

FOSENET NGO Food Security Network

Community Assessment of the Food Situation in Zimbabwe September 2003

For the executive summary please go to page 14

High food prices are forcing people to sell their livestock

Rushinga

Firstly people need relief food then farmers need assistance with inputs of maize seed and fertiliser in order for them to recover from the drought.

Gokwe

Background

The National NGO Food Security Network (FOSENET) involves 24 organisations that collectively cover ALL districts of Zimbabwe, and all types of communities.

FOSENET members subscribe that food distribution in Zimbabwe must be based on a platform of **ethical principles** that derive from international humanitarian law, viz:

- The right to life with dignity and the duty not to withhold or frustrate the provision of life saving assistance;
- The obligation of states and other parties to agree to the provision of humanitarian and impartial assistance when the civilian population lacks essential supplies;
- Relief not to bring unintended advantage to one or more parties nor to further any partisan position;
- The management and distribution of food and other relief with based purely on criteria of need and not on partisan grounds, and without adverse distinction of any kind;
- Respect for community values of solidarity, dignity and peace and of community culture.

FOSENET Monitoring

As one of its functions FOSENET is monitoring food security. The monitoring is implemented by the institutions in the Monitoring Working Group (none of which are directly involved in relief work) 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 access to enhance an ethical, effective and community focussed response to the food situation. Queries and feedback on these reports is welcomed and should be directed to FOSENET monitoring at fsmt2@mweb.co.zw or (263-4-) 708835.

This **eleventh round** of NGO and community based monitoring nationally covers the month **September 2003**. This round of monitoring includes information related to food access, food security-production- poverty links and coping strategies.

Coverage of the data

The monitoring information is collected from sentinel wards within districts. It is presented by district, to provide for two or more site reports on any indicator. Data for the period **September 2003** is drawn from 148 monitoring reports from **53 districts** from all provinces of Zimbabwe, with an average of **2.7 reports per district**.

Change in the food situation

The sky rocketing prices of basic commodities are forcing people to sell their property. Others are going back to their rural homes. Life in urban areas has become too expensive for mostly poor people.

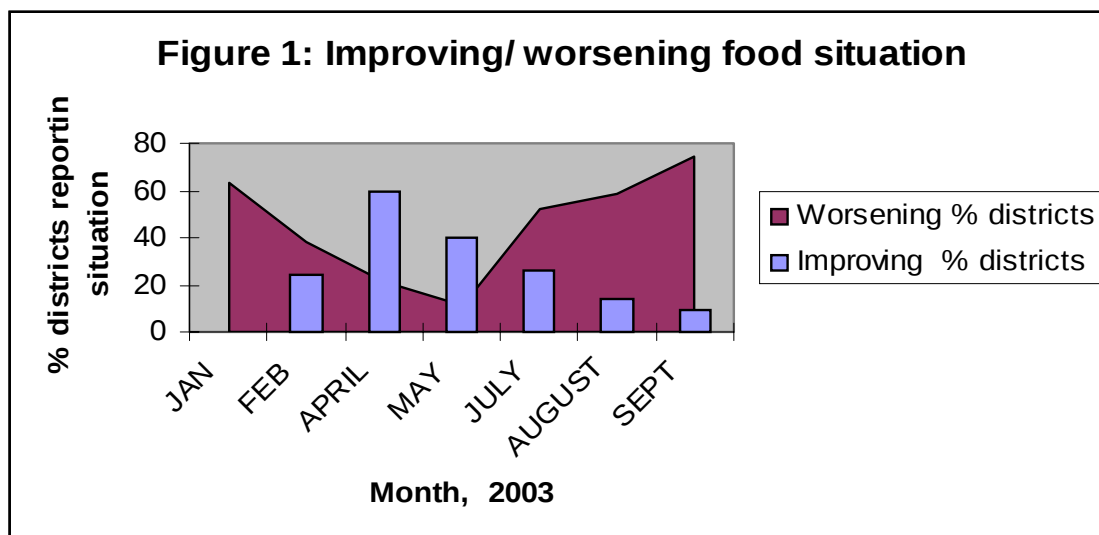
Harare

Three quarters of districts report a worsening food supply situation as staple food supplies are falling. Prices have escalated as demand increases against meager commercial, GMB and relief supplies.

Here in Marondera women are leaving their children to go and work in the nearby farms, because of hardships .

