

# ZIMBABWE FOOD CRISIS 2020 POLICY BRIEF



## MORE THAN HALF OF THE POPULATION OF ZIMBABWE FACING STARVATION AMID COVID-19

More than seven million people in Zimbabwe are facing food shortages after the worst drought the Southern African Region has seen in 35 years. This figure is projected to increase to 8.8 million in Zimbabwe as the food crisis deteriorates. The food crisis is as a result of climate induced droughts, Cyclone Idai, floods and macroeconomic situation, putting the lives of millions of peoples' lives and livestock at risk. The outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Zimbabwe with nine cases and one death as at 3 April 2020, means the vulnerability of people living in poverty will continue to deepen as some of the protection measures cannot apply to communities concerned with finding food on the table for the families.

In a Domestic and International Humanitarian Assistance appeal for April 2020-April 2021, the Government of Zimbabwe has made a plea of US\$2.2 billion with immediate effect for providing humanitarian assistance in the short to medium term. The government said about 7.7 million people in both urban and rural areas (5.5 million rural and 2.2 million urban) will require urgent food assistance.

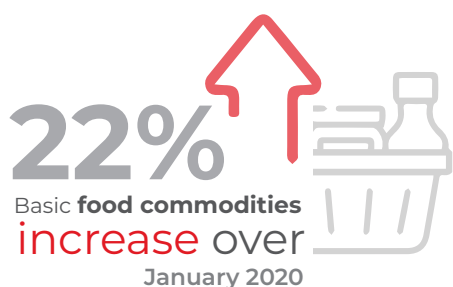
In its Humanitarian Plan for 2020, issued in March 2020, the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) said seven million people in urban and rural areas in Zimbabwe are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance compared to 5.5 million in August 2019.

**“Eating only mangoes and wild fruits has affected my health and my skin has been peeling off. My children go to school on an empty stomach”**

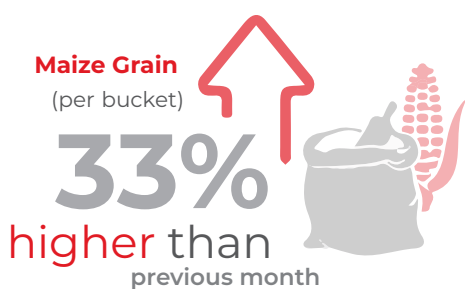
*Nelia a mother of two from Nyazura, Makoni District.*



The food insecurity situation has left many vulnerable women and children resorting to eating wild fruits and reducing meals to one a day or none. Small maize producers are likely to miss their harvest in 2020 after a third consecutive year of drought in Zimbabwe as the crisis escalates. Prices of basic food commodities have increased by 22% over the month of January 2020, with maize grain recording the highest percentage of 53% according to the World Food Programme Zimbabwe Monthly Food Security Outlook for January 2020\*.



According to an ActionAid Zimbabwe Monthly Food Survey for Makoni District as at 29 February 2020, maize grain at Rusape Bus terminus was priced at USD\$7 or ZW\$180 bond cash or RTGs \$250/bucket 33.3% higher than the ZW\$135/bucket price in the last month. Maize traders were charging on average 25-35% more for mobile money payments. Rusape Town recorded the highest price at ZW\$185/bucket in bond cash while Devedzo and Chiendambuya (the traditional maize surplus producing areas) recorded the lowest price of ZW\$175.00/bucket and ZW\$178.00/bucket respectively.



The ActionAid Zimbabwe Monthly Food Basket Survey for February 2020 revealed that mealie meal is not readily available in the district and when available it is very expensive. 10kg of parleta is selling at ZW\$168.00. The shortage is so severe that some people have resorted to physical fighting to get their hands on the country's staple on the few occasions that they manage to come across it (the subsidized roller meal). It also emerged that some licensed retailers were taking the commodity to the black market, where they were selling clandestinely in foreign currency which many cannot afford to get hold of. More people can no longer afford all the necessary basic commodities as the prices continue to rise.

Women and girls are on the frontline of the food insecurity crisis and bear the brunt of any humanitarian disaster. There are reports of school dropouts as families prioritize food, performance of household's chores as well as casual labour over attending school. Violence and abuse, trafficking sexual exploitation, limited access to services by vulnerable groups including children, women, people with disabilities and HIV/AIDS affected persons, are on the increase. There is a growing risk of community tension as the lean season gets to its peak and the price of grains keep hiking even when government has committed to subsidising.

