



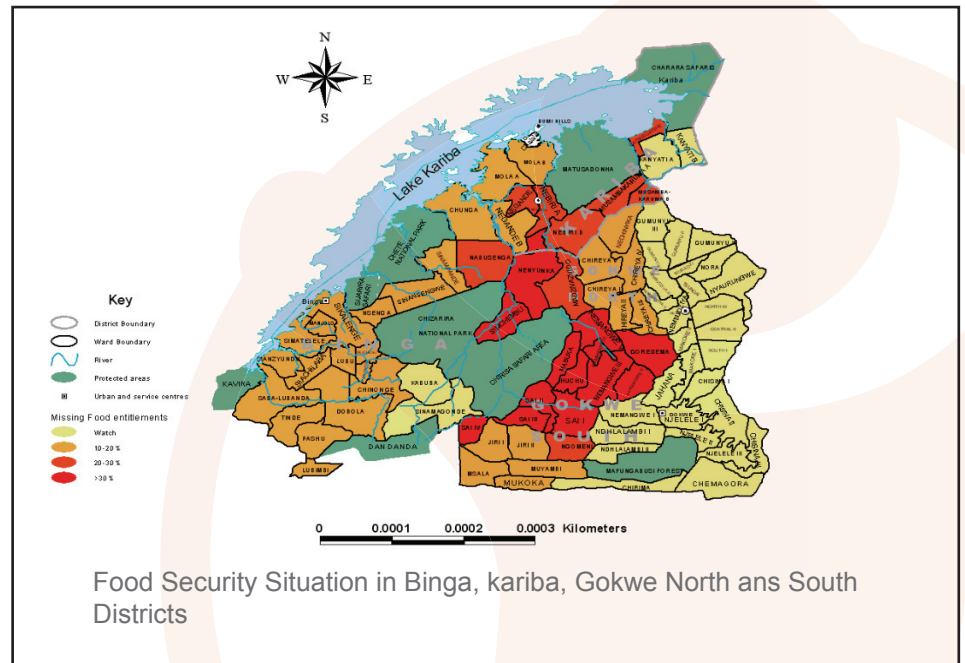
Sub national food security information system

Nov 2007 Monitoring Report

Increased household vulnerability to food insecurity

Further economic decline resulting into more asset poor households

Poor preparations for the 2007/08 agricultural season
Low levels of remittance



Vulnerability will increase due to unavailability and low household ability to access grain

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National situation:

The continued decline of the once thriving agrarian economy in Zimbabwe characterized with an annual inflation rate of 100 580.2 percent by January 2008 and unemployment rate of 80 percent has resulted into country wide shortage of basic commodities with at least 80 percent of the population living below the poverty threshold, often skipping meals to stretch their income which frequently fails to cover basic survival needs.

Sub national situation:

The districts of Binga, Kariba Rural, Gokwe North, Gokwe South and Nyanga North will have major changes in household food security and livelihoods patterns in the next three months due to the following factors:

-Critical shortage of grain.

-This will result into more food insecure households, over the next three months period (January-March 2008).

General scarcity of cereals will worsen due to a number of factors outlined below:

- Poor 2006/07 crop harvest
- Lack of Grain Marketing Board (GMB) deliveries as earlier predicted.
- The speculative effect of the current season among “better-off” households holding on their remaining cereal stock.
- Worsening terms of Trade (small livestock for cereals).
- High prices of grain in alternative market.
- Loss of livestock due to diseases such as anthrax, red water and meningitis.
- Low cereal trade and movement among the different FEZs.
- Restrictive cereal marketing policies

Main reasons for reduced ability to access grains are:

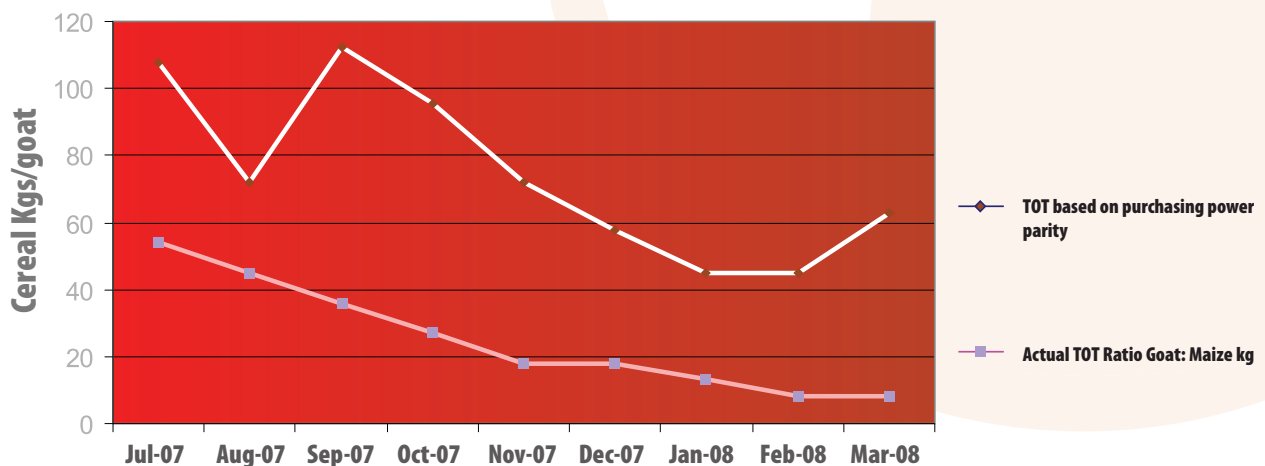
- Reduced maize equivalent income compared with predicted income, due to loss of key income sources such as gold panning and brick molding among others.
- Low prices for local produce such as vegetables and hand crafts
- River floods and frequent deportations which have affected cross border trade with Mozambique in the northern Nyanga district.
- Delayed onset of rains in November 2007, which have affected availability of agricultural labour exchange and cash income. The rains may fall late and reduce “poor” households ability to do other agricultural work.

