from 40% in the late 1980s, the percentage of people living under the poverty level has exceeded 70% in 2005, with significantly higher levels experienced in rural than urban areas⁸.

These dire economic conditions have led to decreased incomes and purchasing power, chronic under funding of public services and resulted in brain drain, strikes, lack of maintenance of equipment and infrastructures, all compounding shortages of basic commodities and declining social services.

HIV/AIDS has been exacerbating poverty levels and economic decline through its impact on all sectors of the economy and all segments of the society, such as the loss of skills and knowledge, loss of manpower and human resources, increased burden for the State and the communities to deal with orphans and sick people as well as funerals.

The country's economical performances seem to have slightly improved since 2004, thanks to better weather conditions in 2003-05 and certain financial and economical measures taken by the Government. The 'look to the East' policy implemented by the Government with China and other Eastern countries

also started to compensate the loss of investments from Western countries.

It must be also noted that despite the above dire description, the country has never been bankrupt and must be still benefiting from its vast mineral resources (Zimbabwe has just become the first world exporter of platinum) and from the earnings of its export crops such as tobacco. Indeed, the State is still able to pay civil servants and pensions and to operate public services, though quality of services is declining. Over the past three years, more than 1 million tons of grain was purchased on foreign markets and imported for the domestic consumption while in May 2005, several fighter jets and a large numbers of buses were imported from China.

Even with less job opportunities in commercial farms, industries and mines, the economy is therefore still functioning. Besides, an important financial inflow comes from the 3,4 million Zimbabwean expatriates: the central Bank has estimated that up to \$ 400 million in remittances could be paid annually to families in Zimbabwe⁹. Such remittances and formally employed relatives apparently maintain an important financial flow towards the rural communities of Zimbabwe.

3. The people's health conditions

The life expectancy has dropped to 33.9 years compared to 61 years during the early 1990s¹⁰. This is primarily due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic but also to the decline of social and health services.

With an estimated national prevalence rate of 20,1%¹¹, Zimbabwe is one of the countries the most affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. More than 3,000 persons die every week by HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe, some 170,000 people per year in a country of 11.6 millions. The number of orphans is estimated to rise to 910,000 in 2005, some 20% of the nation's children. Out of 295,000 people in need of treatment, only about 9,000 receive antiretroviral treatment, which can greatly extend the life of someone infected with the deadly virus¹².

The lack of resources but also the decline of the health system explain these figures; as a matter of fact, the quality and the access to health services in Zimbabwe have been deteriorating over the recent years as a result of under funding, emigration of health staff, and the impact of HIV/AIDS.

The maternal mortality ratio, a good indicator of the quality of health services, deteriorated from 610 per

100,000 live births in 1994 to 1100 per 100,000 live births in 2000. Child mortality has doubled from 59 to 123 per 1,000 live births between 1989 and 2004¹³.

Besides, a number of infectious and epidemic prone diseases have re-emerged in the past few years:

- one of the country's worst ever years as regards malaria was 2003-2004, as a result of failure of the main prevention programme of residual spraying. Already this year there have been more than 650,000 cases and more than 1000 deaths.
- cholera has occurred in Zimbabwe every year since 1998, with very high case fatality rates during outbreaks.
- Zimbabwe is one of the most affected countries as regards tuberculosis: incidence has increased five-fold between 1992 and 2002. The rise has been attributed mainly to HIV; 80% of TB cases are estimated to be HIV positive.
- lastly, rabies and anthrax have made major comebacks as a direct result of the current decline in the capacity for the health care delivery services. Prevention of both diseases required strong inter-sectoral action, which is currently lacking, regular and widespread vaccine availability and appropriate prevention and control programmes.

8. Zimbabwe Humanitarian and Developmental-Relief Programme For 2005, UNDP March 2005.

9. Dianna Games.

10. UNDP March 2005.

11. National Aids Council, 2005.

12. John Donnelly, *The Boston Globe*, 3 May, 2005, In Zimbabwe, AIDS care done on the cheap.

13. Main source in this section UNDP March 2005.

THE AGRICULTURE IN ZIMBABWE

The crisis in Zimbabwe is often explained by the ill conceived land reform programme, which has been implemented by the Government since 2000. The reality is more complex as the current crisis, actually like the land reform itself, is rather the result of a long process.

1. Background of the land reform

As it is widely acknowledged today, the British Colonial rule and later on the white Rhodesian Government have shaped the country of Zimbabwe as one of the most inequitable political regimes, based on the exploitation and the discrimination of the black majority. The white minority had seized control of the vast majority of good agricultural land. As formalized in the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, 50,000 white settlers took control over 51% of the country land while 30%, mostly less fertile and arid land, was reserved to 1.1 million native people (the remaining 19% was unassigned land and forest areas).

The regime also made sure that the black population remained a cheap and readily available labour force for mines and plantations. 'Tribal reserves' were established on marginal land where the black population could hardly make their living on subsistence agriculture and had therefore to rely on out-farm work. Attempts of self-help and 'development' by the black population were systematically countered by a set of laws, such as the Maize Control Act 1934 and the Land Husbandry Act 1951, restricting black farmers access to cash cropping, which would have competed with white farmers' production and reduced people's dependence.

Robert Mugabe, leader of the Zimbabwe National Union Patriotic Front (ZANUPF), came in power in 1980, after a protracted war in which land had been a central issue, both as a deep cause of resentment and a primary objective of the liberation war. The war was ended through peace talks brokered by the British Government that led to the Lancaster House Agreement. This agreement gave special protection to white Zimbabweans for the first ten years of independence and committed the new Government to

not engaging in any compulsory land acquisition during this period.

Whereas respecting the agreement and leaving the white population on their land, including Ian Smith, the former leader of the Rhodesian white minority, the new Government honoured its promises to launch a land resettlement program using under utilized or abandoned land. However, between 1980 and 1989 the pace of resettlement was slower than planned: only 52,000 families were resettled on 3.1 million hectares of acquired land against a target of 162,000 families on 10 million hectares. The redistribution continued in the 1990s at even a slower pace, with an additional 400,000 hectares redistributed by 1997 to 20,000 farmers from communal areas.

The slow resettlement has been explained by a combination of factors: restrictions placed by the Lancaster Agreement¹, the lack of financial resources (Britain favoured purchase from willing sellers at full market prices and British assistance had to be matched dollar for dollar by the Government's own resources), lack of willingness and effectiveness of the Government, and the lack of availability of high quality land for sale.

At the end of the 1990s, after nearly two decades of resettlement efforts, land distribution remained highly skewed. The 5,000 large-scale commercial farms still occupied 29% of the land, located mainly in the areas of highest agricultural potential, while more than 1,000,000 families remained in the overcrowded communal areas on 42% of the land area, located mainly in areas of poor agricultural potential. These families were facing declining soil fertility, and growing incidence of soil erosion from increased population pressures and intensive ● ● ●

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1. Historical inequity was embedded in the constitutional settlement (the 'Lancaster House Constitution') as it preserved the colonial settler pattern of white ownership of most of the fertile land.

● ● ● agricultural production. Rising poverty and tremendous political pressure because of expectations created during the war of Independence made land redistribution a continuing critical issue.

While the British Conservative Government had agreed to finance the land reform, the new Labour Government changed of policy in 1997 and revoked Britain's commitments under the Lancaster Agreement. In a letter to the Zimbabwean Government in November 1997, Secretary of State for International Development, Ms Claire Short stated thus: *"I should make it clear that we do not accept that Britain has a special responsibility to meet the costs of land purchase in Zimbabwe. We are a new Government from diverse backgrounds without links to former colonial interests. My own origins are Irish and as you know we were colonised not colonisers."*

The same year, under pressure from the population and the war veterans, the Government announced the compulsory acquisition of 1,471 farms. A donor conference was then held in 1998 in order to build consensus over the modalities of the reform and secure funding. Despite the agreements reached at the conference, divergent views between the Government and the donors, primarily Britain, led to an impasse and no financial support was eventually provided to Zimbabwe. According to the World Bank², "the unwillingness of donors to make financial commitments in 1999 reinforced the Government's fears that donors were not serious about land reform".