# 92 786

**ASSISTED in**  
Makoni & Nyanga

In response to the unfolding humanitarian and food security crises, ActionAid Zimbabwe is implementing the WFP Lean Season Assistance programme in Makoni and Nyanga districts reaching 92786 people between January and April 2020. The organisation is supporting 5046 people in Chimanimani and Chipinge districts through its Women Led Early Recovery Cyclone Idai Response Programme from September 2019 to September 2020. ActionAid and its Value Chain Alliance Livestock Upgrading Programme partners supported under the European Union funded Zimbabwe Agricultural Growth Programme are implementing a commercialisation project to build communities that are more resilient to shocks and stresses such as droughts reaching 11 000 people in six provinces namely Manicaland, Matabeleland South, Matabeleland North, Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East and Mashonaland West. As part of the humanitarian support to the situation in Zimbabwe, ActionAid and partners under the Zimbabwe Resilience Building Programme (ZRBF) are supporting 218005 people in the three districts of Binga, Kariba and Mbire.

PROGRAMME	TOTAL REACH
Lean Season Assistance	92 786
Cyclone Idai	5 046
Zimbabwe Agricultural Growth Program	11 000
Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund	218 005
<b>TOTAL REACH</b>	<b>326 837</b>
<b>TARGET REACH</b>	<b>500 000</b>
<b>ActionAid target Gap</b>	<b>173 163</b>

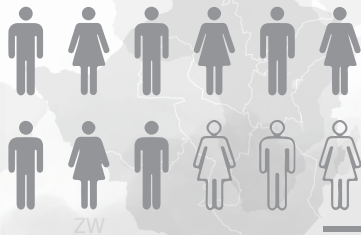
# ACTIONAID HUMANITARIAN AND LEAN SEASON SUPPORT 2019 TO 2023

ActionAid Zimbabwe is currently fundraising to expand the reach of its humanitarian and lean season assistance to at least 500 000 people in its humanitarian and lean season assistance programmes. We are aware that there are other development agencies that are implementing humanitarian assistance programmes in other areas, but current programmes fall short of the estimated 8.8 million food insecure people.

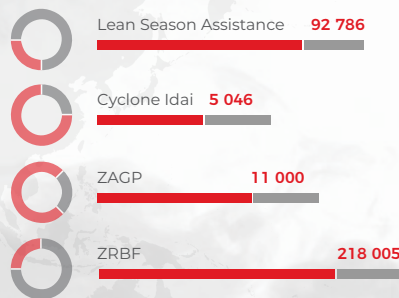
The WFP has scaled up its lean season distribution to reach around 4.1 million people nationally in form of food aid. Because the support is in form of food, the distribution will heighten the safeguarding, women's protection issues and exploitation risks to women and girls. In addition, the programme is limited with regards to taking into consideration voices of women and women's organisations. Most of its responses deprioritises women's issues, particularly women's leadership and the prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV).

## ACTIONAID ZIMBABWE'S REACH (2019 - 2023)

ActionAid Zimbabwe is targeting a total of 500 000 people, however to date support is at 326 837



### Breakdown of reach per project



**TOTAL REACH 326 837**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Government should urgently make it public that the country is facing a humanitarian crisis to trigger the mobilisation of much needed relief just like they have done with COVID-19
- ii. Government must urgently pull resources together to support the people in need
- iii. Government should prioritise fostering broad based and women-led sustainable agricultural policies
- iv. Women and young people affected by the food crisis should access and lead a fair, inclusive and sustainable international response (scale up) which protects them.
- v. Government should prioritise reviewing the national climate change policy to boost agricultural productivity which assures food security

Read more about ActionAid's work on humanitarian assistance here:

<https://actionaid.org/stories/2020/families-receive-life-saving-food-supplies-drought-hit-zimbabwe>

