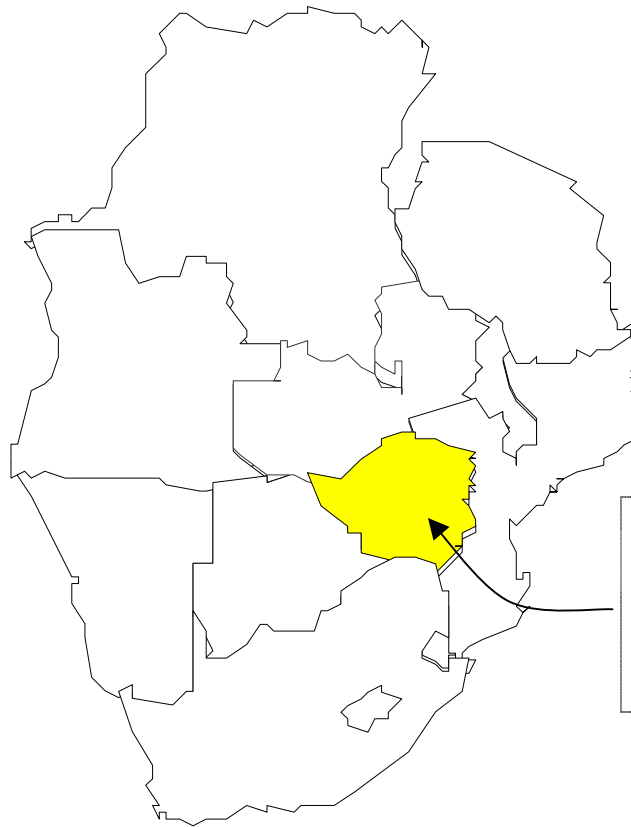


# Zimbabwe Urban Areas Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment – September 2003

Zimbabwe National Vulnerability Assessment Committee  
in collaboration with the SADC FANR Vulnerability Assessment Committee



**ZIMBABWE**  
Some 7.5 million people (2.5 in urban areas and 5.01 million in rural areas) of the population is food insecure in 2003/04 marketing year.

## Urban Report No. 1 January 2004 Harare

Prepared in collaboration with SIRDC – Food and Nutrition Programme, Ministry of Agriculture- National Early Warning Unit, Civil Protection Unit, CSO, MOHCW, Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Education, WFP, Unicef, FEWS NET, GOAL, MEDAIR and ACF. With financial support from Government of Zimbabwe, UNDP, DFID and SADC FANR VAC

**For Full Report Contact:**

Joyce Chanetsa at [jchanets@mweb.co.zw](mailto:jchanets@mweb.co.zw); Tel: 263 4 860320-9 or 263 11 865640, Fax 263 4860340  
Elliot Vhurumuku at [evhurumuku@fews.net](mailto:evhurumuku@fews.net); Tel: 263 4 729196 or 263 11 430397, Fax 263 4 729196  
Isaac Tarakidzwa at [Isaac.Tarakidzwa@wfp.org](mailto:Isaac.Tarakidzwa@wfp.org); Tel 263 4 252471/3 or 263 11 412548, Fax 263 4 799214

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Background:** The assessment was carried out in an environment with economic conditions worsening, the country experiencing food shortages due to droughts and other factors and hyperinflation standing at 455.6 percent in September 2003.

**Survey Design:** A livelihoods based structured questionnaires covering over 5,123 households, 660 focus groups and 256 institutions were administered over two weeks by 124 researchers through funding from UNDP and SADC FANR VAC. The survey was drawn from the CSO sample frame, by stratifying urban areas and considering population distribution and randomly sampling the households.

**Where are the most Vulnerable?** The very poor and poor who live in squatter camps (90 percent), the back yard shacks in high density areas (78 percent) and peri urban areas (80 percent) are both food insecure, do not have better access to services, such as health, clean safe water and are exposed to diseases such as diarrhea. Using the Consumer Council basic consumption basket and the total cost of the basket for September 2003, at least 51 percent of the households were found to be very poor and 21 percent poor (giving a total for the poor of 72 percent of the urban population)

**Who are the most vulnerable?** The elderly and female headed households (widowed or divorced) had the least income compared to the non elderly and male headed households. Households with large number of people normally carter for orphans and are the most food insecure, food insecurity increases with household size, such that households with more than 7 members were more vulnerable.

**Who and where are the food insecure?** A total of **64.8 percent (2.5 million people)** of the estimated 3.8 million urban people are food insecure (could not meet a minimum caloric requirement of **2,100 Kcal/person/day**). Their distribution is such that; Harare Province has about **1.2 million people** (65 percent of the city's population is food insecure), Bulawayo has **480,500 people** (71 percent of population insecure), Midlands with 67 percent (229,000 people), Manicaland (66 percent - **156,000 people**), Mashonaland Central (63 percent - **43,000 people**), Mashonaland East (61 percent – **65,000 people**), Mashonaland West (63 percent – **187,000 people**), Matebeleland North (70 percent – **55,500 people**), Matebeleland South (60 percent – **27,500 people**) and Masvingo Province urban areas (54 percent – **54,400 people**).

