

ZimVAC Lean Season Monitoring 2016: The Process

Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC), a consortium of government and non-government partners, undertook a lean monitoring exercise to update the food security outlook projected in the May 2015 Rural Livelihoods Assessment (RLA) report. This update was necessitated by the need to quickly update the food security situation in order to inform Government and its development partners in planning response in light of the prevailing El Niño phenomena. El Niño is a weather pattern which causes the winds of the equatorial Pacific to slow or reverse direction, in turn raising the temperature of waters over a vast area of the Central and Eastern Pacific Ocean. Higher temperatures cause below- or above-normal precipitation in many regions, especially in the Southern Hemisphere, including Southern Africa and Zimbabwe.

The update which focused on relevant food and nutrition security parameters was undertaken in 3 phases –preliminary secondary data review, district level Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and household surveys. This article chronicles the three -pronged process to give the reader an insight on how the monitoring update evolved.

Review of Secondary data

The ZimVAC team urgently convened on the weekend of 9 January 2016 in response to a call made by the Government of Zimbabwe to quickly update the food security situation in order to inform government planning and response. As a result of the prevailing drought, a number of factors which had contributed to the food security projections had changed. These factors include household stocks, food crops, cash crops, casual labour, remittances, livestock and income (from all other sources).

The methodology of developing the update comprised of revisiting contributing factors and assumptions which could have been impacted by the drought. This included revisiting data from the ZimVAC 2015 RLA and using the latest data from other sources to re-run the analysis and to provide an updated picture reflecting the proportions of affected populations. The ZimVAC team divided itself



Results of poor grazing conditions in Chipinge South, Manicaland

into small working groups and gathered current information on the following thematic areas:

a. Cereal availability

i. National picture based on an updated national cereal balance sheet with information/data obtained from Ministry of Agriculture, GMB, WFP, Grain Millers Association, private grain traders and ZIMSTAT on the 2015 cereal harvest, current public and private stocks, imports, exports, and estimated consumption to reporting time.

ii. Sub-national data on cereal availability from available systems monitoring such as FEWSNET and Agritex-NEWU.

b. *Markets and Food prices*- particularly for cereals, pulses, oils. Data was obtained from Agritex, ZIMSTAT, FEWSNET, WFP, FAO and the analysis focused on trends analysis and deviations from normal/average as well as spatial comparisons/ arbitrage analysis

c. *Health and Nutrition*- focused on wasting, diarrhoea and fever incidences and prevalence among children under-five. Data was obtained from the Health and Nutrition Surveillance system

- d. *Productive and domestic water situation*- This attempted to establish the situation regarding dam levels and current irrigation capacity. Ministry of Agriculture and ZINWA provided the required data for this section.
- e. *Climate and weather* -This attempted to describe the season quality to date drawing from remotely sensed data, Meteorological Services Office reports, Agritex reports and FEWSNET reports.
- f. *Livestock and Grazing Situation* was analysed using data from the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock Production and Development (LPD) Department of Veterinary Services and FAO
- g. *Education* focussed on school attendance and school dropouts, where data was available. Data was availed from the Ministry of Education
- h. *Food Assistance Intervention* This section attempted to map out current interventions according to the three Ws

(who is doing what where). UN-RC's Office, WFP, UNICEF, FAO, Social Welfare were the main data/information contributors Data from the May 2015 RLA was revisited and estimates of the potential household income were revised to both reflect the current developments as well as the possible worst case scenario. Out of this work a preliminary report was produced and shared to all key stakeholders by the Office of the President and Cabinet. The report was also shared at the National Consultative Food and Nutrition Security meeting and the Humanitarian Country Team.