Marondera

The number of districts reporting improvements in food supplies in September 2003 has further fallen to 9%, from 14% of districts in August and 26% in July. As Figure 1 shows, **the period September to January are periods of peak and rising food insecurity based on reported patterns from Fosenet monitoring rounds to date.** Food shortages peak in this 5 month period. The least food insecure periods are between February and May as food availability improves.



Improvements noted were attributed to resumption of relief food distribution or an increase in GMB deliveries. However in most districts food supplies fell markedly, with 74% of districts reporting a worsening food situation, compared to 59% in August. The worst affected districts are shown in Table 1. The deteriorating situation is reported to be largely attributable to the depletion of the harvest stocks in rural communities. This has resulted in reduced supplies to the urban parallel market, further driving price inflation. In rural areas, lack of GMB supplies and the continued absence of relief is the major reason given for falling food availability.

Table 1: Districts with sites with worsening food situations, September 2003

Province	District
Manicaland	Makoni, Mutare urban, Mutare rural, Chimanimani
Mashonaland East	Chikomba, UMP, Goromonzi, Marondera urban, Marondera rural
Mashonaland Central	Shamva, Bindura rural, Rushinga, Guruve
Mashonaland West	Chinhoyi
Midlands	Gokwe, Gweru rural, Kwekwe rural, Zvishavane, Mberengwa, Chirumhanzu, Kwekwe urban, Shurugwi, Gweru urban
Masvingo	Masvingo urban, Mwenezi, Bikita, Zaka, Gutu
Matebeleland North	Binga, Tsholotsho, Hwange rural, Hwange urban, Lupane, Nkayi
Matebeleland South	Gwanda
Cities	Bulawayo, Harare, Chitungwiza

Food Needs

Youth are either going to live with relatives or are going into towns to live as street kids. The kids, some orphans, are moving into nearby Mutare city to live as street kids. They don't have enough food at home.

Mutare Rural

Former farm workers are coming to look for work in the town

Bindura

As another round of food shortages now spreads, groups reported to be most in need are those that have always been identified as vulnerable: The elderly, orphans, People living with Aids, displaced former farm workers, people with disabilities and the unemployed.

Migration continues to be a common phenomenon, with 41 % of districts reporting in or out migration. People are pulled to urban areas by jobs and family support, and pushed from urban areas by job loss, the cost of living and food shortages. People are pulled to rural areas by a search for food, opportunities for gold panning, and pushed from rural areas by displacement, unsuccessful resettlement and unemployment (See Table 2 below).

Table 2: Districts reporting food related migration in September 2003

Province	District	Reason
Manicaland	Mutare rural, Mutasa	Young people going out to live with relatives or to towns to live on the streets.
Mashonaland East	Goromonzi, Mutoko, UMP	People who have lost jobs in town coming home. Movement for gold panning and job hunting.
Mashonaland Central	Bindura urban, Mazoe, Mt Darwin	Newly displaced farm workers looking for employment. Doing gold panning to buy food.
Mashonaland West	Chinhoyi, Mhondoro, Norton	Displaced farm workers looking for a place to stay. Families fleeing from expensive urban life. Youth from rural to urban for employment.
Midlands	Gokwe, Gweru urban, Kwekwe urban, Redcliff, Zvishavane, Shurugwi.	Elderly people reported to be brought from resettlement to urban areas during council elections. Young people going to work for business people in exchange for food. Some going out for gold panning. Some returning from resettlement areas because of poor harvests.
Masvingo	Chivi	People coming to the villages to look for maize. People doing gold panning in order to buy food.
Matebeleland North	Hwange urban	People from Kamativi removed to make way for the National Service youths. Young people coming into town to look for employment.
Bulawayo	Bulawayo	People looking for accommodation in areas close to the city center because of transport problems. Elderly people leaving urban areas due to cost of living and for relief food. People coming into urban areas to search for employment.
Harare	Harare urban, Chitungwiza and Epworth	Political displacement. Retrenched going to their rural homes. Rural people being brought into residential stands in farms acquired close to the city. Urban people gone to rural homes due to hunger and high prices in the city. Rural to urban movement to look for employment.

Young girls and boys have left for Mutare urban and commercial farms . Some widows have gone back to their parents because of hardships related to food.

Mutare rural

Despite high levels of mobility transport continues to remain a problem, with 83% of districts reporting transport difficulties compared to 78% in August. Transport difficulties were reported due to fuel shortages and increases in fares. The GMB is also reported to have failed to distribute food because of fuel shortages.

