



# Zimbabwe Election Period: Weekly Situation Report

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## I. SITUATION ANALYSIS

On June 4, 2008, the Zimbabwean Government, through the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare issued a letter suspending all field operations of Private Voluntary Organisations (PVOs) / NGOs until further notice. The reason was that some organizations had been accused of breaching the terms and conditions of their registration as enshrined in the PVO Act [Chapter 17:05] as well as the provisions of the Code of Procedures for the registration and operation of NGOs (General notice 99 of 2007).

At the request of the humanitarian community, OCHA organised a briefing the Government to clarify the extent of the suspension and attended by the UN and NGOs on June 12, 2008. Clarity was provided on a number of issues including:

- *Definition of field operations:* movement of NGOs / PVOs personnel and communities in order to mobilize, organize or bring together large numbers of people.
- *Interpretation of suspension:* it does not imply banning or deregistration of PVOs / NGOs.
- *Reasons for suspension:* breach of terms and condition of registration as enshrined in the PVO Act by engaging in political activities. To allow fair and transparent investigations, field operations of PVOs / NGOs had to be suspended.
- *Duration of suspension:* Investigations should be dispensed as soon as possible to allow PVOs / NGOs to resume their normal operations.

There have been fears that the suspension of NGOs / PVOs meant that all critical live-saving interventions had to be stopped. This would naturally result in a serious humanitarian situation. However, government clarified that the suspension:

- Does not prohibit beneficiaries on ART and HBC to continue accessing drugs and therapeutic feeds from clinics and hospitals;
- Does not prohibit those providing supplementary feeding programmes to children;
- Does not mean head offices, regional offices and district offices should close, but only field operations;
- Does not affect churches.

On Friday 13 June 2008, the Government issued a clarification memo that was circulated by OCHA to all organisations lifting the suspension for activities not involving community gatherings, such as supplementary school feeding and HIV / AIDS. However, more work remains to be done to ensure that the message effectively reached local authorities and is implemented.

Further negotiations need to be undertaken to ensure that the most vulnerable populations continue to receive assistance, first of all targeting those groups for which relief operations have not been suspended. However, still with this clarification from Government, organizations are reporting having been visited by police representatives with an instruction to inform all NGOs to close down and consider themselves deregistered. They would only re-open after having complied with the re-registration process. The most affected organizations are those with offices/operations outside of Harare, particularly those in Matabeleland. Local authorities have also suspended all NGO movements between main cities and roadblocks have been instructed to prevent NGO cars from reaching some parts of the country; for example, Mutare to Chipinge.

Meanwhile, the Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs, Mr Menkerios visited the country from Monday 16 to Friday 20 June 2008. He met with President Mugabe on Tuesday 17 June and raised the issue of humanitarian access.

### *Observed impacts*

- Constricted / complete closure of humanitarian space; enforced stoppage of operations and intimidation of staff;
- Political violence and intimidation moved to some high density suburbs in urban areas, with demands to attend rallies;
- Independence of citizens is overlooked as there are daily call outs to meetings at base camps in both rural and urban areas
- More protection concerns in the form of separation of women and children from their families.
- Disrupted livelihoods as market traders at rural growth points are instructed to close shop until after the elections.
- Disruption of the education system as more teachers are targeted and some schools continue to be used as political bases.

### *Foreseen impacts*

- Access restrictions for all humanitarian actors until after the run-off elections;
- Deregistration of NGOs implicated in the current investigations;
- More displacements, increased incidences of violence, injuries and fatal casualties in the run-up to the run-off election.
- Increased vulnerabilities as all PVOs / NGOs have been asked to suspend their operations until further notice.
- More displacements, increased incidences of violence, injury and fatal casualties in the run-up for the run-off election.
- Regardless of the outcome of the presidential elections, a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation is very likely; either triggered by a further isolation of Zimbabwe or a new rise in violent attacks surrounding the hand-over of power.

## II. UPDATE ON HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES

## **Food Security**

- A number of NGOs have reported that all their activities have been suspended.
- The sudden loss of humanitarian space is currently impacting WFP's safety-net activities and its preparations for large scale general food distributions planned to start in July 2008. The immediate impact of the suspension of NGO activities is affecting some 300,000 people targeted by WFP from among the most vulnerable in Zimbabwe. Safety-net activities seek to provide reliable and constant food assistance to the most food insecure groups, such as the bed-ridden HIV-AIDS affected, accessed through HBC programmes, and patients receiving HIV-AIDS and/or TB treatment who are accessed through the Nutritional Support to Anti-Retroviral Therapy programme. The risk to these people's health status will likely be seriously affected by the disruption of both the medical and food assistance components. This is even more worrisome as the latest round of WFP's Community Household Surveillance shows that in this harvest time, Zimbabwean households are already showing signs of stress higher than that experienced at the peak of last year's hunger season.
- The suspension raises serious concern over the impact it will have on the agricultural situation of the most vulnerable. This part of the season is critical for Conservation Farming (CF) principles and for the vegetable winter season. Suspending the assistance entails the risk of even poorer yields in the coming season, thus deepening the hunger.

