



Establishing the Nutrition Outcome Gains of The Past Decade and Beyond That Are at Stake of Being Reversed by The COVID -19 Pandemic in Zimbabwe.

Context and background

Zimbabwe has in past 20 years, made great progress in key food and nutrition security indicators despite the myriad of socio, economic and environmental challenges that have characterised the country's landscape. Even though the country is striving hard to further enhance the agricultural sector as well as ensure food is available to all households, according to the 2020 Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment (ZimVAC), at least 56% of rural households are food (cereal) insecure. The 2020 IPC findings indicate that 2.61 million people (27% of the analysed population) in rural Zimbabwe are facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above), while nearly 2.9 million people (29%) are in Stressed (IPC Phase 2). The food insecurity is primarily due to shocks and hazards experienced in the country such as drought, reduced livelihood opportunities due to restrictions linked to COVID-19, pests and diseases, and high food prices (IPC Zimbabwe, 2020). The COVID-19 has menacingly affected households' ability to source for food with observed COVID-19 restrictions resulting in household income reductions of more than 50% (IPC, 2020). This evolving landscape in the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has really brought about a need to take stock of where we are as a country and what gains are at stake with regards to food and nutrition security. Generally, nutrition indicators such as stunting, wasting and underweight have improved markedly over the past decade. However, food security indicators have not done very well and are at the brink of being worsened by the multiple hazard environment the country finds itself in the beginning of 2021.

Purpose

This discussion to amplify the gains that are at stake of being reversed was identified as key in helping to present an overview in a summarised form of what is at stake with regards to key nutrition indicators, in light of this COVID-19. It is also meant to influence decision makers and fellow gatekeepers in the food and nutrition security arena. The paper will also inspire other sectors to take stock in their respective fields and reflect on the gains they need to sustain and closely monitor during these uncertain times.

Methodology

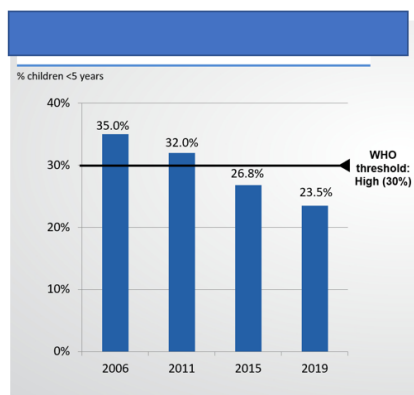
Secondary data from national recognised surveys will be utilised to identify trends.

Objectives

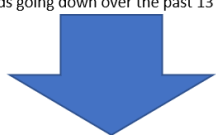
- To give an overview of the key indicators that could be negatively affected by the COVID -19 pandemic.
- To identify practical strategies that can be adopted to sustain the food and nutrition gains of the past decade and beyond.

Nutrition security gains of the past decade that are at stake of being reversed by the COVID-19

