



Zimbabwe Election Period: Weekly Situation Report

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I. SITUATION ANALYSIS

On the 4th of June 2008, the Zimbabwean Government, through the Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, instructed all Private Voluntary Organisations (PVO) / Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to suspend their field operations across the country until further notice. During the week preceding the instruction, another letter had been written by the Minister of Local Government, National Housing and Urban Development almost to the same effect. District Administrators had begun implementing the instruction by summoning humanitarian actors and informing them of the instruction to cease operations with immediate effect.

Most humanitarian actors had already reduced operations due to the up coming run off elections planned to be held on the 27th of June, 2008. Those working were concentrating only on critical programmes and were running on skeletal staff such as HIV programmes, OVC programmes and supplementary child feeding. For example, vulnerable group feeding (VGF) programmes had been stopped before the March 29 elections and had not resumed. Many organisations were still waiting for assessments to be conducted and these would inform where the needy populations are for them to provide assistance. Such assessments, like ZIMVAC have also been postponed until after elections.

Observed impact:

- An immediate cut of supplies to vulnerable groups, including HIV / AIDS programmes and child supplementary feeding programmes, has potential impact of affecting 500, 000- 1,4 00 000 people.
- Most programmes of the UN have also stopped because they are implemented through PVOs / NGOs.

Foreseen impact:

- Increasing numbers of people falling in the vulnerable group category, with little assistance coming.
- Folding up of some critical humanitarian actors in critical sectors, leaving vulnerable populations worse off.

II. UPDATE ON HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES

Food Security

- Humanitarian organizations and particularly World Vision had planned to distribute food rations to 11,075 highly vulnerable communities in Bulawayo prior to the PVO/NGO activities suspension letter. The distribution has since been stopped.
- The market assistance programme (MAP) which distribute subsidized sorghum meal through targeted retail outlets in urban Bulawayo, which help meet the cereal gap of 200, 000 individuals monthly, has been suspended from the 6th of June, 2008 until further notice.

Protection

The suspension of humanitarian activities of NGOs by the government raises serious protection concerns as it directly affected life-saving interventions that were supporting over 330,000 people.

There are no marked increases reported in the cases of politically motivated violence, but severity of attacks are said to have worsened. The impact of the violence and the consequent displacement children is also worrying as separations of children from their families continue to be widely reported. The total number of missing children so far is 69.

Health

World Vision is very concerned about the combined impact of the current nurses strikes and suspension of the food support program for the chronically ill (those affected and infected by HIV/AIDS, TB etc)

Mobile and Vulnerable Populations

- IOM and its implementing partners continue to assist victims of politically motivated violence, and have to date assisted 5 684 MVPs with blankets, soap, sanitary wear, supplementary food and emergency sanitation. The assistance is largely carried out in Harare where IOM has not faced restrictions even after the letter of suspension from government. Moving relief assistance to outside Harare has become impossible after the suspension though IOM partners still do so under cover or in low profile; to areas like Masvingo.

Lutheran Development Services (LDS) reported that it has been difficult to both implement humanitarian activities and monitor the effects of political processes on vulnerable populations as movement to the field has been curtailed. However information trickling in through a variety of sources is to the effect that all is not well. Communities are living in perpetual fear and a number are on the run and homeless.

Nutrition

- The suspension of NGO activities will definitely impact on the nutritional status of the children.
- Save the Children Norway (SCN-Z), reported that before the NGO activity suspension, the child supplementary feeding programme was reaching a total of 47 333 children (32 260 under fives, 436 children living in child headed households and 14 634 children living in elderly headed households. The programme has since been suspended.

WASH

- Activities have been suspended in conformity to the government directive through a letter dated the 4th of June, 2008..

Education

According to Zimbabwe Teachers Association, in general, there are less teachers reporting cases of violence in and around schools although violence is reported to have increased in areas such as Mashonaland Central, Buhera and Gutu during the last two weeks. Most teachers and children are still not back at school in those areas.

In the areas where no cases of violence have been reported, the situation remained relatively calm with children accessing school as usual. However teachers are reported to be absent from their schools most of the time in order to attend political campaign meetings that are called for by political parties. At these meetings, teachers continue to be threatened and blamed for the loss of votes that certain political parties suffered during the last election since they were participating in the voter education. This de-motivates them and instills a sense of fear and insecurity in them. All this is affecting the teaching and learning process at schools.

III. PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

The following arrangements continue to be in place, to facilitate effective humanitarian coordination and in anticipation of resource mobilization:

1. The suggested contingency planning alert window is now extended, 15 March to 31 August 2008. It covers in space and time all possible outcomes of the electoral process, including the impacts of the second tour of the presidential elections. OCHA has a collocation agreement with WFP during the period, including essential NGO Staff.
2. OCHA is maintaining an Emergency Relief Supply and Capacity Matrix for Zimbabwe, with the excellent cooperation of humanitarian partner organizations.
The emergency stockpiles list is posted on <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/dbc.nsf/doc108?OpenForm&emid=ACOS-635PHU&RC=1> and <http://ochaonline.un.org/zimbabwe>
3. Possible gap areas in coordination support have been identified, as well as needs for surge capacity from HQ and the regional level.
4. Humanitarian analysis, monitoring and advocacy are being strengthened in view of the increased pressure on ongoing programmes.
5. Weekly situation reports will be issued throughout the entire expanded alert period until 31 August 2008.
6. Daily meetings by the UNCT Crisis Group have strengthened UN security arrangements for the country although there are serious telecommunications issues which WFP has offered support through provision of VHF radios.
7. Emergency Focal points contact list updated. *Posted on <http://ochaonline.un.org/zimbabwe>*
8. Capacity mapping of the key humanitarian agencies/NGOs in Zimbabwe.
9. Strengthening of the IASC and cluster implementation.
10. Enhancement of information sharing mechanisms and information management tools where OCHA has stepped up the production of information support tools including situation reports, maps, humanitarian updates and contact lists on a 24-hour basis. Weekly Technical Coordination Meetings are taking place every Monday at 2:30, at UNICEF. They provide a broad forum where humanitarian actors can build consensus on humanitarian analysis, operational challenges and best practices on how to operate in a context of restricted humanitarian access, including violence and intimidation.
11. Mapping and monitoring high-risk geographical areas.

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