Districts	Population at risk	Population on “watch”
Binga	65 262	None
Kariba Rural	19 830	None
Nyanga	20 412	None
Mudzi	12 230	None
Northern Gokwe	76 123	19 961
Southern Gokwe	75 631	33 064

Worsening Terms of Trade (TOT)

The main form of market exchange among the population in the Seven food economy zones (FEZs) is barter trade, particularly exchange of small livestock, fish, cooking oil, local construction materials and vegetables with grain. However the TOT is skewed in favour of grain suppliers than livestock owners during the monitoring period (July-December 2007). The unfair terms of trade has persisted mainly due to general unavailability of maize grain in the different parts of the country, coupled with sky rocketing price of maize grain in the alternative market far above the predicted rate of inflation in the same period. This in turn eroded household purchasing power increasing hunger and number of asset poor households among the population .

Terms of Trade: Cereals for Goat



Relief food aid

Food aid was a major source of cereal and pulses among the chronically poor households in the four districts covered during the monitoring period. It equally became a vital source of cereal among non beneficiaries, who received some share of the ration from beneficiary households. Food aid particularly maize grain was also used as seed during the 2007/08 planting season due to shortage of seed among rural farmers.

More relief food aid assistance in the period January to March 2008 will enhance agricultural productivity in the following ways:

- Saving labour poor households from concentrating on other peoples agricultural work.
- Help to reduce long distance migration in search of food for work activities.
- Prevent further depletion of productive assets such as small livestock as a result of unfair TOT.

Remittances

In-kind and cash remittances are some of the main sources of household food and cash income among the rural population in the seven food economy zones. The main forms of remittance include staple and non staple food items such as maize meal, sugar, cooking oil and salt. A significant number of households received these items from relatives to celebrate the Christmas festive season in December 2007. However majority of households anticipate a reduction in remittances due to lack of transport and further decline in economic conditions in the country.

Preparations for the season

Overall preparation for the 2007/08 agricultural season has been inadequate. Despite NGO support among 60% of the population, the majority of households had limited maize seed and fertiliser for the season.

Critical assumptions during the monitoring period:

- Availability of grain will worsen due to unreliable supply by the Grain Marketing Board
- Labour poor households will be constrained by limited labour.
- Agricultural employment opportunities will be less available due to limited grain and the speculative effect of a likely poor 2007/08 agricultural season.

Application of HEA findings for predictable transfers in Zimbabwe.

The period 2000 to 2007 has seen Zimbabwe plunged into a complex socio-economic crisis which has underpinned household and individual poverty and vulnerability levels in the country. The poverty situation has been exacerbated by drought, floods and HIV & AIDs, making it practically difficult to make any significant progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly MDG 1: aimed to “eradicate extreme poverty and hunger” among the population.

SC (UK) in partnership with four other international agencies applied the Household Economy Assessment (HEA) methodology to understand rural livelihoods and predict the level of risk to food insecurity and extreme poverty. Four community wealth groups were identified and designed relevant and appropriate social protection transfer packages aimed at improving household food security, nutrition status, productive asset capacity and income levels. A rigorous community based targeting criteria using a combination of demographic & socio-economic characteristics was also employed to select the most suitable beneficiary households for a particular social protection package. The following were some of the social protection measures implemented over the last one year.

1. Social assistance through provision of Home based Care (HBC), vegetable kits, relief food aid and small livestock among labour poor households.
- 2.. Social insurance through promotion of the small livestock pass on gift scheme among the sometimes "poor" households and specific community groups.
3. Micro and area based schemes such as rehabilitation of dip tanks, roads and construction of learning centers in order to reduce local migration in search of food, while promoting local area development (LED) .
4. Child protection through support of child protection committees.

Conclusion

Generally household vulnerability to food insecurity increased as predicted in July 2007. The situation was exacerbated by political interference during ward ranking and prioritisation for relief food aid assistance, higher rate of inflation than earlier predicted and high livestock diseases particularly in the Gokwe sub region. As a result more people will be food insecure over the next three months (January- March 2008).

The 2007/08 agricultural season is not likely to be a better season than last year due to inadequate agricultural inputs such as maize seed, fertilizer and draft power among the labour "poor" households.



Photograph of school children returning from a grinding mill during school hours.



Photograph of women constructing a temporary school shelter during rain season in Nyaminyami district.

Immediate Response

- Provision of relief food aid assistance for an additional 47, 000 households in Gokwe North district.
- No political interference in food aid ward prioritisation process
- More rigorous targeting in the future.
- Identification of other forms of food aid distribution, so as to complement agricultural production.
- Broadening level of livelihoods support packages, through provision of veterinary services among livestock farmers.
- Targeting of labour rich households to increase local availability of food.

Next Up date- April 2008