## **Protection**

- There are reports of increases in politically motivated violence and intimidations in urban and rural areas, in terms of the number of victims and the severity of the attacks. However, it is difficult to obtain quantitative and verifiable information on the magnitude and trend of the violence as well as the humanitarian needs of the displaced populations; as the recent suspension of NGO field operations has further curtailed the access, collection and dissemination of information. The Protection Sector Working Group noted that provincial / local authorities have not been informed of the Government's explanations and clarifications of the 4 June suspension of field activities. Most agencies continue facing difficulties in conducting any field activities.
- A revised protection strategy and action plan is under preparation with the support of OCHA-DPSS, taking into consideration the main protection concerns in the country and the existing response capacity. The outputs of the short humanitarian planning exercise organised last week by OCHA will feed into this process.

## **Health**

- Distribution of vital and essential medicines has started through the NatPharm, supported by UNICEF and donors in the districts of Mutasa and Nyanga in Manicaland and Tsholotsho and Lupane in Matabeleland. UNICEF and ECHO will be conducting a monitoring visit to two NatPharm regional stores and clinics in order to follow up on distribution and find out what are the challenges facing this programme.
- Due to the current harsh economic situation some health workers in different health facilities are not turning up to work. For example, nurses in Bulawayo were not coming in for work for the past two weeks. Though people believe that they are on strike they say that they are not on strike but have no sufficient funds to come to work.
- On the other hand, access to health services by the communities in many parts of the country is decreasing due to transport and huge increases in the user fees at hospitals and local authority clinics. Special groups (such as under fives) are exempted from user fees but this is not being implemented in some of the (mostly city) health facilities.

## **Mobile and Vulnerable Populations**

- To date, IOM and its implementing partners have assisted over 5823 mobile and vulnerable people countrywide. The assistance was in the form of blankets, soap, sanitary wear, supplementary food, emergency sanitation and shelter. IOM also continues its health activities to support MVPs throughout Zimbabwe with mobile clinics and other health services, as well as responding to emergency health needs.

## **Nutrition**

- A number of NGOs have reported that all their activities have been suspended.
- As part of emergency preparedness, with the possibility of deterioration in the nutrition situation of children and lack of commodities at therapeutic units, UNICEF is scaling up its support to hospital based nutrition care in all 70 Ministry of Health and Child Welfare Therapeutic Feeding Units across the country. This is in addition to UNICEF support to community management of severe malnutrition in 10 districts. Training on management of treatment of severe malnutrition has commenced for provincial health teams and it will be rolled out to the districts over the coming weeks. Commodity support needs are being assessed but will include RUTF and F-75 if and when the permission is received from the MoHCW to import emergency stocks of therapeutic feeding milk F-75. The MoHCW does not approve the importation of therapeutic feeding milks such as F75 and F100 as it is outside the national protocol for the treatment of severe malnutrition. Nevertheless, importation of F-75 for a six month period has been recommended by the government chaired Community Nutrition Care Taskforce and UNICEF is advocating with the government to approve its importation.

## **WASH**

- A number of NGOs have reported that all their activities have been suspended.
- WASH cluster has met as planned and developed a rapid questionnaire for members to ascertain resources (material, human etc) available for immediate response. A consolidated contingency materials list will be developed from this information.
- A smaller working "Crisis Task force" has been created from within WASH cluster members to carry planning and response activities forward.
- Water trucking by UNICEF to Mabvuku and Tafara in Harare continues while 4 boreholes have been completed. 16 are still being drilled in the two locations.

## **Education**

- Zimbabwe Teachers Association confirmed that more reports of violence in and around schools are being received from Manicaland, Mashonaland Central, and Masvingo. In other areas, teachers are not teaching because they are attending political campaign meetings regularly. At the meetings, the same teachers are threatened and sometimes beaten up resulting in the majority of them fleeing to seek refuge either with relatives in towns or mountains. Many of the schools are now without teachers and where there are teachers children tend not to go to school. A number of schools continue to serve as bases for political violence.

#### Refugees

- UNHCR continues to monitor the election period situation and liaises with fellow UN (within IASC and UNCT mechanisms), international and other organizations concerning the reported instances of political violence and stands ready to respond to the needs of the affected population within the broader UN led response scheme and in accordance with its mandate and resources.

### 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 presidential elections re-run. 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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