In April 2000, the Parliament adopted an amendment to the Constitution which stipulated that if donors did not provide funds for land purchases,

the Government could acquire farms compulsorily without paying compensation. A wave of invasions hit the country, organized by war veterans and condoned by the Government. In July 2000, a newly-elected government proceeded to take over large-scale commercial farms under the Fast Track land reform program involving the compulsory acquisition of 5 million hectares of commercial farm land. In July 2001, the Government increased the amount to be resettled from 5 million hectares to 8.3 million hectares, or almost 77% of the land area with large-scale commercial farming.

Farm invasions and related human rights abuses were condemned by most western countries, which hardened their position towards the Government. Targeted sanctions were adopted against senior members of ZANU-PF and relations of Zimbabwe with the EU, the US and Britain have continued to be tense since.

Yet, according to the World Bank *"land redistribution was critical for poverty alleviation, essential for political sustainability, and imperative for increasing economic efficiency"*. Indeed, land redistribution appears to have been the only solution to fight poverty and trigger development. As indicated by various studies³, the policy of redistributing land would improve the productivity of unused, or underutilized, land. These studies also suggest that resettled households performed well in terms of income and productivity when compared with their position prior to the land reform program, or when compared with their communal counterparts. However to a large extent, this expected impact did not materialize in Zimbabwe.

2. Current situation of agriculture

Zimbabwe has an estimated population of 11.6 million people⁴, 67% of which is involved in agriculture. Prior to the recent land redistribution, the agricultural land was classified into the following four land use types⁵:

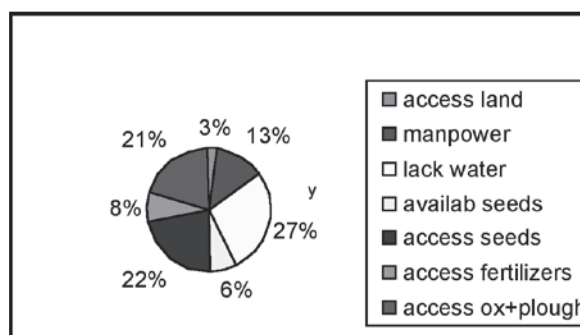
- communal lands: 16 million hectares
- large scale commercial farming areas: 11 million hectares
- small scale commercial farming areas: 1 million hectares
- old resettlement areas: 3,5 million hectares

The country disposes of five different agro-ecological zones where farming conditions vary greatly from one to the other.

2. Main source in this section World Bank Report No. 29058.
3. See Deininger, Klaus, Hans Hoogeveen, and Bill Kinsey. 2002. "Benefits and Costs of Land Reform in Zimbabwe with Implications for Southern Africa.", World Development; The Experience of Resettled Farmers in Zimbabwe, Sophia Chiremba and William Masters, African Study Quarterly.
4. Central Statistical Office August 2002 census.
5. Action Contre la Faim Report on the Food Security Situation of 200 Families Assessed During the Combined Food Security/ Nutrition Survey Done in Four Districts of Manicaland Province, Oct/Nov 2003.
6. See Annex.

FOCUS

From the study investigated in Chipinge and Zvishavane (villages from communal lands and in natural region V), farmers stressed out the main agricultural constraints they have to face.



Main agricultural constraints mentioned in Chipinge and Zvishavane

The main agricultural constraint mentioned is the drought, as these areas are all located in the driest natural region (V) and since the 2004/2005 crop season was affected by the lack of rain. The two following main constraints are the access to seeds and to draught power.

Seeds (and fertilizers) used to be subsidized by the GMB while they were also available on the market but at higher price. As a direct consequence of the economic crisis, the GMB is no more able to supply a significant part of the required inputs to the farmers while market prices have considerably increased. An aggravating factor is that seeds from the GMB are distributed in priority to the farmers getting the better yields. Depending on the quantity available at the GMB, medium wealth ranking farmers can also get some seeds but poor farmers (about 70% of the population) can only work for richer ones in order to get some seeds in exchange since they cannot afford to buy them from the market. This will lead those farmers to plant later than the regular period and induce a longer hunger gap period to cope with.

The lack of draught power is a main concern for farmers: they have to rent it (but most farmers cannot afford it), or to plough their land with the hoe, or to work for neighbours at the ploughing time in order to get the draught power in exchange of their work. The consequence of this lack of draught power is that farmers are not always able to plough the whole of their land, or at the right time, thus accumulating delays in planting and losing yields.

The next main agricultural constraints mentioned is the lack of manpower. This is indeed mostly a consequence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic which leads to changing deeply the households' age curve with 41% of households' members below 12 or above 60.

The size of the land is also a strong constraint for small-scale farmers.

At the national level, approximately 25% of households in communal areas have land holding of less than 1ha; 45% have 1.0-2.5 ha; 20% have 2.6-4.0 ha and only 10% have over 4 ha. Those figures shows that a significant proportion do not have access to adequate operational land for crop production. Indeed, such land sizes do not allow proper crop husbandry, i.e. rotation and replenishment of fertility through fallow⁷.

Before the reform, large-scale commercial farming areas were mostly located in the agro-ecological zones II and III benefiting from high and stable rainfall. Most of this land has been redistributed now: since the beginning of land redistribution, 205 823 farmers have been resettled as A1 (small subsistence farmers) and 28 665 as A2 (commercial medium and large farmers). Taking into account

FOCUS

In Chipinge and Zvishavane, the average land owned per household is 2.1 ha and the average area cultivated 1.6 ha. For the rest of the country, arable land holdings are generally less than 2.5 ha⁸.

farmers' family members, this resettled population represents more than 1 million Zimbabweans.

Although the agricultural potential is greater in resettlement areas because of more favourable agro-ecological conditions and larger land holding, this potential has been underused so far. Indeed, especially for farmers resettled under the recent Fast Track programme, the lack of resources and technical knowledge has apparently limited the ability of resettled farmers to exploit their land. ●●●

7. Zimbabwe Food Security Issues Paper, forum for Food Security in Southern Africa.
8. Whereas large scale farms benefit from 2 200 ha and small scale farms 125 ha, in FAO, Country Pasture and Forage Resource Profile, October 2000.
9. Action Contre la Faim Assessment Report Oct/Nov 2003.

●●● The necessary adaptation of large scale commercial farms into smaller units of production requires significant levels of investment and management, which have been apparently lacking so far.

Given the agro-ecological conditions and the small land holding in communal areas, even in a good year, there is always a percentage of the population which remains food insecure. According to the ZIMVAC 2005¹⁰, at the hunger peak (Jan/Mar 2006) a total of 2.9 million people will not be able to meet their minimum cereal requirements during the 2005/06 season, which represents about 36% of the total rural population.

farmers and most of this production ceased after the invasions.

However, production in communal farms dropped too in 2002 and in 2005, down to a very low level, around 70% below the average of the year 2001. This drop can be explained by the drought affecting the region, and the economical crisis which led to a lesser access to agricultural inputs, essential for the prevailing agricultural patterns, especially in a drought year, and ultimately to reduced areas cultivated and yields. Price volatility also increased the need for small farmers to access alternative sources of income with off farm labour, and resulted in less manpower and less area planted. Simultaneously, opportunities for off-farm labour reduced because of regional evolutions and negative markets trends for some products such as tobacco.

FOCUS

In Chipinge and Zvishavane, the 2004-05 cropping season was affected by a drought characterized by very low rainfalls at mid term of the cropping season. The survey showed that the average quantity harvested per household was 50kg of maize and 42kg of sorghum in Chipinge, and 100kg of maize and 30kg of Millet in Zvishavane. On average, households could rely on their crop production only for 2 to 6 weeks.

THE LACK OF RESOURCES AND TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE has apparently limited the ability of resettled farmers to exploit their land. The necessary adaptation of large scale commercial farms into smaller units of production requires significant levels of investment and management, which have been apparently lacking so far.

Before the reform, the communal sector used to produce as an average some 60% of the maize production, which fluctuated greatly over the years, according to the rainfall¹¹.

