

MONITORING URBAN POVERTY IN A FAILING STATE: HARARE, ZIMBABWE

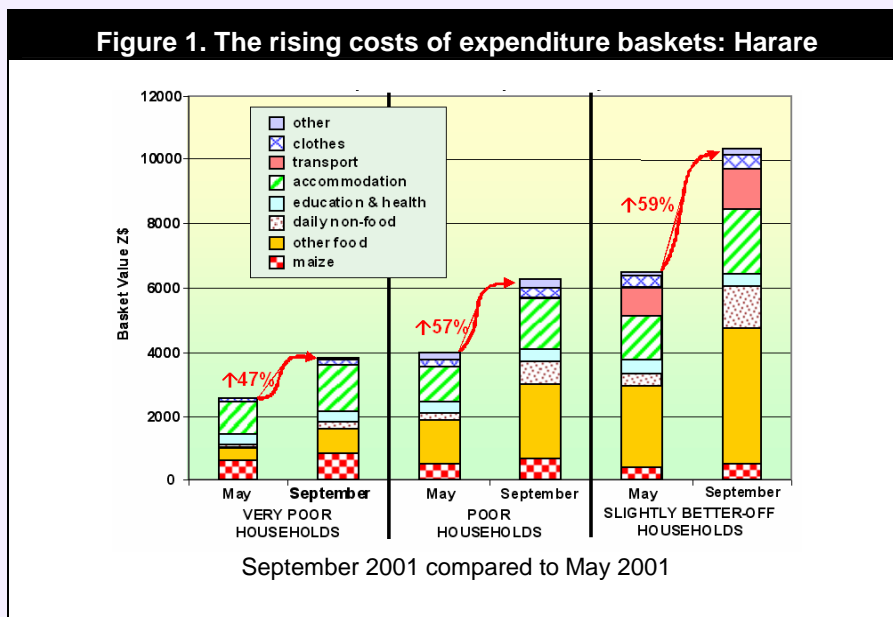
The case study below shows how HEA was used by FEWS NET and the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe to help design a practical monitoring system in Harare in 2001.

Case study: Using HEA to monitor food security and poverty in Harare¹

In 2001 FEWS NET and the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (CCZ) carried out an assessment of urban vulnerability in greater Harare, one aim of which was to recommend a practical monitoring system that provided an early indication of declining access to food and essential cash income.

The assessment team recommended a two-pronged approach, involving the monitoring of both expenditure and income. On the one side, patterns of expenditure for the poorer families were translated into particular ‘expenditure baskets’, the price of which could be tracked over time. On the other side, a monthly survey of incomes and profits among informal businesses was proposed, as well as the monitoring of incomes in the formal sector.

An example of how this information was used later in 2001 is given in Figure 1. The graph shows the rise in the cost of the expenditure baskets for three wealth groups.



Parallel monitoring of formal sector wages showed an increase in wages that lagged far behind such price increases. The picture for the informal sector was mixed, with income from some businesses keeping pace with inflation, while others lagged behind.

The main shock to which households in Harare were vulnerable in 2001 was inflation – in the price of rents, electricity, bus fares and food - together with formal sector job losses and crackdowns on ‘illegal’ businesses in the informal sector, which resulted in the loss of tools, goods and capital.

¹ FEWS NET/Consumer Council of Zimbabwe, *Harare Urban Vulnerability Assessment*. FEWS NET/CCZ, Harare. July 2001