Food availability and access

Food from Production

Households who had no farm inputs or who got inputs when it was too late have done badly

Bindura rural

Even if rains come on time this month we are going to have another food shortage because there are no seeds and fertiliser in the shops.

Guruve

Communities continue to report that seed and fertilizer is widely unavailable across all provinces, only one month before the beginning of the planting season. Only seven districts (13 %) reported that seed was available commercially, and 13 (25 %) that fertilizer was available. (See Figures 2 and 3)

Figure 2: Seed availability September 2003

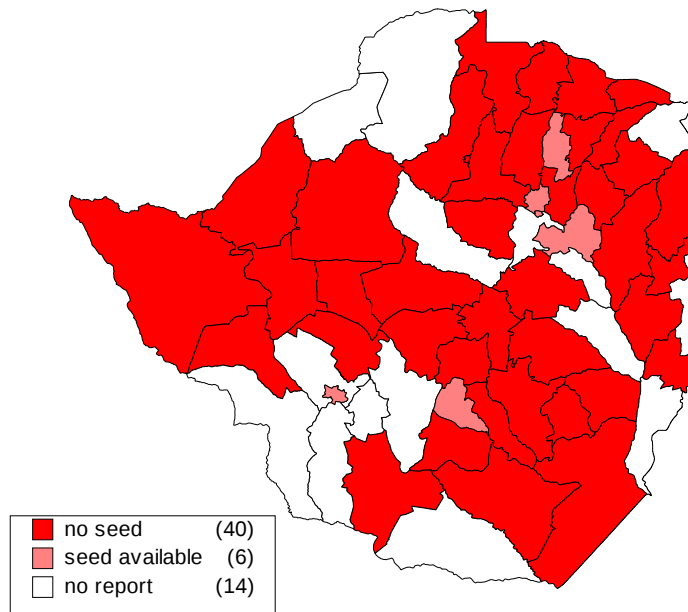
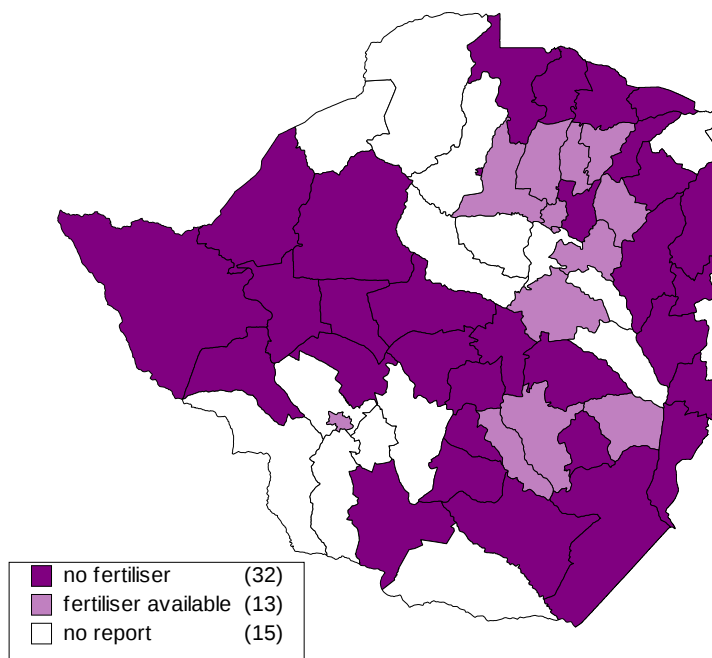


