

The Guardian

Zimbabwe urged to prioritise children as record poverty causes food shortages

Researchers sound the alarm after statistics reveal almost half of impoverished children in rural areas do not have enough to eat



Children in Mafomoti village, in Zimbabwe's Mwenezi district, wait while their mothers prepare their only meal of the day. (Photograph: Aaron Ufumeli/EPA)



Last year's drought was one of the worst on record - shrivelling corn in farmers' fields. (Aaron Ufumeli/TNH)

Zimbabwe faces one of the world's worst food crisis: New UN report



Zimbabwe remains in the grip of severe food insecurity, with millions of people already requiring humanitarian assistance due to prolonged drought, climate-related shocks, economic deterioration and the situation set to worsen as the COVID-19 pandemic spreads, according to the new Global Food Crisis Report Forecast (GFCRF).

Poverty has reached unprecedented levels in Zimbabwe, with more than 70% of Zimbabwean children in rural areas living in poverty, a UN study has found.

The report, compiled by Unicef and the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, shows high levels of privation in rural areas, where 76.3% of children live in abject poverty. Statistics seen by the Guardian suggest that almost half of these children do not have enough of the right food to eat.

Humanitarian organisations have warned that if nothing is done to address food security issues in Zimbabwe, child poverty will escalate further.

“In rural areas, all land use areas have [a] high prevalence of poor children, but communal and resettlement areas are slightly worse; urban areas in rural provinces also have high rates of child poverty,” said the report’s authors.

Key Figures



Key Drivers



Overview

More than 4.34 million people in rural Zimbabwe are acutely food insecure facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse from February-June 2020. That is equivalent to 49% of the country's rural population. This includes over 1.04 million people facing Emergency (IPC Phase 4) food insecurity, with Hwange, Kariba and Binga districts being the most vulnerable.

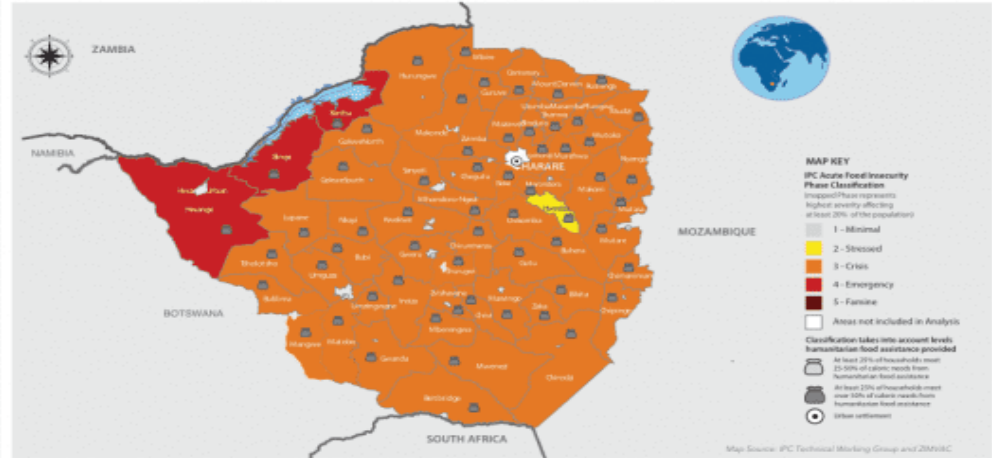
The main factors driving the situation are: poor rainfall which has caused crops to wither, flooding which has wiped out the green harvest, high food prices and skyrocketing food prices, and lack of economic opportunities. This has forced many people to sell off their assets, such as livestock, in order to purchase food, while many others are reliant on external assistance. According to the Lean Season Assessment 2020, around 78% of interviewed households reported to have received assistance between April and December 2019. Assistance coverage and scale has increased since December to help people through the lean season.