The drop in agricultural production after the Fast Track is partly due to the land reform as around 40% of the cereals were produced by commercial

The land reform not only resulted in a decrease in the production of cereals: since the late 1980s, the agricultural sector had been the largest single source of export earnings for the country, contributing 40% to 45% of total exports in most years. Tobacco was the major cash crop but cotton and horticulture products such as flowers were also exported. The seizure of commercial farm therefore also resulted in a dramatic drop in exports earnings: between 1997 and 2002, the commercial agricultural revenue dropped from \$ 1.1 billion to 227 millions¹².

This twofold effect of the land reform, less food production and less export earnings, has therefore a twofold impact: food shortages and reduced financial capacity to address them through commercial imports.

10. ZIMVAC, Zimbabwe rural food security and vulnerability assessments report, June 2005, p7.

11. Ministry of Agriculture: Agricultural Statistical Bulletin 2002.

12. The Loss of Property Rights and the Collapse of Zimbabwe, Craig J. Richardson, Cato Journal, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Spring/Summer 2005).

RESPONSES TO FOOD SHORTAGES

The low and fluctuating agricultural production, in combination with the impacts of the economic decline, and deteriorating health and social indicators, has critically affected livelihoods of most rural families. Additionally many families that previously were supported through formally employed family members are currently depending largely upon their own agricultural

production, which is adding stress on the already fragile and overexploited communal areas. The succession of poor harvests have worsened the situation, and exacerbated vulnerabilities. As a result, large numbers of rural households have been relying on food aid and subsidised sales for their food consumption over the past three years.

1. Difficulty to estimate the food deficit

Several variables are used to estimate the food deficit: crop, imports and exports, food consumption and other uses of food (animal feeding or industries) and stocks.

A calculation is then made to estimate the food deficit, which may be covered by food aid and commercial imports.

In the case of Zimbabwe, there are several reasons to take with great caution the estimates done over the past few years:

- the food consumption is based on a per capita cereal consumption of 163 kgs, a figure which is relatively high compared to Zambia, reputed for its similar maize based diet, which has a consumption of 110 Kgs/year only. This average is also likely to be much less in bad years when people compensate the lesser availability of maize with increased consumption of vegetables and tubers.

- prior to the August 2002 Census, the estimates of the food requirements were based on a total population estimate of 13.6 million people; however, the census indicated an official population estimate of 11.7 million¹. This 2 millions difference would make a difference of 342 000 MT. Furthermore, an estimated 3,4 million Zimbabweans may have migrated out of the country in the recent years²; this would represent a decrease of 554,000 MT in food consumption, i.e. 29% of the national requirement.
- informal cross border trade is not taken into account when estimating the food needs; yet, significant quantities of grain are apparently traded to Zimbabwe from Zambia³.
- lastly, large quantities of grain are diverted to the parallel market by farmers and traders and may not be accounted.

1. ZIMVAC, Zimbabwe Emergency Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment - April 2003.
2. Central Bank Advisory board, cited by Dianna Games.
3. Famine Early Warning Systems Network: Food Security Brief March 2005; Informal Cross Border Food Trade In Southern Africa May 2005.

2. The Grain Marketing Board

Created in the 1930s, the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) is a parastatal body in a situation of monopole for the marketing of maize and some other crops in Zimbabwe. It buys harvests from the farmers at predefined prices, imports, sells to the milling industry (the maize is then processed into maize meal and sold in shops and supermarkets) or to households in food deficit through subsidised sales. The GMB has historically played a critical social safety net role in ensuring the spatial and

temporal distribution of maize throughout the country, ensuring transfer from surplus to deficit areas and selling at subsidised prices, affordable to the poorest. This role is essential in a country with acute disparities between agricultural areas, and among the population: as seen earlier, even in a good year, a significant proportion of the population will not produce enough for its own consumption. The Government also uses the GMB as an instrument of agricultural policy. By fixing purchase ●●●

ON THE ONE HAND, the lack of foreign exchange and the reduced Government resources have limited GMB's ability to import food, and as a result the quantity of food available for subsidised sales.

ON THE OTHER HAND, due to high inflation and scarcity of food for sale in official markets, many surplus farmers have become reluctant to sell their grain to the GMB.

●●● prices for the cereals, the GMB influences the choice of farmers between various crops. For instance, in May 2005, when it appeared that the ongoing harvest was going to be poor, the GMB drastically increased buying prices for maize and wheat, in the hope that more farmers will sell their crops to the Board but also to provide an incentive for the coming winter cropping.

In the past few years, the GMB has been often accused of discrimination of opposition supporters for its subsidised sales, mismanagement, misappropriation and corruption⁴. However, the lack of transparency in the GMB's activities combined with the political stakes involved around food issues make it difficult to measure precisely the extent of such patterns.

In any case, for many years, the subsidised sales by the GMB have represented the primary source of food security for over three quarter of Zimbabweans living below the poverty line⁵ and overall the GMB has been playing a key role in addressing food deficits in the past few years:

- In 2002-03, the GMB distributed 75% of the 1.2 million total cereals distributed in the country, while WFP and NGOs distributed about 25% of the grain⁶.
- In 2003-04, GMB would have imported 400,000 MT, around 50% of the total requirement, against 380,000 MT for international food aid⁷.

However, this social role has been undermined by the evolution of the recent years:

On the one hand, the lack of foreign exchange and the reduced Government resources have limited GMB's ability to import food, and as a result the quantity of food available for subsidised sales.

On the other hand, due to high inflation and scarcity of food for sale in official markets, many surplus farmers have become reluctant to sell their grain to the GMB. They would get a lesser price than if they sell on the parallel market, especially if they keep the grain until the price increases in the lean period: in May 2005, the GMB multiplied by three the purchasing price by GMB to farmers (from 750,000 to 2,2 million Zim \$ per metric ton). Even then, prices on the black market remained higher at some 3 million.

Furthermore, the high inflation and uncertainty over future results in farmers keeping their production for their own consumption (rather than selling at the harvest time and buying at the GMB later on in the season as it was common in the past)⁸.

As a result, at the end of the 2003-04 season, a parliamentary report on the food situation found out that out of an estimated 2,4 million tons produced, only 500 to 600,000 MT would reach the GMB.

3. The difficulty to determine food aid needs

After the 1992-93 drought, large amounts of funding were channelled through the Government for GMB imports and sales. International food aid was provided free in complement to the GMB subsidised sales. Situation has been different in this current crisis, where donors did not support the Government activities; NGOs and UN programmes were developed in parallel to Government programmes.

In a situation of crisis, international food aid plays a great role, by bringing additional resources and means but also by allowing the distribution of free food for those who can't afford the price of subsidised sales.

The determination of the food aid requirement should therefore depend on three variables:

- the extent of the food deficit
- the quantities of food imports by the GMB
- the number of people in need of free food distributions.

However, it did not work this way in the past few years as it has been almost impossible to estimate precisely the food deficit and to know in advance the amounts of food to be imported by the GMB. The repartition between free food aid and subsidised sales was realised somehow informally, without proper assessments of how many people would need free food versus how many can afford subsidised sales.

It is only in 2004, after the Government turned away food aid for general distributions, that free food was confined to targeted feeding for an esti-

4. Human Rights Watch, October 2003 Vol. 15, No. 17(A), Zimbabwe, Not Eligible: The Politicization of Food in Zimbabwe.

5. R. Loewenson, Relief and recovery in Zimbabwe: food security in the current humanitarian crisis, TARSC, March 2003.

6. ZIMVAC - April 2003.

7. ZIMVAC Zimbabwe Emergency Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment - April 2004.

8. Interviews with farmers in March 2004 and May 2005.

mated 1.3 million vulnerable people through school feeding, supplementary feeding, orphan support and home based care for the chronically ill.

As from the ZIMVAC 2005⁹ published in November: "A total population of 2.9 million people, which constitutes 36% of the rural population, will not be able to meet their household food requirements during the 2005/06 marketing year. A total of 225,455MT of maize will be required to meet household deficit for this population". After 3 months of negotiation with the UN and NGOs, Mugabe's government acknowledged that some Zimbabweans would be in need of food aid and agreed to let WFP and NGOs providing assistance to some 2.2 million people gearing up to 3 million people until June 2006. WFP had estimated the number of hungry Zimbabwean at 4.3 million¹⁰.