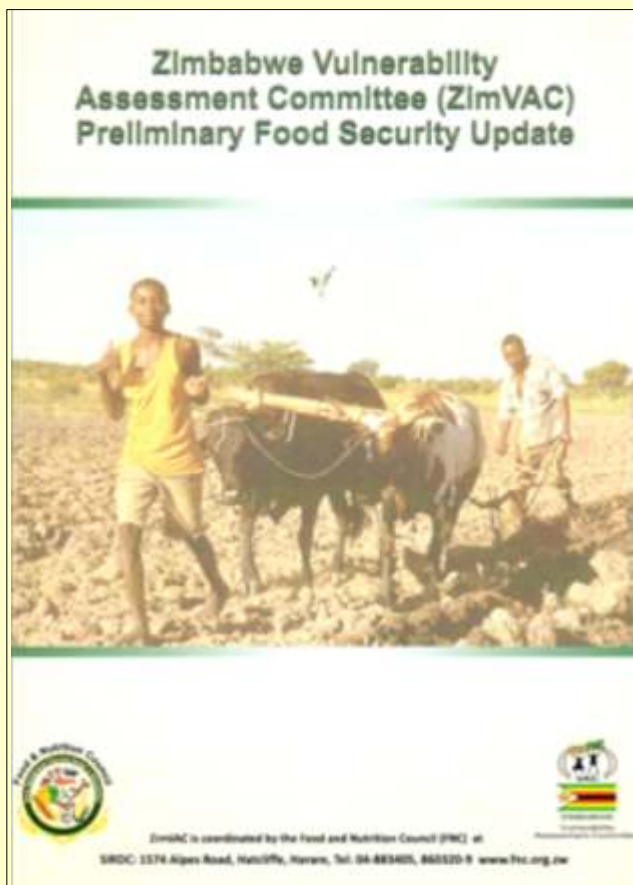
Field Assessment

The aim of the monitoring exercise was to assess the prevailing food and nutrition security situation with specific objectives to:

1. Assess how the food and nutrition situation has evolved since the last assessment (Focusing on food availability, access, stability and utilization)
2. Assess the performance of the 2015/16 agriculture season
3. Assess the performance of the current food and nutrition interventions
4. Assess households' coping mechanisms
5. Determine levels of acute and chronic malnutrition in children under 5

Lean Season Monitoring Primary Data Collection

The process began with the development of data collection tools and refinement of the methodology for the survey. Two data collection tools, the focus group discussion (FGD) guide and the household questionnaire were developed and reviewed through a multi-stakeholder process. This was followed by a 2-day standardisation training in which all national supervisors were taken through the monitoring tools and survey methodology. Data collection was then undertaken in all 60 rural districts from the 18th to the 26th of January.



The Preliminary Report



Some yet to plant in Gokwe North

Focus Group Discussions: A team of 30 national supervisors participated in the monitoring exercise and were split into 8 teams with each team covering 1 province. The teams facilitated FGDs in each of their respective districts using the FGD guide with a list of questions covering the following thematic areas:

1. Rainfall season quality
 1. 2015/16 agricultural assistance
 2. crop condition
 3. Grazing and livestock condition
 4. food and livestock markets
 5. casual labour
 6. household income sources and livelihoods strategies
 7. domestic and production water situation
 8. food assistance and
 9. gender based violence



Cattle grazing in Mutare rural

The FGDs were done with DFNSCs where they existed and the DDRCs where there were no DFNSCs. In preparation for the FGDs, the DFNSCs/DDRCS were requested to assemble relevant information ahead of the FGDs in order to enrich the discussions. The FGDs were attended by various stakeholders with expert knowledge of their districts drawn from government, development partners and other relevant sub-national structures.



Bulilima district FGD in progress with Themba Nduna emphasising a point.

The FGD data collection template was structured to facilitate the collection of ward level data on all the indicators except for the Gender Based Violence (GBV) section which was at district level. This was done to ensure that critical variations within each district were not masked. In addition to collecting information on the relevant indicators, the FGDs facilitated the random selection of 4 wards for household enumeration in each district. The 4 comprised of 2 representing the worse off wards and 2 representing the better off wards. The process involved stakeholders ranking all wards within their districts into the better off and worse off wards. 2 wards were then randomly sampled for enumeration from each category. Data for the FGDs was entered into a standardised template by the national team members during the interviews.

Household Survey: The sample size for the household assessment was designed to be statistically representative at Provincial and National level. The anthropometric data was representative at rural national level only.