Compared to the last IPC Acute Food Insecurity (AFI) analysis carried out for October-December 2019, the current situation reflects a 7% deterioration in the proportion of people facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse. Compared to the IPC AFI analysis carried out one year ago (February-May 2019), the current situation reflects a 14% deterioration in the proportion of people facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse. The increase is mainly attributed to the prolonged and severe lean season expected to last until June, high food prices, cash shortages and worsening market conditions.

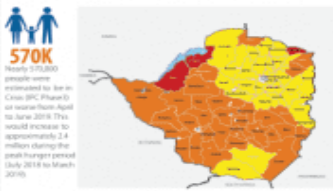
The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) initiative uses phases to classify the severity and magnitude of food insecurity and malnutrition for better and more actionable information.

Additional information on the IPC initiative can be found at <http://www.reliefweb.int/ipc> and <http://www.fews.net>.

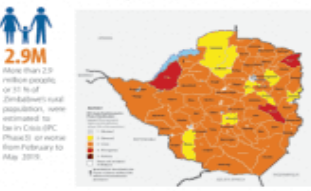
ZIMBABWE: Acute Food Insecurity | February - June 2020



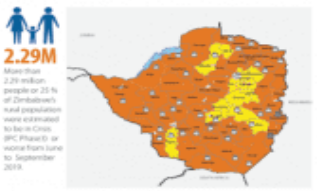
Acute Food Insecurity | April - June 2018



Acute Food Insecurity | Feb - May 2019



Acute Food Insecurity | June - Sept 2019



IPC Analysis Partners:

The Zimbabwe IPC Acute Food Insecurity analysis was led by the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZIMVAC), in close collaboration with the IPC Global Support Unit (GSU) and country partners: the World Food Programme (WFP) and Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET).

Zimbabwe Integrated Food Security Report for June, 2020.

IPC v3.0 Acute Food Insecurity Phase

- 1: Green - Minimal
- 2: Yellow - Stressed
- 3: Orange - Crisis
- 4: Red - Emergency
- 5: Burgundy - Famine

See this report on the web at:
<https://reliefweb.int/report/zimbabwe/zimbabwe-integrated-food-security-phase-classification-snapshot-february-june-2020>

ReliefWeb

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<https://reliefweb.int/country/zwe>

“WFP projects a 50% increase in food insecurity, affecting 8.6 million people by the end of 2020 due to drought, economic recession and COVID-19. “Acute malnutrition is expected to increase by 15% in 2020, with an additional 15,000 children severely malnourished.

“Zimbabwe Food Security Outlook, June 2020 to January 2021”

High levels of acute food insecurity and assistance needs are expected to persist into early 2021 **KEY MESSAGES** • Although food security outcomes are better than previously anticipated in areas of the... Over half of the country of Zimbabwe is now officially considered to be in the midst of a food crisis.

See: <https://fews.net/>

‘Zimbabwe drought, food crisis likely to run into 2020’ – Famine Systems Network



The devastating scars of climate change are clear to see on Zimbabwe's landscape. (Credit: ITV News)

A swathe of Zimbabwe, running from the southwest to the northeast, faces a “Phase 3” food crisis after a sporadic start to the rainy season, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network said.

Phase 3 is just two steps down from full-blown famine, the USAID-funded Fewsnetsaid in an emailed statement on Friday. The forecast for the region is for “below average rainfall,” it said.

Parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Mozambique and Malawi will also be affected, it added.

It’s the second drought in as many years. “Many areas of the region are likely to face a second consecutive poor rainfall season and harvest,” the organisation warned.

That’s particularly bad for Zimbabwe where the “poor macro-economy is negatively affecting planting and germination rates,” it said. Millions of rural Zimbabweans are too poor to plant and farm corn, the country’s staple food. Zimbabwe faces an economic crisis where shortages of cash, fuel and electricity cripple people’s access to basic food.

“High staple prices in the region are contributing to below-average purchasing power for a significant number of poor households,” Fewsnetsaid, mainly because prices are trending 5% to 10% above the five-year average in South Africa, the region’s biggest producer and the source of much of the region’s milled corn.