The levels of food imports and cereal prices are determinants for food aid needs. As indicated by

the ZIMVAC 2005: "Grain should be made available on the market for households to purchase. Government should maintain the price of maize at current levels of ZW\$ 36000 per 50kg bag (720/kg) and ensure efficient distribution so that the number of food insecure people will not increase from the current projected 2.9 million people."

Arguments around the rejection of general food aid by the Government and controversy over the amount of food needs are only relevant when considering potential discrimination by the GMB. Indeed, apart from that, the food aid requirement mainly depends on the capacity of Government to import food.

So far, no information is available with respect to the capacity of the GMB to distribute subsidised food and seeds. It seems difficult at this stage to assess if the most vulnerable part of the population has been targeted for assistance.

9. ZIMVAC Zimbabwe rural food security and vulnerability assessments report, June 2005.

10. AFP, 1st of December 2005, Johannesburg.

11. Traditional dish made of maize flour.

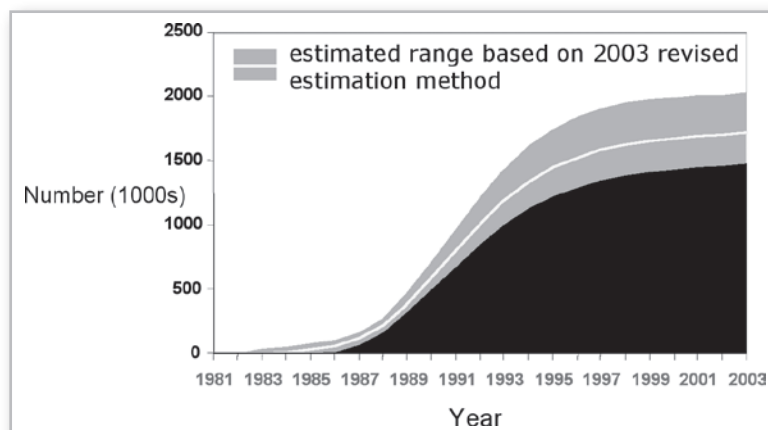
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In Chipinge and Zvishavane, negative coping mechanisms were observed in households with a low level of food security :

- Reduction of quantity of food eaten per day was the most common (for more than 90% of the surveyed households), followed by reduction of number of meals per day (60% have reduced from 3 meals to 2 meals of Sadza¹¹ a day, 32% to 1 meal and 1.5% could not even eat 1 meal a day).
- Selling livestock in the specific order to purchase food is planned to be done by 66% of interviewed households, while 6 years ago (in 1999/00) only 21% of them had to sell livestock to get some food.
- The average harvest (25kg in Chipinge and 100kg in Zvishavane, in May 2005) could allow households to constitute food stocks for a period of 2 to 6 weeks, considering the average monthly need of 12kg of staple food per person and the average of 7.4 members per household. At the time of the assessment (july-october 2005) granaries were already empty and households had to supply food from the market at continuously increasing prices.
- Regarding the kitchen stock at the time of the assessment, 37.4% of households only had maize flour, salt and vegetables (with no cooking oil, sugar, beans or meat available) and 2.3% of them did not have any maize flour or salt available. 48.8% of the households had sugar available, when 35.2% had cooking oil and only 18.4% had some meat.
- Considering the sources of expenditures, 89% of households investigated spent the first part of their expenditure budget on food, while the second part was spent on education (37%), agricultural inputs (38%) and health (21%). The third source of expenditure was also mainly education, health and agricultural inputs.
- Regarding the sources of income 75% of households relied on casual work, mainly on farms' work for communal land farmers; 40% (from all wealth group) are involved in petty trade such as handicraft, vegetable and wild fruit selling; 35% of households (mainly poor ones) investigated in Zvishavane work on gold panning; 18% of households have a member working as a formal employer and able to provide them some income; and 13% had to sell some of their assets to buy some food.

HIV/AIDS: THE CURRENT PRIORITY FOR LIFE SAVING

The bulk of the increase in HIV/AIDS infection occurred in the early 1990s. The dramatic 27 years drop in life expectancy confirms that treatment has not been accessible so far by most of the affected people: it is only now, 20 years after the onset of the pandemic, 10 years after the massive rise in prevalence that ARV treatment is slowly starting to be provided. However, out of 295,000 people in need of treatment today, only about 9,000 people receive antiretroviral treatment today¹.



HIV/AIDS prevalence in Zimbabwe 1981-2003²

1. John Donnelly, *The Boston Globe*, 3 May, 2005, in Zimbabwe, AIDS care done on the cheap.
2. Zimbabwe: Trends in critical social indicators, UNICEF, Harare 29 July 2004.
3. « Frequently ill » means being ill for more than 40 days within the past 12 months.

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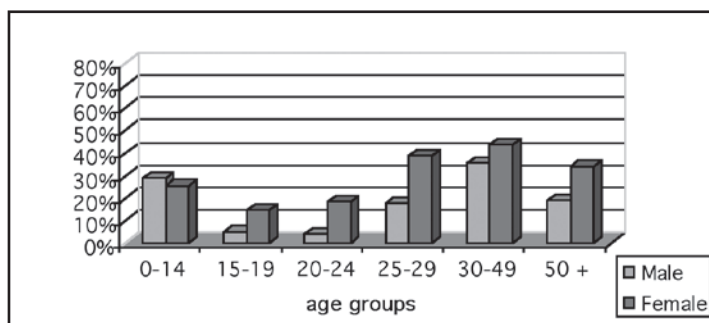
In Chipinge and Zvishavane, 47.5% of the interviewed households acknowledged that 1 to 3 persons among the family members are "frequently ill"³. A total of 9% of the interviewed population was thus considered as "frequently ill".

Over 90% of these cases being adults, a great proportion of the active population is unable to work on a permanent basis, which has a direct impact on the households' ability to earn food and incomes. Moreover, while being ill they need care from other household's members, the later being unable to work during that time. Thus the consequence of such a high proportion of households having "frequently ill" members is the reduction of their level of food security. Moreover, it was found that 19% of the surveyed households had a member who has died during the past 12 months. The total deaths toll during the period represents 3% of the total population assessed.

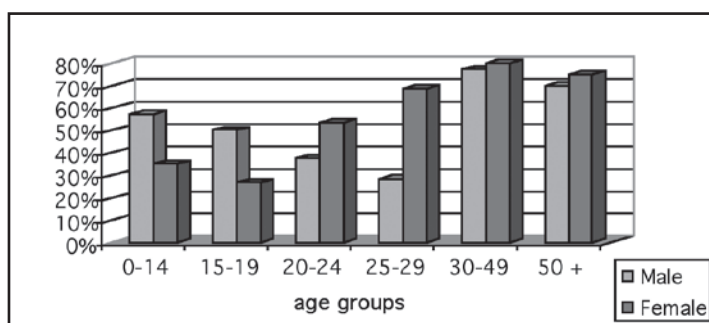
Most of the interviewed people in both districts did not know their HIV/AIDS status for two main reasons:

- The VCT (Voluntary Counselling and Testing) or PPTCT (Prevention of Parents To Child Transmission) tests are only available at hospital level (1 hospital in the whole Zvishavane district and 3 in Chipinge).
- Most people say they would rather ignore their status as HIV/AIDS might be a source of stigmatisation. ●●●

- People from the villages mainly do the VCT test when they are chronically sick and when a doctor has diagnosed the virus as being at the origin of the current illness.



Percentage of HIV/AIDS positive VCT test, Chipinge, Jan-Aug 2005⁴



Percentage of HIV/AIDS positive VCT test, Zvishavane, Jan-Aug 2005⁴

By looking at the PPTCT (Prevention of Parents To Child Transmission) statistics on testing of pregnant women (only 23% accepted to be tested in Chipinge), we find that 20% of them were HIV-positive in Chipinge and 44% in Zvishavane. That confirms the results of the graphs showing that the rate of infection is much higher in Zvishavane. The limited sample (23%) shows how difficult it is to gather comprehensive information on HIV/AIDS. It is also likely to reveal that discrimination may occur among HIV-positive persons, thus deterring them from getting tested. Moreover, only 15% of the HIV-positive pregnant women in Chipinge could access a “Niverapine” treatment in order to avoid transmission from mother to child⁵.