**Chart 1.
Chronic Malnutrition**

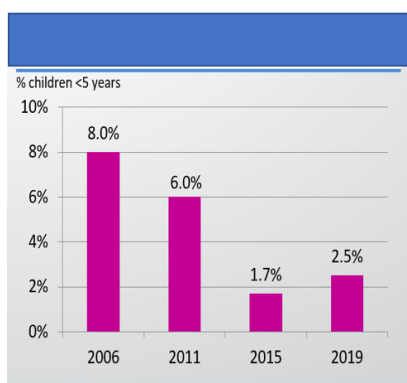


1. Stunting trends going down over the past 13 years



**STUNTING LEVELS
REDUCED BY MORE THAN
10 PERCENTAGE POINT IN
THE LAST 15 YEARS**

**Chart 2.
Overweight**

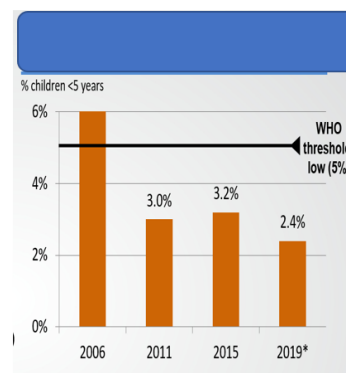


2. Overweight trend going down over the past 13 years.



**OVERWEIGHT DECREASED
BY 5.5 PERCENTAGE POINT
IN THE PAST 15 YEARS.**

**Chart 3.
Wasting**



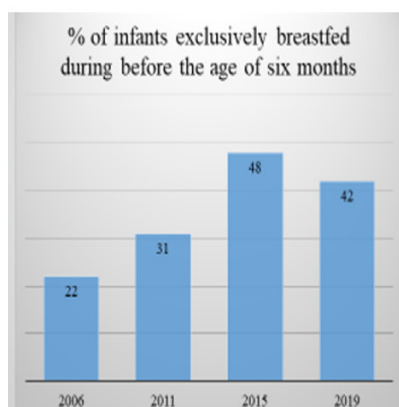
3. Wasting on a general decline over the past 13



**WASTING LEVELS
REDUCED FROM 6% IN
2006 TO 2.4% IN 2019.**

SOURCES DHS 2006,2011,2015, MICS 2019

Chart 4. EBF

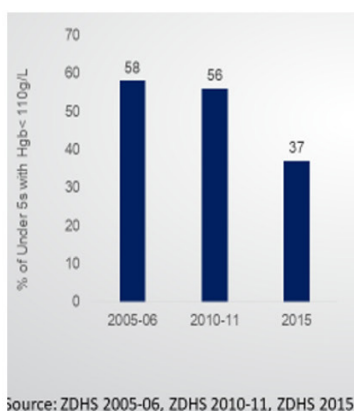


4. EBF rate increased in the past 13 years



**EBF RATES HAVE
INCREASED FROM 21% IN
2006 TO 42% IN 2019**

**Chart 5. Under 5
Anaemia**

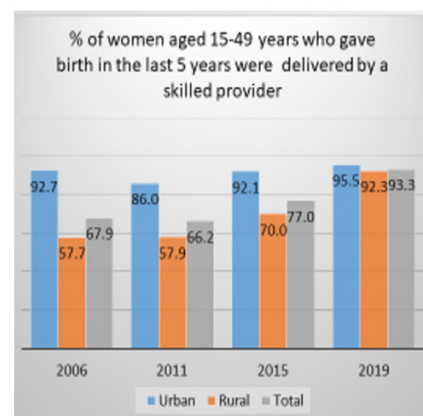


5. U5 Anaemia on a decline over the past 13 years



**ANAEMIA IN UNDER FIVE
CHILDREN WAS ALSO ON A
DOWNWARD TREND SINCE
2006 TO DATE.**

**Chart 6. % Of Pregnant
Women Delivering
Through A Skilled Provider**



6. Increase in the past 13 years of deliveries by skilled provider



**WOMEN GIVING BIRTH
THROUGH A SKILLED
PROVIDER WERE ALSO ON
THE INCREASE.**

SOURCES DHS 2006,2011,2015, MICS 2019

HOW CAN THESE NUTRITION GAINS BE SUSTAINED DURING THIS COVID 19 CRISES?

UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore. "So now is the time to focus even more on the nutrition of children and women. 2021 presents us with a unique opportunity to respond, recover and reimagine better, more effective nutrition policies, programs and actions for the future, and to emerge from the COVID-19 crisis stronger than before." The pandemic could reverse years of progress made in the battle against malnutrition, with children in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa being hardest hit – especially those in poorer households or in crises and conflict zones.

The Government of Zimbabwe and its development partners are to commit to:

- Increased investment in nutrition by the government of Zimbabwe, donors and development partners.
- Strengthen policy guidance as well as a prioritised set of actions to safeguard nutrition in the context of COVID-19, covering six domains: (1) healthy diets; (2) maternal, infant and young child nutrition; (3) management of wasting; (4) micronutrient supplementation; (5) school feeding and nutrition; and (6) nutrition surveillance.
- Ensure emergency response activities are nutrition sensitive.
- Ensure government supported food security programmes and agriculture support cover more households.
- National rehabilitation and drilling of more boreholes to increase availability of clean safe water

References

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2. <https://www.dhsprogram.com/publications/publication-FR322-DHS-Final-Reports.cfm>
3. IPC Zimbabwe Acute Food Insecurity 2020Oct2021Mar_Report | Food Security Cluster (fscluster.org)
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5. Remarks by UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore at the Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Kick-Off Event.
6. WASH (reliefweb.int)
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8. Zimbabwe Rural livelihoods assessment 2020

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