Ravages of acute hunger will likely hit six in 10 in Zimbabwe: WFP

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/07/1069321>

July 30, 2020 | [Humanitarian Aid](#)



WFP/Claire Nevill In Harare, Zimbabwe, a single mother of three relies on food assistance from the World Food Programme (WFP) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The World Food Programme (WFP) is urgently seeking more international support to prevent millions of Zimbabweans plunging deeper into hunger. The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated an already severe hunger crisis in Zimbabwe, UN humanitarians warned on Thursday.

Triple shock

That represents around 60 per cent of the population, the agency said in a statement, blaming drought, economic recession and the coronavirus pandemic as the main drivers of the crisis.

Galloping hyperinflation has meant that few families can now afford even basic food, WFP said, with the price of maize, the staple cereal, more than doubling in June.

Lola Castro, WFP's Regional Director for Southern Africa, said that many Zimbabwean families were suffering "the ravages of acute hunger", before appealing to the international community to help prevent "a potential humanitarian catastrophe."

Unemployment rife

Zimbabwe's food insecurity has been compounded by a nationwide lockdown which has caused massive joblessness in urban areas.

In rural areas, hunger is accelerating, as unemployed migrants return to their villages, without the vital remittances they once provided.

According to WFP, subsistence farmers make up three-quarters of Zimbabwe's population and produce most of its food.

They are hurting because of a third successive drought-hit harvest this year which yielded only 1.1 million tonnes of maize, the staple cereal.

Harvest short by half

This amount is well down on last year's already poor harvest of 2.4 million tonnes, and less than half the national requirement.

As a result, WFP has warned that there will "even more severe hunger" in early 2021, at the peak of the next "lean" season.

With sufficient funding, the agency intends to assist four million of the most vulnerable people in Zimbabwe this year: those suffering "crisis" and "emergency" levels of hunger.

It intends to scale up this aid to five million people from January to April next year, the peak of the lean season.

This month, amid serious funding shortages, WFP will only reach 700,000 of 1.8 million intended recipients.

With climate change, hyperinflation and #COVID19 wreaking havoc, 8.6 million in #Zimbabwe are set to be hungry by end of year. The risk of catastrophe is very real.

Cheering megaphone

WFP is calling on the international community to step up to provide life-saving food assistance.



U.N. Seeks \$130 Million to Prevent Hunger Catastrophe in Zimbabwe

<https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2020-04-08/un-seeks-130-million-to-prevent-hunger-catastrophe-in-zimbabwe>

// photo // (not shown)

HARARE (Reuters) - The United Nations food agency said on Wednesday it needed \$130 million to fund emergency operations in Zimbabwe until August and prevent a catastrophe in the southern African nation, as climate- and recession-induced food shortages deepened.

The World Food Programme (WFP) said 7.7 million Zimbabweans, half the population, need food aid after a devastating drought and cyclone last year. A lack of predictable rains this year has affected crops, compounding the situation.

The coronavirus pandemic has added to the pressure. Zimbabwe has recorded only three deaths and 11 cases, but economists predict it could face a second successive recession this year as the pandemic shuts down large parts of the global economy.

Zimbabwe's mining industry, the largest single earner of foreign exchange, has already signalled that exports could fall by a quarter due to the effects of the new coronavirus.

"With most Zimbabweans already struggling to put food on the table, the COVID-19 pandemic risks even wider and deeper desperation," Eddie Rowe, WFP director for Zimbabwe, said in a statement.

"We must all do our utmost to prevent this tragedy from turning into a catastrophe."

The WFP said inflation, at 540% in February, was pushing prices of staples beyond the means of most Zimbabweans, forcing families to eat less and sell off belongings or go into debt.

Zimbabwe is under a 21-day lockdown, but some residents have complained this risks exacerbating the situation. More than 80% of the working population ekes out a living in the informal sector, leaving them with few protections.

The government says the lockdown is necessary to contain the spread of the virus, which has killed more than 81,000 people globally.

(Reporting by MacDonald Dzirutwe; Editing by Nick Tattersall, William Maclean)