The Global Fund has excluded Zimbabwe until May 2005, when a first grant of \$ 10 millions was eventually provided against a request of more than \$ 300 millions by the Government.

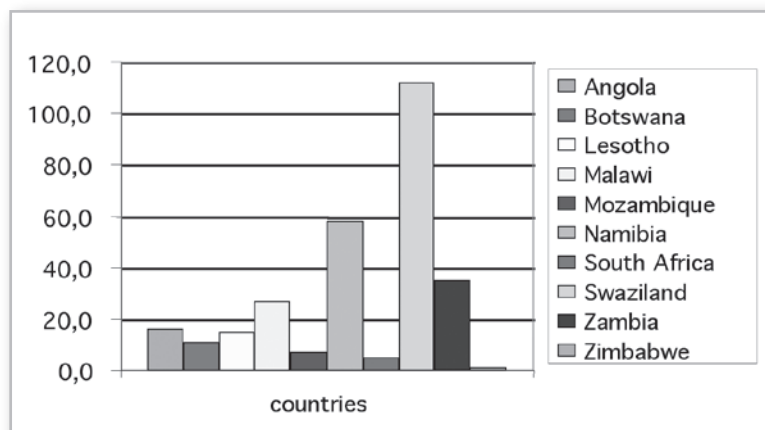
Even with this grant, Zimbabwe remains the least assisted country with slightly more than \$ 1 per capita, provided through the Global Funds. The

comparison with other countries in the region clearly shows the special treatment received by Zimbabwe when it comes to HIV/AIDS: South Africa receives 5 times more per capita funding, Namibia, 58 times, Swaziland 112 times. Furthermore, Zimbabwe is still excluded from other aid packages such as the US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and Multi-country HIV/AIDS Program (MAP)⁶. ●●●

4. In the above graphs only people who came for a VCT (Voluntary Counselling Testing) as a volunteer and after sex abuse are taken into account. The population sample tested in Chipinge was 2220 people and 360 people in Zvishavane. The percentage of contamination is much higher in Zvishavane district with a higher percentage of female affected than male.
5. No data was available in Zvishavane.
6. UNDP March 2005.

THE COMPARISON WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

in the region clearly shows the special treatment received by Zimbabwe when it comes to HIV/AIDS: South Africa receives 5 times more per capita funding, Namibia, 58 times, Swaziland 112 times.



Global Fund budget per capita in southern Africa

●●● The lack of Global Fund funding has been justified by the poor confidence in the Government's capacity to handle the funds, which is not very consistent for a country which not long ago was known as having one of the best health systems on the continent.

Few years ago, the Government of Zimbabwe instituted a 3% tax levy to generate domestic resources for fighting HIV/AIDS through treatment and prevention, but this remains far from sufficient to adequately tackle the disease. Furthermore, the economic

crisis, resulting in brain drain and deteriorating infrastructures, combined with the death toll due to HIV/AIDS contributes to the rapid depletion of the health and social services.

The Director of UNICEF noted in March 2005⁷ that "despite the world's fourth highest rate of HIV infection and the greatest rise in child mortality in any nation, Zimbabweans receive just a fraction of donor funding compared to other countries in the region" and appealed to donors "to look beyond politics and to differentiate between the politics and the people of Zimbabwe".

7. <http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=46167>

PITFALLS AND CHALLENGES FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

1. There was no famine in Zimbabwe

The national nutritional surveys conducted in 2003 by the Government and UNICEF and the surveys conducted in early 2004 by ACF in five provinces did not show any significant acute

malnutrition in the country (GAM below 3% for all surveys). As indicated in the table below, ACF nutritional surveys show that acute malnutrition has remained at a very low level despite the crisis.

District	N	Global Acute Malnutrition	Severe Acute Malnutrition
Mutare	900	2.6%	0.3%
Mutasa	900	3.1%	1.4%
Murewa	900	2.3%	0.3%
Chitungwiza urban	900	2.3%	0.8%
Harare urban	900	1.1%	0.6%

Acute malnutrition (wasting) in Z- scores for children aged 6 to 59 months¹

Severe acute malnutrition is apparently mostly related to diseases, and primarily HIV/AIDS rather than problems of food².

In the same survey, ACF found a high prevalence of chronic malnutrition ('stunting', measuring height/age) in all the districts surveyed. At the difference to acute malnutrition which is typically brought on by a short-term food crisis, chronic malnutrition, assessing child growth, is an indicator of chronic poverty.

According to ACF surveys and data, over the past four years, acute malnutrition has remained at a very low level, and identified cases are apparently mainly due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The use of the word 'famine' was therefore clearly misleading.

As a result, some of the relief actions initially undertaken were inappropriate: for instance, massive amounts of therapeutic milk were delivered³, food rations⁴ were similar to what would be given in a refugee camp where no other source of food or income would be available, which was not the case in Zimbabwe.

2. The misrepresentation of the crisis

“Southern Africa is currently facing a crisis of biblical proportions” (World Vision, June 12 2002).

“14m people across southern Africa face the prospect of starvation and disease epidemics as famine threatens the region” (TearFund . July 26 2003).

As seen above, despite alarming bells rang by some media and NGOs, the acute malnutrition levels have

remained very low and stable throughout the past three years. Given the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the poor sanitary conditions in many parts of the country and the poor access to health services, it is very likely that the reported malnutrition levels reflect mostly disease related malnutrition (though one cannot ignore that poor nutrition increase the vulnerability to diseases).

ACCORDING TO ACF SURVEYS AND DATA, over the past four years, acute malnutrition has remained at a very low level, and identified cases are apparently mainly due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The use of the word 'famine' was therefore clearly misleading.

1. Nutrition Anthropometric Survey, Children Aged 6-59 months in Mutare & Mutasa Districts, Murewa District, Chitungwiza & Harare urban areas, February 27th – May 9th 2004, Action Contre la Faim – Ministry of Health.
2. See Concept Paper for Combined Nutrition and HIV Activities, Action Contre la Faim, Zimbabwe, 2005.
3. A significant quantity is still in the country, to be destroyed as most is now expired.
4. Food ration distributions were all set at 2100 Kilo cal.

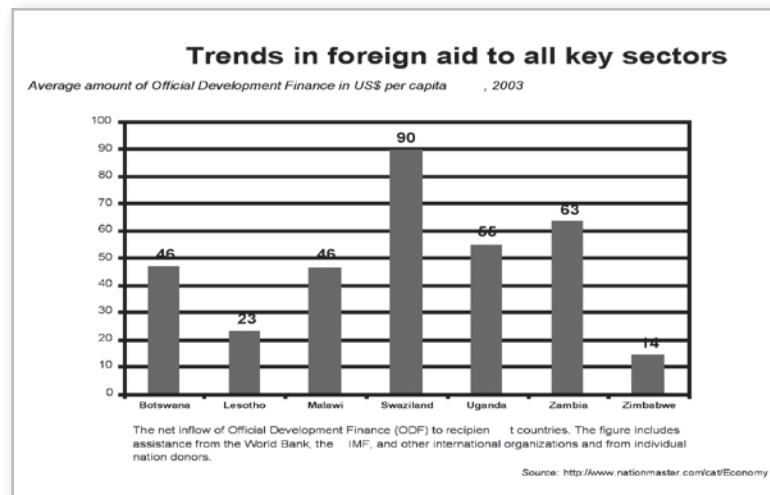
3. The politicization of the assistance

a. Restrictions on Funding

According to UNDP, “the core issue differentiating the country from the other nations is the different standpoints between the Government and international community on critical policy priority areas. This has meant that, in addition to suffering the consequences of the food scarcity, livelihood deterioration and reduced access to basic social services, Zimbabwe has been unable to access the combination of medium and long term support that would be needed to reverse current trends.”⁵

Indeed, in the current tense political situation between Zimbabwe and some Western countries, the assistance to the country has been restricted by donors in different ways:

- the country receives less assistance than countries in comparable difficulties
- the assistance focus on emergency relief, mostly food aid, whereas the support to agriculture and to social services remains limited.
- the health sector, and primarily HIV/AIDS, remains largely under funded in spite of one of the highest death tolls in the world.
- the resettled farmers are excluded from the main aid packages
- all assistance is channelled through international organisations, which prevents any institutional support to Government services.