Figure 3: Fertiliser Availability September 2003

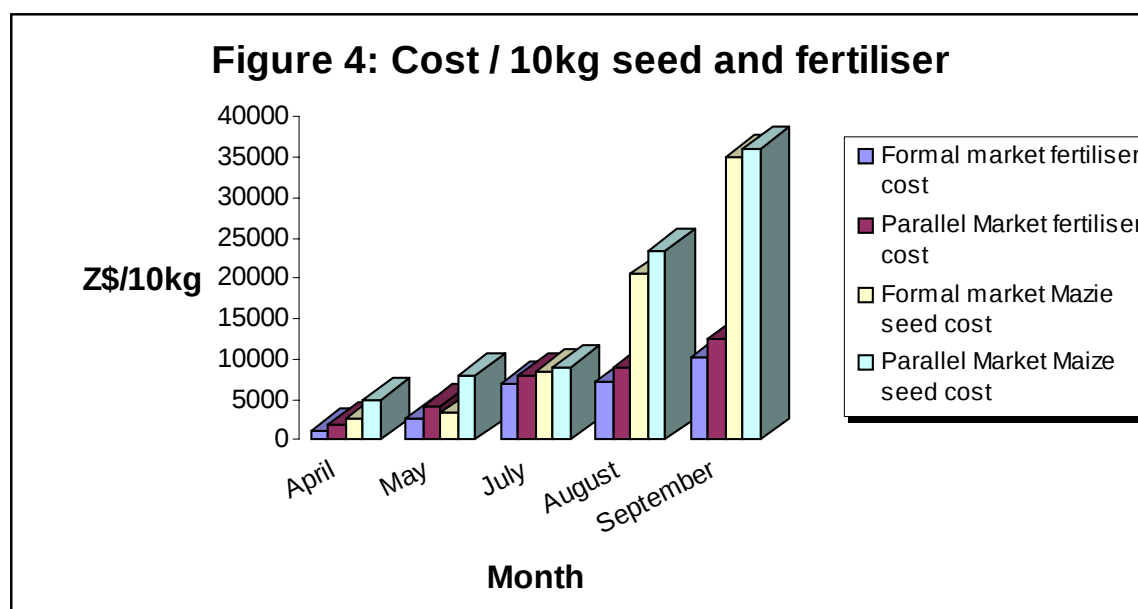


Inadequate supplies of seed and fertilizer have pushed the prices up. Reported maize seed prices have increased by over 42 % in the past month and are now reported to be up to \$50 000/10kg.(see Table 3).

Table 3: Price differences maize seed and fertiliser, July to September 2003

Month	Fertiliser Cost Z\$/10kg		Maize seed Cost Z\$/10/kg	
	Formal market	Parallel Market	Formal market	Parallel Market
Price range April	350- 1750	500- 3250	300-5000	800-9000
Price range May	520- 5000	1200- 7000	600-6000	1000-15000
Price range July	2000-12000	3000-13000	4000-15000	3250-15000
Price range August	2400-12000	6000-12000	9000-32000	12000-35000
Price range September	4600 - 14000	5000-20000	20000-50000	20000-52000

Prices have risen rapidly since April 2003, with an increase in the median price of fertilizer of up to 615 % and of seed of 635 %. This represents a doubling of the price every month in the period.



These prices are not uniform nationally and reflect scarcities, market forces and local conditions in different parts of the country. Table 4 shows the price variances reported over one month from August to September 2003 across selected districts to exemplify this point. Prices vary across districts by over 100%.

Table 4 : Maize seed and fertilizer prices for selected districts, formal and parallel markets, August and September 2003

District	Fertiliser Cost Z\$/10kg		Maize seed Cost Z\$/10 / kg	
	September 03	August 03	September 03	August 03
Manicaland	12000			
Makoni		7000-8000	25000	20000-30000

Mutare rural	7600 - 12000	5800-9600	38000 - 52000	26000-35000
Mutare urban	8000 - 12000	5800-9000		23000-30000
Mashonaland East				
Chikomba	6000	6000-7000	20800 - 30000	22000-25000
Marondera rural	5000 - 18000	6000 - 7000		25000-30000
Marondera urban	7600 - 9400		28500 - 35000	
Goromonzi	6000 - 7000		38000 - 40000	
Mutoko	7000		35000	
Mashonaland Central				
Bindura Rural	8000		20000	
Bindura urban	5600	5000-6000	40000	20000
Guruve	5600 - 10000	5000-6000	25000 - 40000	13000-16000
Shamva	5600 - 7200	4400-7200	30000 - 38000	18200
Mashonaland West				
Chinhoyi	8600 - 17600			
Norton	5000		38000	
Midlands				
Gokwe	15000		20000 - 40000	18000 - 30000
Mberengwa	5000 - 6000	5000-6000	20000 - 30000	15000-20000
Gweru rural	6400 - 10000	6600		8000-10000
Gweru Urban	7600		35000	
Shurugwi	5000 - 6400		35000 - 39000	
Zvishavane	6600		20000 - 30000	
Masvingo				
Bikita	7000 - 9000		34000	
Chivi			35000 - 50000	
Gutu	7200 - 20000	6000	36000 - 40000	15000-25000
Masvingo urban	4600	4600-7000		
Urban				
Bulawayo	7200	6530	35000 - 40000	9800 - 30000
Harare	5000 - 8600	4000-12000	35000 - 40000	30000