**What is the food Access and food availability situation?** Over 50 percent of the communities reported that cereals were and maize were either occasionally or rarely available except for Harare and Bulawayo. Households sourced over 60 percent of their cereals from parallel markets and small proportions from shops, own production and the GMB. Urban and rural agriculture contributed very little to cereals availability. Only a few suburbs benefited from food aid, mainly provided by NGOs, with Matebeleland South urban areas with greatest percentage benefiting from food aid 64.7 percent.

**What is the consumption pattern?** About 57 percent of the urban population was having 2 or less meals per day,. Of these, 62 percent were from the very poor socioeconomic group with the percentage decreasing to about 10 percent for the middle and better off. Urban households consume mainly maize, with carbohydrates consumption increasing with the increase in the socio economic status. The very poor consumed mostly carbohydrates (80 percent) followed by vegetables 16 percent and very little protein and oils, whilst the better off increased their carbohydrates consumption to 87 percent , vegetable consumption decreased to 6.7 percent and protein increasing to 4.9 percent.

**What shocks and Hazards are prevalent in urban areas?** All income groups cited inflation, followed by cost of services (school fees and other services), followed by unemployment and taxes, then followed by deaths, illness and hospital bills as the greatest shocks that affect their livelihoods. This is different from the 1995 PASS study which cited unemployment as the greatest shock.

**What is the health status?** The analysis shows that 91 percent of communities had clinics in their suburbs and 57 percent had private doctors facilities in the suburb. Of the households that reported at least one member falling sick in the past three months, 66 percent were food insecure households and 34 percent were food secure. Of the households that lost a member through death about 69 percent were food insecure and 31 percent food secure.

**What is the status of HIV and AIDS based on proxies?** Most households showing HIV and AIDS proxies were among the poor and very poor and were in the food insecure category. Approximately 39 percent of communities in low density suburbs had no access to HIV and AIDS services, 37 percent in medium density and 25 percent in high density suburbs.

**What is the education status?** Of the households with at least one child dropping out of school, 85 percent were food insecure and 78 percent of the food insecure households received educational assistance. About 88 percent of the very poor and poor households indicated that they had cut on education expenditure to buy food.

**What is the accommodation situation?** From the survey, at least 38 percent owned houses whilst 33 percent were lodgers/tenants .House ownership varied across the socio economic groups, with at least 44 percent of the better off owning houses. The poor and very poor lived in shacks. The average number of rooms occupied by the very poor was 2.8 and increased with the socio economic group to 4.3 for the better off.

**Water and sanitation status?** At least 90 percent of the households had access to piped water and this include over 40 percent of the very poor. About 87 percent had their water on the premises. Most households in squatter camps used water from unprotected sources. About 55 percent of the population used flush toilets and only 2.6 percent used the bucket or bush for toilet facilities. The number sharing a toilet was as high as 18 people for the very poor and improved with socio economic status decreasing to half for the better off. About 15 percent of the communities reported that refuse was not being collected, with 83 percent of the squatter camps reporting that refuse was not collected. In the high density areas 44 percent of the communities reported that refuse was collected regularly and the rate increased to 57 percent in medium and low density suburbs.

**What are the Recommendations?**

- Economic stabilization is required as most households reported price increases/inflation as the greatest shock.
- Market liberalization of cereals will help the poor as most poor households buy their cereals from parallel markets.
- The Government through GMB to use the SGR to stabilize prices in the market as parallel market prices are very high.
- Health and Education assistance programs should be more properly targeted as even the middle and better off HH benefit from the programs

- Food aid in the form of targeted subsidies (food stamps, cereals or market targeting) is required for the poor.
- Production of pulses to increase protein content of the poor in their diet should be encouraged in both rural and urban areas.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The following are some of the eminent recommendations, list not exhaustive:**

- Economic stabilization is required as most households reported price increases/inflation as the greatest shock.
- Food assistance programmes should be extended to the urban population, with free food targeted to those meeting less than 50% of their requirements and targeted subsidies (food stamps, less preferred cereals or market targeting) targeted for the other categories of the urban poor.
- Market liberalization of cereals will help the poor as most poor HH get cereals from parallel markets.
- The Government through GMB to use the SGR to stabilize prices in the market as parallel market prices are very high.
- Due to the prominence of both unemployment and the informal sector, support to be provided for income generation schemes and micro-credit for the urban population.
- Properly targeted health and education assistance programmes that could be modelled after some of the existing good programmes such as the BEAM
- Agricultural production programmes to put emphasis on the cheap sources of protein that can increase the availability of affordable sources of protein foods, such as pulses, for the poor.
- The government public works programme should be extended to all urban centres, in addition other stakeholders should initiate similar programmes in urban areas for both income transfer and rehabilitation of the social services infrastructure etc.
- Implementation modalities for urban programmes should emphasize the use of and strengthening of existing structures and better targeting.
- Further studies are needed to better understand the coping mechanisms of the population that is surviving on less than 25% of their calorie requirements and yet are alive as well as other aspects of urban vulnerability.