Similarly to what was said earlier concerning HIV/AIDS, the above graph shows that whereas Zimbabwe was the neediest country in the region food-wise, it is the one receiving the least amount of external funding. Indeed, all major donors and financial institutions curtailed most of their cooperation and development support to the country in the aftermath of the Fast Track land reform programme. The main donors have then concentrated their support on humanitarian assistance, and specifically food aid which represents more than 80% of this assistance:

- the USAID funding to Zimbabwe for 2004 amounted to a total of 72 m\$, including 90% – over USD 65 m\$ of food aid imported from the US⁶.
- in 2003-2004, the British Government (DFID) has provided 8 m£ for HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe⁷, 4,5 m£ in agriculture and 17 m£ on food aid⁸.

- up to 2004, the EU food security funding concentrated on emergency food aid. The European Programs for the period 2006-2008 allocate 10 m€ among which: 2.8 m€ for targeted feeding programs and 7.2 m€ for food security programs. ECHO is allocating a 12 m€ envelop for the 2006-2007 period, covering food security and water/sanitation programs.

Besides, the funding of EU food security programmes has been dramatically delayed: the funding for the 2004-2005 agricultural season, officially approved in February 2004, was eventually disbursed in December 2004, i.e. too late for the season as planting for the main crops was due in November. In 2005, the call for proposal planned by the EU in April 2005 was still not done in June, which again jeopardizes the ability of NGOs to use these funds for the next planting season⁹.

5. UNDP March 2005.
6. United States Agency for International Development (USAID), USAID/OFDA Southern Africa Update - Information Bulletin #2, 21 May 2004.
7. <http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2003/dfid-afr-30may.pdf>
8. <http://www.britishembassy.gov.uk/servlet/Print?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&id=1054572535002>
9. According to a EU Food Security Adviser interviewed in Harare May 3rd 2005.

The agricultural recovery is clearly a strategic issue considering the controversy over the land reform. For the main agricultural season 2004-2005, international NGOs distributed approximately 2,000 MT of seeds while the Government distributed an unprecedented amount of 60,000 MT to farmers in an attempt to boost agricultural production.

Another aspect of the politicization of the assistance is that donors and NGOs focus almost exclusively their assistance on communal areas. In 2003, Save The Children UK called “donors and humanitarian agencies to apply the humanitarian principle of need and impartiality in implementing their programmes, and [to] include resettlement areas in their activities.”¹⁰ Indeed, donors have been generally opposed to support programmes in these areas, in line with their opposition to the land reform process. Apparently, NGOs were also reluctant to intervene because of donors’ influence but also because of their fears around the highly controversial nature of the land reform programme.

b. A difficult collaboration between the government and the international community

In 1992-93, during the last serious drought in Zimbabwe, positive relationships between the Government of Zimbabwe and Western countries had allowed the fruitful collaboration of all actors which resulted not only in a successful humanitarian response to the crisis, but also in a swift recovery. The situation is very different today with mistrust and political tensions between the Government on one side, some donors and UN agencies on the other and some NGOs, which should not happen..

Three main charges have been held against Mugabe by the opposition, some Western Governments, NGOs and media:

- the collapse of the agricultural production and national food security due to the land reform
- the discrimination of the opposition in the subsidised sales undertaken by the GMB and the use of food as a political weapon to win the elections.
- the obstruction to foreign aid and food aid resulting in wide spread hunger and increasing poverty.

The situation has deteriorated since may 2005 when President Mugabe decided to carry out a demolition campaign, described as an “urban renewal program” aimed at destroying illegal shacks and driving out crime and grime. According to a UN-Habitat report¹¹, 700000 persons have been directly affected by the demolition and lost their home, livelihood or both. More than 1,5 million people are said to have been indirectly affected by the blitz campaign.

Yet, most resettled farmers have received a very limited support to start production; they lack inputs, infrastructures and technical expertise to restore food production in these areas. As a result, there is no indication today that, despite an improved access to land, newly resettled farmers are doing better than communal farmers. Furthermore, the resettlement areas have the highest agricultural potential, because of better fertility of the land and better access to water and are essential for the economic and agricultural recovery of the country.

A last crucial difference in the way assistance is provided to Zimbabwe compared to other countries in the region is that funds are channelled mainly, if not only, to non governmental channels such as NGOs and UN agencies. Yet, certain sectors, especially health, but also education or agriculture can hardly make any progress out of a governmental framework.

The government strongly disagreed with the conclusions of this report, arguing that “(it) describes the operation in value-laden and judgmental language which clearly demonstrates in-built bias against the government and the operation”¹².

It was also said that the report went outside the mission terms of reference “and upholds the pro-opposition tone implicit and explicit throughout the report”, thus giving a political turn to the debate.

In December 2005, UN Aid Coordinator Jan Egeland criticised Zimbabwe for rejecting an UN offer of tents to house some of the hundreds of thousands left homeless. The organisation then proposed semi-permanent houses, that were described by Zimbabwean representatives as “below human dignity” and reflected a “this-is-good-for-Africa attitude”¹³. These statements demonstrate that the position of the Zimbabwean government is becoming more radical toward the international community.

On an other hand, the biased vision of the food crisis in Zimbabwe presented by some NGOs and international agencies has participated to the loss of trust of the Government in the apolitical nature of most international organisations. This trend was reinforced by several features relative to NGOs’ intervention in Zimbabwe:

- some international NGOs have drawn a misleading picture of the food situation in Zimbabwe, ●●●

THE VULNERABLE PEOPLE OF ZIMBABWE

are the direct victims of these tensions: the debates around the humanitarian situation are so politically charged that it has become increasingly difficult to assess objectively people’s needs and to design appropriate interventions.

10. HEA A1 resettlement areas & Mutorashanga Informal Mining Communities, Zvimba District, Mashonaland West, Zimbabwe, SCF UK, Nov. 2003.

11. Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Zimbabwe to assess the Scope and Impact of Operation Murambatsvina by the UN Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe Mrs. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, July 2005 UN-Habitat.

12. Foreign Affairs Minister Simbarashe Mumbengegwi, reported in AFP July 22nd, 2005.

13. AFP, December 21st, 2005, UN denies sub-standard Zimbabwe model home claim.

- ● ● overstating the severity of the food insecurity and the extent of malnutrition.
- this dire picture they presented and the relief operation in general have been used to campaign against the Government.
- the relief intervention excluded resettled farmers and gave priority to emergency relief versus agricultural recovery.
- lastly, the main donor countries for humanitarian assistance, the UK and the US, also supported financially and politically the opposition during the electoral campaign.

The direct consequence of this mistrust has been an increase in bureaucratic and practical restrictions to the work of international and national humanitarian organisations, and a reduced collaboration between them and Government services. For instance, NGOs have been facing long processes and some difficulties in getting work permits (specifically in spring 2005) and registration. Recently an NGO bill was passed in 2004, restricting the activity of NGOs, especially those involved in issues of governance and human rights.

WAYS FORWARD

1. Relief and recovery interventions

The economic crisis affecting the country results in reduced support to farmers by Government, and especially extension services (agricultural support and technical advice), but also in a lesser availability of inputs, fuel, equipment and spare parts. The design of interventions must consequently integrate this evolution, address its consequences and propose alternatives or adjustments to modes of production that have become unsuitable. Decreasing farmers' dependency on market or public services should be a central element of food security strategies given the current crisis and disruption of former support mechanisms. Assistance should target small scale farmers in both communal and resettlement areas, on the basis of objective need assessments.

The objectives of future food security interventions should aim at:

- developing humanitarian programmes aiming at improving living conditions and protecting livelihood for the most vulnerable households and individuals.
- developing recovery activities aiming at finding sustainable solutions for vulnerable farming communities.

Three main axes of intervention can be identified:

- addressing the issue of access to water (drinking and agricultural water)
- addressing the lack of agricultural inputs
- developing alternative farming systems adapted to both the changing households' configuration (in terms of age curve and manpower available) and the recurrent droughts.

a. The issue of access to water

According to the ZIMVAC 2005 and confirmed by the ACF food security assessment¹, the lack of water and erratic rainfall are seen as the most severe challenges faced by farmers. Indeed, given the agro-ecological conditions and the characteristics of agriculture in Zimbabwe, water must be a central element of food security projects implemented in Zimbabwe.