Shortages of seed and fertilizer compounded by massive price increases make access to farm inputs a likely critical constraint to future food security that needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. While draught power is a constraint (See Table 5) it does not match the severity of shortfall in inputs. This has been raised in previous Fosenet reports but the situation has not improved. Communities themselves repeatedly warn that food shortages will persist well into 2004 and beyond even with adequate rains unless an input support scheme is urgently introduced.

**Table 5: Household access to tillage / draught power, seed, fertiliser
September 2003**

Province	Average % households with access to tillage / draught power	% Districts reporting NO availability of seed	% Districts reporting NO availability of fertiliser
Manicaland	30	50	100
Mashonaland East	50	75	75
Mashonaland Central	70	86	43
Mashonaland West	n.a	67	67
Midlands	46	90	100

Masvingo	40	100	63
Matebeleland North	37	100	100
Matebeleland South	n.a	n.a	n.a

n.a = less than two reports per district

Given the findings reported in previous rounds of household asset sales for food and the poverty induced by HIV/AIDS, the rising cost of farm inputs presents a significant threat to food security in these households. Given the increased poverty induced by food insecurity in 2002 and 2003, this threatens to drive such households out of production completely. Aggregate production data masks this effect in the poorest households.

GMB Deliveries

During local government elections there were weekly GMB supplies.

Kwekwe rural

The frequency of GMB deliveries were reported to have improved slightly in September compared to August 2003, particularly in urban and peri-urban areas. Ten percent of districts reported a positive change, attributing this to food being made available during the build up to the urban council elections in late August, with deliveries continuing into early September. They also reported a fall off in deliveries after the elections.

Ever since the elections the GMB deliveries have stopped and the price of maize has suddenly been raised from \$1800/50kg to \$13000/50kg

Shurugwi

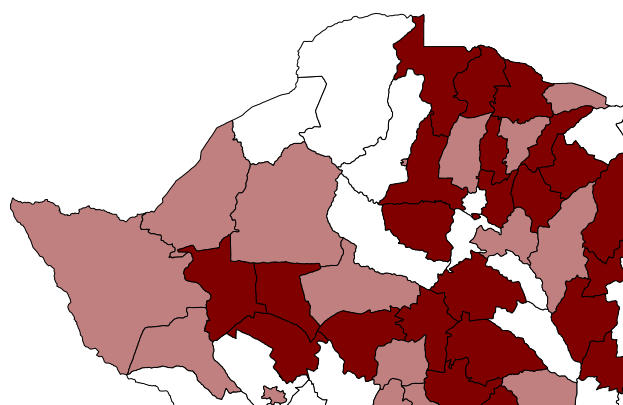
The last week of August saw improved deliveries during campaigns. The maize disappeared again after the results .

Bulawayo

The average number of reported deliveries to sentinel wards was 0.22 compared to 0.18 in August and 0.25 in July. The reported average tonnage delivered was 2.7 tonnes per delivery a slight increase compared to 2.3 tonnes in August and 0.18 in July.

Monitoring sites in thirty three districts (62 %) reported no GMB deliveries in the period attributing this to absence of maize stocks and fuel problems.

Figure 5 : Frequency of GMB Deliveries September 2003



Some districts have not had GMB deliveries for several months, including Buhera, UMP, Chikomba, Bindura rural, Goromonzi, Chirumhanzu, Chiredzi, Mwenezi, Nkayi, Lupane, Hwange.

The GMB maize price is now different depending on the person who want to buy. The working class and schools buy it at \$15000/50kg and the unemployed buy at \$1050 per 50kg bag.

Mutasa

GMB grain prices did not rise significantly in September and fell in some areas (See Table 7). The sources of bias in access to GMB food reported in previous Fosenet rounds were also reported in this round.

The GMB is reported to have introduced a new pricing system charging different prices for different areas and individuals for the same commodity. Differential pricing is one option for ensuring access to grain by poor communities. It demands however high levels of transparency to ensure that the subsidy reaches the correct target. Communities reported that they were worried that the differential pricing system could be abused for profit or political gain unless properly managed.