Mr. Krispen Nyadzayo (MoHCC) 'calibrating' the scale to measure the weight of an under 5 at a household in Mangwe district

The household survey was undertaken to triangulate secondary data as well as data acquired from the FGDs. Household level data collection was done by teams comprising of members of the ZimVAC national team and at least 6 members of the DFNSCs/ DDRCs. From the prioritised wards, a total of 25 households were randomly sampled and interviewed in each district, bringing the national sample size to a total of 1533 households.

The household survey collected data on the following thematic areas:

1. Household demographic
2. Education
3. Household access to food assistance
4. Household consumption and livelihoods coping strategies
5. Income sources
6. Household dietary diversity score (HDDS)
7. Food consumption score (FCS)
8. Household hunger score (HHS)
9. Livestock holdings
10. Domestic and production water availability and
11. Child nutrition



Mash Central Nutritionist measuring height using the height board

Anthropometric measurements (weight, height and MUAC) were taken from children aged 6-59 months in the sampled households. The total number of children in this age category in the sample was 1417. The anthropometric data was collected from 898 children by team members with expertise on the collection of these measurements (mainly from the Ministry of Health and Child Care). Some of field level data was triangulated (compared and validated) with secondary data from situation reports and other documents relevant to the monitoring. Following the completion of enumeration, all teams presented their preliminary findings to the Provincial Administrators and Provincial FNCS. Data entry for the household interviews was done by the national supervisors using the application, CSpro. Following the completion of the data collection exercise, data entry, cleaning and report writing was completed on the 5th of January 2016.



Wilting crop in Shurugwi, Midlands Province



Villagers queuing for water in Mat North

Report Writing

Data analysis and report writing began on Monday the 1st of February and ended on the 5th. The analysis process was undertaken by the ZimVAC national team and the provincial coordinators with members allocated to analyse and report on the different thematic areas of the report.

Towards the end of the report writing exercise senior officials from various government ministries/departments and development partners were invited to contribute to the process by reviewing the draft assessment report and their valuable comments were noted. The Chairperson of the Technical Committee on food and Nutrition Security, Mr. O.E.M Hove, a Senior Principal Director in the



Mr. E.O.M Hove, Chairperson of the Technical Committee on Food and Nutrition

Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC) chaired the review meeting. The Matabeleland North Provincial Administrator hosted and officially opened the meeting. Provincial Administrators for Matabeleland South, Matabeleland North, Masvingo and Midlands provinces, Senior National Government representatives from OPC, Ministries of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture Mechanisation and Irrigation Development, Ministry of Health and Child Care and ZimSTAT as well as representatives from EU, USAID, UNICEF, CARE, World Vision, WFP, to mention but a few, attended the meeting. The ZimVAC team presented the findings to the invited guests and they made invaluable comments that were taken into account in refining the assessment report.

The monitoring update results were packed into two products; the power point presentation and a draft narrative report that will be polished and published in March 2016. Meanwhile, the power point presentation was used to widely disseminate the assessment results.

Conclusion

The lean season assessment was a very important exercise to both government and the development

partners as it provided an updated picture on the food and nutrition status of the country. The assessment results have already contributed to the Government's Declaration of State of Disaster due to the El Nino-induced drought and both the Domestic and International Appeal by Government for assistance. The Humanitarian community, across the board are ceased with using the results to inform both current and new programmes aimed at saving lives and livelihoods of rural communities in Zimbabwe.



Marco Marroni of WFP making a presentation on the rainfall section



Themba Nduna of USAID presenting the Nutrition Section



George Kembo, ZimVAC Chair introducing invited guests to the review meeting



Provincial Administrator for Matabeleland South, Mrs Dhlamini, welcoming participants to the review meeting in Bulawayo



ZimVAC technical team going over their sections during the analysis and report writing



Some of the participants at the Draft Lean Season Monitoring report review meeting in Bulawayo





Arnold Damba (in black shirt) leading the incomes group during the analysis



Provincial Coordinators - From left: S. Mafu - (Mat. South and T. Sithole-Manicaland) following proceedings during the review of the draft report



Livestock condition in worse off wards of Binga



Livestock condition the better off ward of Chirumanzu



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