Interventions can address the water issue in two ways:

- improving access and availability of water through support to irrigation and water harvesting: rehabilitation and construction of infrastructures, provision of equipment focusing on community based management
- improving farming methods: promotion of conservation farming, diversification of production towards more drought resistant crops.

Improving water use and management

The potential of construction or rehabilitation of irrigation facilities is limited by the availability of water and the poor access to surface water in dry zones, where most communal areas are located, where, unless large scale public works are undertaken, the main irrigation possibility is through small scale gardening using underground water.

The potential appears to be high for irrigation in less dry zones and areas where surface water is available through rivers and streams. This includes old and new resettlement areas, i.e. former commercial farms, where water is generally available but underutilized because of the investment required and the lack of resources and technical expertise.

Overall, there is a high potential for the development of irrigation facilities, both in terms of infras-

1. ACF, Food security assessment in Chipinge and Zvishavane, July/October 2005.

●●● tructures (canals, dams, tanks) and equipment (pumping systems, hoses, pipes). Irrigation can allow both gardening (vegetables, pulses...) and cereal, especially winter wheat and maize.

In all agro-ecological zones, water harvesting and water management can be promoted in order to optimize the water available.

Improving farming methods

Conservation farming (CF) has been promoted in Zimbabwe for the past two years. CF encourages sustainable crop production practices that conserve time, energy, soil and moisture both in the field and in gardens (e.g. trench gardens). Essentially, CF combines sound management and husbandry practices that arrest soil degradation, increase productivity, and enable farmers to stagger labour demand to be sequential with critical operations such as land preparation, planting, and weeding. The activity is reported to be quite labour intensive for the first two or three years, but increases production and productivity on the long run.

The experience of the past two years presents mixed results: CF programmes did not always receive enough investment by those undertaking this kind of activity. Levels of involvement by NGOs and Agricultural Research and Extension Services (AREX) varied: in some cases, the input of some NGOs was mainly food hand-out in a project considered as Food for Work (the farmer works through his own farming or a community plot). On the opposite side, some other organizations would have a much more serious involvement with the farmers, conducting training, providing inputs, being present on a long period in order to ensure some monitoring and provide continuous technical support.

Along with CF, the diversification of agriculture seems to be also relevant considering the strong tendency of maize mono-cropping, very vulnerable to the erratic weather conditions prevailing in Zimbabwe. Despite the reluctance of many farmers to consider other crops than maize, tubers such as Cassava and sweet potatoes, and "small cereals" such as millet and sorghum are more adapted than maize to the agro-ecological conditions of the dry zones. In Zambia, where similar conditions prevail, the promotion of such alternative crops has given positive results in the past few years.

b. The provision of agricultural inputs

The lack of agricultural inputs is seen as another heavy constraint for many farmers and as a key factor of low yield and production.

However, the provision of inputs (seeds and fertilizers) by NGOs in the past few years had a limited impact for different reasons:

- late donor funding delayed the procurement of inputs
- the deliveries have been further delayed by logistical and administrative difficulties faced with imports
- inadequate seeds, especially sorghum, were delivered
- inadequate targeting
- limited impact of NGOs interventions compared to Governments efforts: in 2004/2005, the Government supplied 60,000 MT of mostly maize seeds, far more than the 2,000 MT distributed by the international community.

In the current context of economic crisis and disruption of market mechanisms and public services, and given the lessons learnt from recent interventions, it seems relevant to promote as much as possible the autonomy of farming communities for their access

to inputs. Interventions supporting community based seed multiplication projects as well as the use of Open Pollinated Varieties (OPVs) of maize seeds may help farmers reducing their dependency on external supplies of seeds and increasing their access to inputs.

The use of OPVs has been recently promoted in Zimbabwe. Contrarily to the more common Hybrid Varieties, these seeds enable farmers to retain part of the harvest for the next season (up to three generations). This approach is part of a strategy that intends to reduce the dependency on having to purchase new seed every season, often at a high cost, and sometimes of limited availability. It is the first time that Zimbabwean communal farmers get exposed to these new varieties to such an extent, and the outcome of such a new approach is still unknown. 2003-2004 was the first season in more than two decades that relief agencies were allowed to distribute open pollinated maize varieties. While virtually all smallholders had adopted hybrid maize, the rising costs of this seed in recent years had led many to replant seed derived from their previous season's grain production. This was contributing to a decline in average maize yields. The delivery of open

pollinated varieties offered farmers a cheaper, more sustainable, alternative².

Similarly, dependency can be reduced through the promotion of organic manure and of micro-dosing

for chemical fertilizers, as farmers are today heavily reliant on the use of large quantities of chemicals, which have been less available and less affordable in the recent past.

c. Targeting for food security interventions

The targeting of vulnerable groups/individuals for food security interventions in Zimbabwe has not always been successful, with reports of inclusion and exclusion errors³, but also difficulties in terms of understanding and acceptance of the criteria used by people, who may feel that, in a given community, people are equally affected by food insecurity, especially when caused by climatic conditions.

ZIMVAC 2004 shows that the application of generic criteria at national level is not appropriate: *“for a number of groups considered as ‘vulnerable’ – in particular female-headed households, elderly-headed households and households with orphans [the level of food insecurity was] not very different from households without these characteristics.”*⁴ Besides, the high HIV/AIDS prevalence in the country makes that a majority of households must be affected in a way or another.

The Zambian VAC in 2003 put in perspective the relation between food insecurity and HIV/AIDS⁵: *“The findings of the Zambian VAC failed to provide*

hard evidence to support the notion of ‘the new variant famine’ operating in the country. It would appear if climatic conditions, food pricing policies, the lack of agricultural support and extension services, environmental degradation, a lack of infrastructure and poverty play a larger role in inadequate harvests than HIV/AIDS. However, the epidemic may compound matters during an environmentally induced food shortage, such as what happened the previous season”.

In conclusion, it seems important to remain cautious in the way targeting is conducted. Targeting strategies should not focus on generic criteria but should integrate a range of socio economical criteria to be used with the active participation of communities. Pragmatic approaches encouraging community support mechanisms may be relevant in order to strengthen these mechanisms rather than substituting to them. For instance, integrating better-off households in programmes may strengthen production at the community level and indirectly benefit to non-productive households and individuals.

IT IS PARAMOUNT to reject and to fight any form of discrimination in the assistance, whether it comes from the Government or from donors.

2. Getting out of the political arena

The politicization of certain donors, namely the US and the UK, and the restrictions on certain forms of assistance such as the limited and slow support by the EU for agricultural recovery currently limit the opportunities of funding for food security programmes in Zimbabwe.

The suspicions over NGOs and the political tensions around assistance undermine further the ability of development and relief organisations to significantly improve the livelihood of the rural population in Zimbabwe.

Therefore, NGOs interventions may aim not only at bringing assistance to the people but also at improving the working environment in the country; this should include the promotion of a shared understanding of the challenges faced by the communities and of the priorities of the assistance. In order to do so, it is paramount to reject and to fight any form of discrimination in the assistance, whether it comes from the Government or from donors. It is

also essential to produce and disseminate objective information and analysis on livelihood situations in order to generate adequate funding and to promote appropriate relief and recovery interventions that will benefit to the vulnerable people of Zimbabwe.