There is need to monitor the selling of maize to retailers so that overcharging is avoided
Mutare urban

Table 7 : Reported costs of GMB maize, Z\$/10kg

Province	Price range in Z\$/10kg		
	Sept-03	Aug-03	Jul-03
Manicaland	2600 – 3000	2600 – 3000	2600
Mashonaland East	1100 - 3000	2600 – 3000	2600
Mashonaland central	1900 - 2300	1900 – 2300	2000 - 2600
Mashonaland West	2600 - 3000	2600	2600
Midlands	2600	2230 – 2600	2600
Masvingo	2200 - 2400	1300 – 2400	2140 - 2400
Matebeleland North	2160 - 3000		

Matebeleland South	2200	2300 – 2600	2600
Cities; Harare and Bulawayo	2720		2000

Market Supplies.

GMB should pay the people more for their crops so that people can sell to GMB

Harare

Less districts reported selling grain to GMB or other markets in September, indicating that communities have sold whatever grain they had to sell. The remaining grain sales appear to be going preferentially to parallel markets where farmers are paid in cash, get better prices and can use the cash to buy agricultural inputs. Six districts reported that grain had been confiscated, either from parallel markets or from people carrying grain from rural to urban areas.

Commercial food availability is reported to be better this year than the same time last year, using maize meal and oil as indicator foods. Cost is the major constraint in accessing commercial market foods. Parallel market process have remained relatively stable for grain over the past month, and are about ten times higher than the price in September 2002 (See Tables 8 and 9).

Table 8 : Reported market availability of foods, Sept 02 and Sept 03

% of districts reporting food present	Maize		Oil	
	Sept 03	Sept 02	Sept 03	Sept 02
Manicaland	50	33	50	83
Mashonaland East	50	44	75	89
Mashonaland Central	43	20	85	60
Mashonaland West	67	n.a	67	n.a
Masvingo	25	0	75	14
Midlands	70	43	80	29
Matabeleland North	50	40	83	0
Matabeleland South	n.a	0	n.a	33

Table 9: Upper prices of maize meal in parallel markets, July2003-Sept 2003

Province	Upper prices of Maize meal in parallel Markets Z\$/10kg			
	Sept2003	Aug 2003	July2003	Sept 2002
Manicaland	9000	10500	8500	900
Mashonaland East	10000	8000	10000	900
Mashonaland central	10000	10000	10000	500
Mashonaland West	9000	5000	5000	700
Midlands	10000	10000	n.a	880
Masvingo	8000	10000	7000	1000
Matebeleland North	8000	8000	7000	750
Matebeleland South	n.a	n.a	n.a	1200

Cities; Harare and Bulawayo	7500	7500	4000	n.a
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n.a = not available

Relief food

Relief supplies were stopped at once without notice.

Chirumanzu

Many people will starve this year because not many can afford the maize meal prices.

Hwange urban

The monitoring reports indicate that relief activities face three issues:

- o **Absolute shortfalls in GMB supplies and problems in access to GMB supplies leaving communities dependent on more expensive market supplies**
- o **Inability of poor households to afford market supplies and engaging in harmful activities to raise funds, such as commercial sex and child begging**
- o **Absolute shortfalls and high costs of seed and fertilizer prolonging food insecurity**

Direct food handouts can only temporarily mitigate the first two problems for poor households and do not address the third problem. Enabling the poorest households to produce and ensuring effective functioning of the GMB would seem to be critical to avoid a persistent cycle of food handouts.

Poor households however need food until these measures are implemented and communities have urged through the monitoring for relief to resume.

Relief activities were reportedly increasing in the month, with 49 % of districts noting some relief food distribution compared to 21 % in August 2003 and 26 % in July 2003. This is a small improvement on the situation in September 2002 when 44 % of districts reported relief activities.

According to reports, these relief activities mainly cover school child feeding (Gr1-7) and under 5 year old feeding, and only 8% of the districts reported any household food distribution. Relief organizations at this stage appear to be covering only extremely vulnerable groups, including the elderly and terminally ill people.

Districts reporting relief activities were (See Figure 5) :

Manicaland: Makoni, Mutare urban, Mutasa, Nyanga.