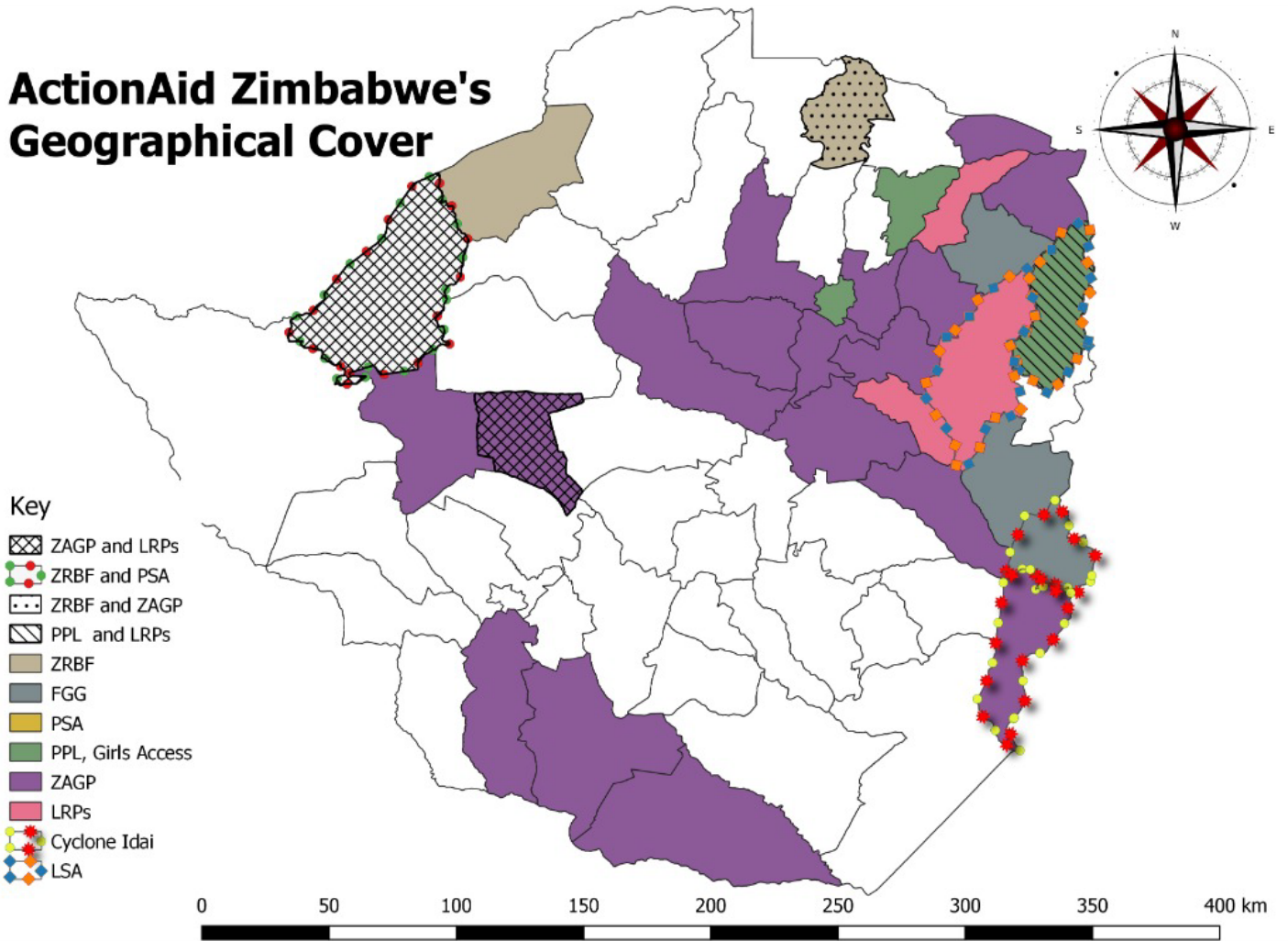


Social distancing being practised as women queue and receive food as part of ActionAid Zimbabwe and WFP distribution in Nyanga on 3 April 2020 done despite a COVID-19 Lock Down in Zimbabwe, showing the high levels of vulnerability of communities facing hunger.

# ACTIONAID ZIMBABWE GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

The following is a map showing ActionAid Zimbabwe Programmes and Project Geographical Coverage in Zimbabwe as at March 2020.

## ActionAid Zimbabwe's Geographical Cover



### The Map key acronyms

- Cyclone Idai Response
- Empowered Adolescent Girls for Improved Quality of Life -funded by the People Post Code (PPL)
- Fair Global Green (FGG)
- Empowering Girls to Overcome Barriers to Education
- Lean Season Assistance (LSA)
- Local Rights Programmes (LRPs)
- Partnership for Social Accountability (PSA)
- Zimbabwe Agricultural Growth Programme (ZAGP)
- Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund (ZRBF)

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