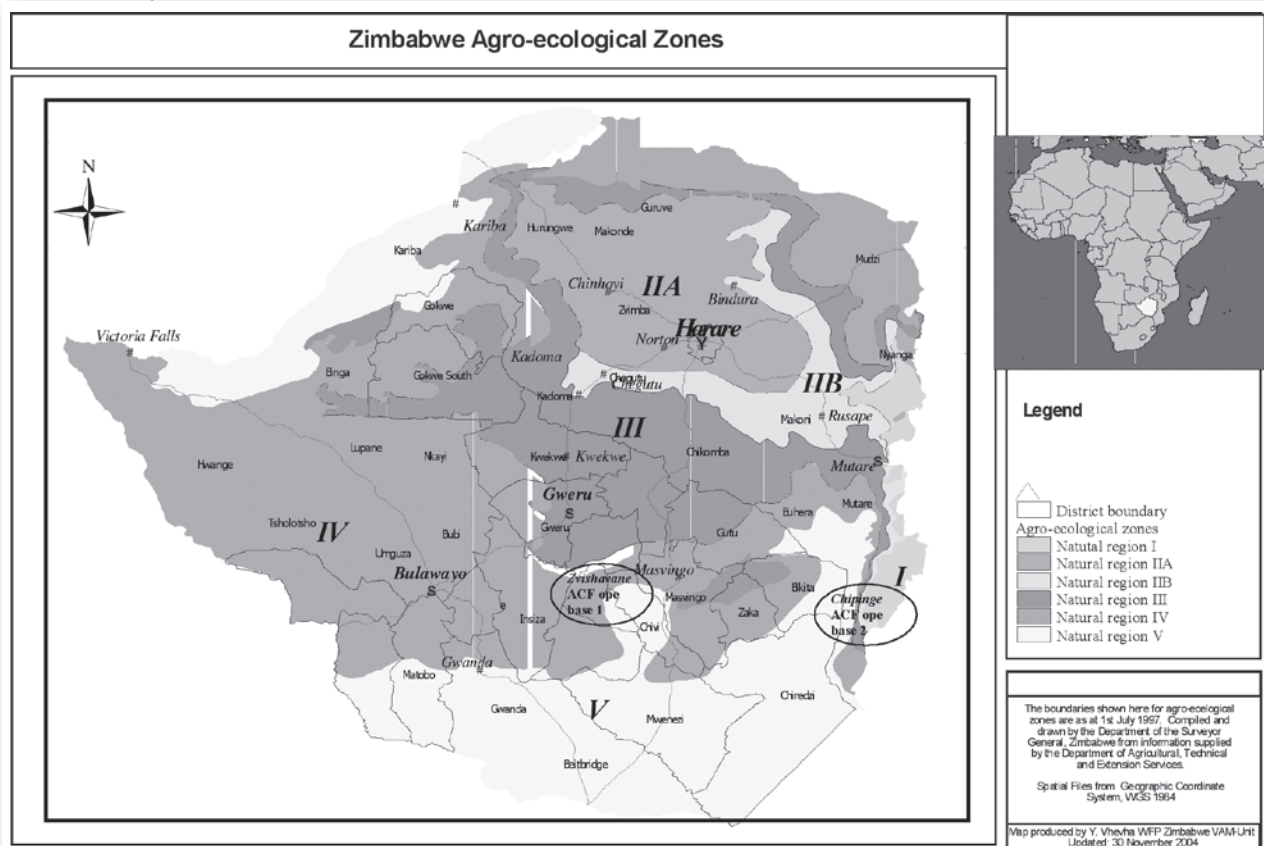
As seen in this report, HIV/AIDS and other diseases kill today far more than malnutrition which has remained in Zimbabwe at one of the lowest levels in Africa. Yet, most media and NGOs keep focusing on food issues, the bulk of the assistance remains food aid, and a silent embargo is maintained on HIV/AIDS and institutional support funding for health services.

Lastly, the human rights violations and political tensions around the land reform have somehow obliterated a fundamental fact in the mind of many: meaningful land redistribution, accompanied with relevant financial and technical support to resettled farmers, is essential to eliminate poverty and food insecurity in Zimbabwe.

MEANINGFUL LAND REDISTRIBUTION, accompanied with relevant financial and technical support to resettled farmers, is essential to eliminate poverty and food insecurity in Zimbabwe.

2. Adapted from D. Rohrbach, A.B. Mashingaidze, M. Mudhara.
3. D. Rohrbach, A.B. Mashingaidze, M. Mudhara.
4. ZIMVAC - April 2004 Report, p29.
5. Zambia Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC), April 2003, Report dated June 2003.

ANNEX



Zimbabwe Agro-ecological zones and related farming systems (this information was supplied by the Department of the Surveyor General, Harare - Zimbabwe).

Natural Region I:

Specialized and Diversified Farming region

Rainfall in this region is high (more than 1,000mm per annum in areas lying below 1,700m altitude, and more than 900mm per annum at greater altitudes), normally with some precipitation in all months of the year. Temperatures are normally comparatively low and the rainfall is consequently highly effective

enabling afforestation, fruit and intensive livestock production to be practiced. In frost free areas plantation crops such as tea, coffee and macadamia nuts can be grown; where the mean annual rainfall is below 1,400mm, supplementary irrigation of these plantation crops is required to top yields.

Natural region IIA

Intensive Farming Region

Rainfall is confirmed to summer and is moderately high (75-100mm). This sub-region an average of at least 18 rainy pentads per season and normally enjoys reliable conditions, rarely experiencing

severe dry spells in summer. The region is suitable for intensive systems of farming based on crops and/or livestock production.

Natural region IIB

Intensive Farming Region

This sub-region receives an average of 16-18 rainy pentads per season and is subject either to rather more severe dry spells during the rainy season or to the occurrence of short rainy seasons. In either event, crop yields in certain years will be affected, but not sufficiently frequently to change the overall utilization from intensive farming system.

Natural region III

Semi-Intensive Farming Region

Rainfall in this region is moderate in total amount (65-800mm), but, because much of it is accounted for by infrequent heavy falls and temperatures are generally high, its effectiveness is reduced. This region will receive an average of 14-16 rainy pentads per season. The region is also subject to fairly severe mid-season dry spells and therefore is marginal for maize, tobacco and cotton production, or for enterprises based on crop production alone.

Natural region IV

Semi-Extensive Farming Region

This region experiences fairly low total rainfall (450-650mm per annum) and is subject to periodic seasonal droughts and severe dry spells during the rainy season. The rainfall is too low and uncertain for cash cropping except in certain very unfavourable localities, where limited drought-resistant crops can afford a sideline.

Natural region V

Extensive Farming Region

The rainfall in this region is too low and erratic for the reliable production of even drought-resistant fodder and grain crops, and farming has to be based on the utilization of the veld alone. The extensive form of cattle ranging or game ranging is the only sound farming system for this region. Included in this region are areas of below 900mm altitude, where the mean rainfall is below 650mm in the Zambezi valley and below 600mm in the Sabi-Limpopo valleys.

Note: A rainy pentad is defined as the centre of three five-day periods (pentads) which together receive more than 40mm rainfall and two of which receive at least 8mm of rainfall.

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M E T H O D O L O G Y

This report is based on two ACF studies that have been recently conducted by ACF in Zimbabwe.

The first one was carried out from April to May 2005 in Harare. It involved a number of interviews with representatives from NGOs, UN and Donors.

The second study was conducted from July to October 2005 and was aimed to analyse at a microscopic level

the current food security situation in two districts where ACF is involved: Chipinge district (Manicaland province) and Zvishavane district (Midlands province). This study shows the specific needs in the areas and gives suggestions for adequate food security activities.

In Chipinge, 131 households have been investigated within 22 villages from 8 wards.

In Zvishavane, 69 households have been investigated within 13 villages from 4 wards.

ACTION CONTRE LA FAIM

ACF (Action Contre la Faim) is an international humanitarian organization founded in Paris in 1979. It is a non-governmental organization whose main objective is to fight against hunger through actions in the fields of food security, nutrition, water & sanitation, health and advocacy. ACF is also committed to raise public awareness on the hunger issue in the more advanced countries. ACF aims to bring assistance to people adversely affected by either natural or man-made disasters, whenever food supply, medical assistance or water & sanitation basic needs are not met. ACF is a non-denominational and non-political organization intervening regardless of race, religion or gender issue, in over 40 countries worldwide.

Since 2003, ACF has been implementing projects of rehabilitation of protected water points and

construction of public latrines, while promoting better hygiene practices. Intervention areas are selected on basis of standard needs coverage with the aim of meeting the most urgent needs. Until now, the water & sanitation related operations have focused on, first the Manicaland and, then the Midlands provinces.

Such approach will be continued in future, targeting the remaining uncovered and urgent needs in areas identified as particularly vulnerable and in link with the other ACF projects in the field of food security i.e. Chipinge district & Zvishavane district. Further intervention areas such as Mberengwa district will be assessed for the 2006-2007 planned intervention but current intervention areas remain the priority as long as the most urgent needs are not fully covered.



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