Mashonaland East: Marondera urban, UMP

Mashonaland Central: Guruve, Mt Darwin, Shamva

Mashonaland West: Chinhoyi

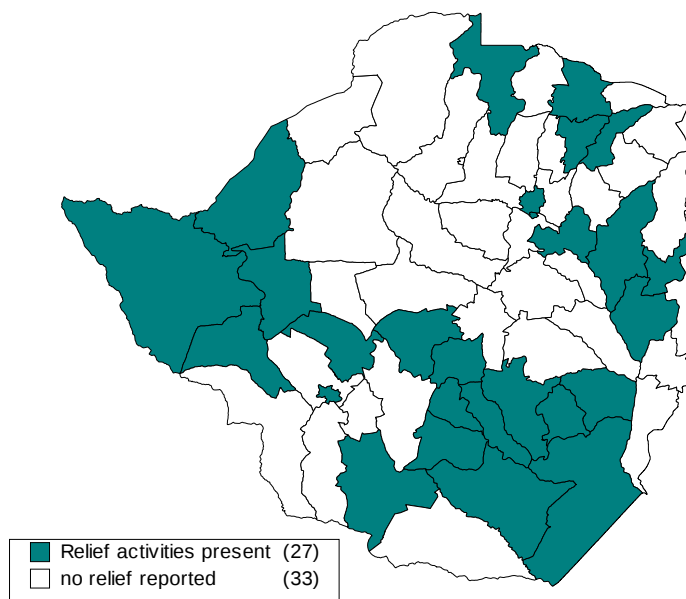
Midlands: Gweru rural, Gweru urban, Mberengwa, Gokwe, Zvishavane, Shurugwi

Masvingo: Bikita, Chiredzi, Chivi, Masvingo urban, Mwenezi, Zaka

Matebeleland North: Binga, Bubi, Hwange, Lupane, Tsholotsho.

Matebeleland South: Gwanda
 Bulawayo: Bulawayo urban
 Harare: Harare urban, Chitungwiza, Epworth

Figure 5: Districts reporting some relief activities



Reports of political interference and unfair distribution of relief were made in seven districts. (See Table 10).

Table 10: Reported problems in accessing relief in districts, September 2003

District	Issues reported
Shurugwi	Women who prepare porridge are being threatened by party youths.
Mwenezi, Shamva	Anyone who does not attend Zanu Pf meetings can not be on the list of beneficiaries/favouritism
Gokwe	Insufficient supplies only ten wards are being covered, and leaders benefiting more than others.
Bubi, Hwange	The distribution is not fair, some people are not accessing

The cash for work programme was also reported to have expanded in September with 60 % of districts reporting its presence compared to 22 % in August. This programme provides income support to purchase food of about \$5000 per month. However a number of problems were reported in this programme that need to be addressed, including reports of:

- **Work done in the cash for work programme but no cash paid**
- **Councilors deducting independence day celebration contributions for April and council levies from cash for work earnings**
- **Inability of the ill, aged, childheaded households to access the cash for work support**

Community responses

Commercial sex workers on the rise, child headed households need recognition and community support. Donor agencies need to look at those people facing problems in urban areas because problems of prostitution and destitutes are emerging

Harare

Community responses to the current situation are mainly focused on preparing for production and purchasing food.

- o **Numerous reports were made of efforts to prepare land, access farm inputs from market sources and to expand irrigation.** Communities were reported to have initiated programmes or approached local authorities to discuss how to improve water supplies in Mutasa, Makoni, Tsholotsho, and Gwanda. Early tilling of land has been done to be prepared for early rains.

People are selling send hand clothes to new farmers

Zvishavane

- o **Many districts report an increase in household asset sales to raise money for food and farm inputs. Assets sold include furniture, livestock and household goods. Livestock sales were reported in Gokwe, Gweru rural, Tsholotsho and Mwenezi.**

Some children of single parents have gown to towns to look for food as street kids

Mutare Rural

- o **Both urban and rural districts reported children going to seek money or food as street children, and some increase in crime and prostitution for money or food.** In 2002 children were involved in queues and foraging for food. In 2003 reports indicate a greater focus on activities that can bring cash into households. This carries a risk of children being involved extremely harmful activities like child labour, begging and commercial sex.

People are afraid to confront councilors selling food items

Chinoyi

- o **Districts reported meetings with councilors and local leaders to access scarce foods or secure inputs. They also reported concerns where councilors and local leaders were part of the problem of unfair distribution and biased access, especially to GMB grain.** Strengthening communities to ensure accountable local government and to support positive community – local authority interactions would appear to be necessary to deal with both the short term issues of fairness in food distribution and the longer term recovery processes.

