



Food and Nutrition Security in the Context of COVID-19 in Zimbabwe

BINGA DISTRICT Response Strategy

Binga District

Matabeleland North



District Brief background

Binga District lies in the Northern part of Matabeleland North province in Zimbabwe and is one of the seven districts in the province. The Northern part of the district borders Zambia with the Zambezi River. Most parts of the district belong in agro ecological region four and five with a population which mainly relies on trading small livestock production and fish trading. It has population of 181 386 people settled in 25 wards. The district has a worrisome open defecation of 59.9% which is the highest in Mat North and has been consistently high. Majority of the households are surviving on Food Assistance from Government or Partners.

The COVID-19 lockdown greatly affected income generating activities of the majority of the population. Fish and kapenta trading was banned. Tourism came to a halt and employees were sent back home. Small livestock trading came to a standstill as no movement was allowed. Cross border trading was banned. Market stalls were closed. Families surviving on these activities were exposed to hunger and food insecurity.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, there was a decrease in food availability as there were no markets-vegetable vendors and no transport for small scale business owners to go and buy commodities in towns. Small scale fishermen were not allowed to fish nor sell fish to traders as government move to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Restricted movement affected small scale farmers and those who sell artefacts to travel around selling their produce and products. Food insecurity increased as some people rely on income they get from daily selling of firewood, vegetables and fish.

Recommendations

- *There is need to increase food availability and access to food by vulnerable food insecure households to cushion them against hunger during the lockdown period.*
- *There is need to increase access to education post primary school so as to increase post education livelihood opportunities.*
- *There is need to promote small grain production which are resilient during these emergency periods characterised by drought.*
- *Promote the Pfumvudza Approach in agriculture to ensure improved harvests since these small plots are micromanaged including watering when necessary until harvest periods.*
- *Capacitate farmers in irrigation schemes so as to increase the quality and quantity of produce.*
- *Binga district's open defecation tops nationwide. There is urgent need to reduce the proportion of households that practice open defecation.*
- *The percentage of children receiving minimum acceptable diet and diversified diet remains very low. More nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive interventions are needed to raise awareness on the need for a diversified diet using locally available resources.*
- *There is need to upscale Covid response through adequately equipping the district civil protection unit.*

Response strategies

- *Increase households targeted for support by government and partners.*
- *Scaling up of registration of COVID 19 allowances by Department of Social Welfare*
- *To expand school feeding programmes to all primary and secondary schools*
- *Need for community awareness programmes to educate parents on the importance of education as less than three quarters of children attend and finish secondary education.*
- *Promote production of drought tolerant and drought resistant varieties*
- *Intensify promotion of climate SMART agriculture*
- *Train farmers on crop diversification*
- *Identify better markets and ensure their accessibility*
- *Need to promote small livestock production*
- *Conduct trainings on livestock disease management and survival feeding,*
- *Promote value addition*
- *Promote demand-led sanitation*
- *Community engagement on the importance of good sanitation*
- *Intensify Participatory Health and Hygiene Education (PHHE)*
- *Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) education and promotion of appropriate infant feeding practices needs to be prioritised. Food supplementation is needed targeting children under five years of age*
- *Promotion of home fortification and use of local ingredients including fruits*
- *Conducting trainings on healthy harvest, food preservation, construction of solar dryers, food diversification, and distribution of a wide variety of agriculture inputs. Promotion of youth projects to increase household income.*
- *People should continue wearing face masks properly and practice social distancing during food distributions. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is need to establish proper market structures, support of small scale businesses, capacitating VHWS with trainings, conducting WASH and COVID-19 trainings*
- *Capacity building on resilience to climate change and emergency preparedness*

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