Summary

This report outlines information drawn from **148 monitoring reports** from **53 districts** from all provinces of Zimbabwe for September 2003.

Three quarters of districts report a worsening food supply situation as staple food supplies are falling. Fosenet monitoring since 2002 shows that the period September to January are periods of peak and rising food insecurity.

In or out migration is reported in 41% of districts. People are pulled to urban areas by jobs and family support, and pushed from urban areas by job loss, the cost of living and food shortages. People are pulled to rural areas by a search for food and opportunities for gold panning, and pushed from rural areas by displacement, unsuccessful resettlement and unemployment.

Communities continue to report that seed and fertilizer is widely unavailable across all provinces, with seed was available commercially in 13% of districts and fertilizer in 25%.

Inadequate supplies of seed and fertilizer have pushed seed prices up by 42% in the past month, to reported levels of up to \$50 000/10kg. Prices of seed and fertilizer have risen rapidly since April 2003, doubling on average every month in the period.

Shortages of seed and fertilizer compounded by massive price increases make access to farm inputs a critical constraint to future food security. While draught power is a constraint it does not match the severity of shortfall in inputs. This has been raised in previous Fosenet reports but the situation has not improved. Communities themselves repeatedly warn that food shortages will persist well into 2004 and beyond, even with adequate rains, unless an input support scheme is urgently introduced.

The rising cost of farm inputs also presents a significant threat to both poverty and food security in poor and HIV/AIDS affected rural households. With the increased poverty induced by food insecurity in 2002 and 2003, current input costs threaten to drive such households out of production completely.

Ten percent of districts reported a positive change in GMB deliveries in September, attributing this to food being made available during the build up to the urban council elections in late August. They also reported a fall off in deliveries after the elections. However, monitoring sites in thirty three districts (62%) reported no GMB deliveries in the period at all.

GMB grain prices did not rise significantly in September and fell in some areas. The sources of bias in access to GMB food reported in previous Fosenet rounds were also reported in this round.

The GMB is reported to have introduced a new pricing system, with different prices for different areas and individuals for the same grain commodity. Differential pricing is one option for ensuring access to grain by poor communities. It demands high levels of transparency to ensure that the subsidy reaches the correct target. Communities reported that they were worried that the differential pricing system could be abused for profit or political gain unless properly managed.

Commercial food availability is reported to be better this year than the same time last year, using maize meal and oil as indicator foods. Cost is now the major constraint in accessing commercial market foods, with prices about ten times higher in September 2003 than in September 2002.

The monitoring reports indicate that relief activities face three issues:

- o Absolute shortfalls in GMB supplies and problems in access to GMB supplies leaving communities dependent on more expensive market supplies
- o Inability of poor households to afford market supplies and households engaging in harmful activities to raise funds, such as commercial sex and child begging
- o Absolute shortfalls and high costs of seed and fertilizer prolonging food insecurity

Relief activities were reported to have increased in the month, with 49% of districts noting some relief food distribution compared to 21% in August 2003. Reports of political interference and unfair distribution of relief were made in seven districts.

The cash for work programme was also reported to have expanded in September with 60% of districts reporting its presence compared to 22 % in August. Reported problems to be addressed included work done in the cash for work programme but no cash paid; councilors deducting independence day celebration contributions for April and council levies from cash for work earnings and inability of the ill, aged, childheaded households to access the cash for work support.

Community responses to the current situation are mainly focused on preparing for production and purchasing food.

Households have made efforts to prepare land and access farm inputs from market sources. Communities were reported to have initiated programmes or approached local authorities to discuss expanding irrigation.

Many districts report increased sale of household asset – including furniture, livestock (in four districts) and household goods - to raise money for food and farm inputs.

Both urban and rural districts report children seeking money or food as street children, and some increase in crime and prostitution for money or food. The pressure for cash for inputs and food carries a risk of children being involved extremely harmful activities like child labour, begging and commercial sex.

Districts reported meetings with councilors and local leaders to access scarce foods or to secure inputs. They also reported concerns where councilors and local leaders did not

respond to their approaches, or were part of the problem of unfair distribution and biased access, especially of GMB grain. Ensuring accountable local government and supporting positive community – local authority interactions would appear to be necessary to deal with both the short term issues of fairness in food distribution and the longer term recovery processes.