



Zimbabwe Election Period: Weekly Situation Report

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I. SITUATION ANALYSIS

The political status-quo does not clarify uncertainties affecting humanitarian agencies and their activities. The suspension of NGOs remains in effect, despite the announced relaxation of restrictions on HIV/AIDS and supplementary feeding activities. Identified priorities include:

- Continued advocacy for opening of humanitarian space
- Carrying out needs assessments
- Reconciliation efforts at national and community level, particularly for perpetrators and victims of violence.
- Addressing the immediate humanitarian needs of people (food, shelter, ART etc)
- Strategies for mitigating the increased shortages of basic commodities and food insecurity, considering the early warning raised by the latest CFSAM.

End last week a group of 494 people (342 from SA embassy, 52 from Germany embassy; but only 387 registered, as 7 refused to register) sought refuge at the South African Embassy. Upon receiving assurances regarding their security and welfare, the group agreed for the Government to move them to a temporary reception centre in Ruwa, on the outskirts of Harare. UN humanitarian agencies, the Zimbabwe Red Cross and IFRC, Christian care and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches accompanied the group to the site, providing psychological protection and humanitarian assistance. A site management Committee was formed on Saturday 28 June and has been working 24H to coordinate relief efforts and ensure that the people sheltered in Ruwa are assisted with dignity. Some of the beneficiaries have indicated that they are prepared to be re-integrated back to their communities if support is available, it is guaranteed that their protection will be assured and humanitarian organisation were ready to accompany their reintegration into affected communities. A Stakeholder Committee was formed at Head of Agency level, including the UN, Ministry of Public Services Labour and Social Welfare, IOM and the Zimbabwe Red Cross. The Stakeholder Committee met on 1 July and start charting the way forward for addressing the case of people sheltered in Ruwa as well as a comprehensive response to the overall humanitarian backload of displacements. All parties agreed to maintain this channel of cooperation and meet at least once a week.

The issue of humanitarian access and suspension of NGOs was raised at the Stakeholder meeting. The Government responded that the ongoing suspension of NGOs was a Cabinet decision and will soon be considered by the Cabinet, when its resume work. It was understood that the lifting of the suspension was just a matter of time and will be decided once cabinet starts meeting. However, the few NGOs under investigation will remain suspended until their cases are cleared.

Observed impacts

- Humanitarian space is still very limited,
- The absence of partners on the ground and lack of assessment make it difficult to map out impacts and plan adequate response.

Foreseen impacts

- More restrictions and field challenges for all humanitarian actors as discussion continue on forming government.
- Prolonged suspension of NGOs / PVOs under investigations for alleged involvement in politics.
- Best case scenario of subsiding of violence across the country and less political tensions in result of negotiations. .

II. UPDATE ON HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES

Food Security

- As part of a humanitarian assistance package, WFP is providing food assistance to over 300 people that sought refuge at the Embassy of South Africa and now temporary sheltered in Ruwa.
- WFP has been reviewing the joint WFP/FAO Crop and Food Supply Assessment findings with government, donors and cooperating partners and developing operational plans. A budget revision is near completion for an anticipated expanded food assistance programme that is expected to assist some 4 million people during the peak hunger season. WFP food assistance is to be complemented by C-SAFE programme that plans to assist another 1.1 million food insecure people.
- Recent WFP Community and Household Surveillance shows that many households are already employing a large number of negative coping strategies to meet their household food gap, coping strategies that would be normally applied at the height of the hunger season (usually the January to March period).
- The GoZ suspension of NGO field operations continues to seriously impact the delivery of food assistance. During the protracted election period humanitarian activities and movements have remained on hold. It is hoped that WFP will resume food distributions as planned in the upcoming month.
- All new dispatches to World Vision operational are still on hold, in compliance with suspension of NGOs areas (except for selected urban institutions and community kitchens in Bulawayo).

- With no staff in the field, no field monitoring activities are taking place for all WV activities: ECHO chronically ill programmes; ECHO safety net programmes; CSAFE supported programmes and the WFP supported SBFP.
- Some Bulawayo Urban Feeding programmes, cleared by Government key stakeholders for distribution in the previous week, opened a way for Corn Soya Blend distributions taking place in 27 institutions and 6 community kitchens. A total of 2.7MT were distributed to beneficiaries supported by some churches in Bulawayo.
- Field visits by World Vision staff are still on hold.

Protection

- There are increasing reports of sexual violence, though unconfirmed. UNFPA and its partner Musasa continue to provide counseling and assistance to SGBV survivors through its hotline (08003268727).
- CONTACT Family Counseling Centre in Bulawayo: after a short period of confusion over the suspension of operations issue, the counseling services department was open to the public and the "Child Sexual Abuse Project" continued helping sexually abused children with medical, legal and social assistance following a clear definition on "field operations" was given. During the month of June 153 cases received counseling assistance in face-to face sessions while 16 cases resorted to telephone counseling. At the same period about 20 sexually abused children and their families received some sort of assistance either with medical examinations and treatment of STIs, or safe shelter arrangements etc
- On Thursday night, 26 June, 342 people sought refuge on the parking place of the South African embassy. Immediate assistance that evening and the day after was provided by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC); food, water jerry cans, kitchen sets, soap, buckets, hygiene kits, baby packs and clothes and MSF provided health care & Tents. IOM/UNICEF provided 400+ blankets during the first evening of the stand-off. On Friday, the South African Ambassador convened a series of meetings with UN-HC, IOM, UNICEF, Zimbabwe Council of Churches and Director Social Welfare (GoZ) to find a solution to the situation. After seven hours of discussions and negotiations with representatives of the displaced people it was agreed that the IFRC together with the Zimbabwe Red Cross Society (ZRCS) would move the group to a Rehabilitation Centre of the Ministry of Public Service (15 km outside of Harare) where they would be assisted by church and humanitarian organizations. Another 40+ people who unsuccessfully attempted to enter the German embassy on Thursday last week are also residing at the same centre. Support is currently being provided to the people at the centre where the Zimbabwe Red Cross Society (ZRCS) are maintaining a 24 hours presence assisting these communities.
- A major point of concern is the security and protection of the people when they will leave the centre in the coming weeks as well as urgent attention on the reunification of separated children.
- Training in trauma and child counseling for volunteers is being organized by UNICEF. This is for volunteers who previously have been trained in palliative care for children. Training will be conducted by one of UNICEF long standing partners in this field - CONNECT and the volunteers will be drawn from HOSPAZ home base care implementing partners. The training is scheduled to take place at UNICEF from 1-3 July.
- There are reports of post election violence from Matabeleland (in constituencies that had by elections) and in Mudzi, Buhera and Gokwe.
- Those who observed the elections report that they witnessed unidentified individuals recording the details of those who were voting and in some instances voters were being requested to note down the serial number of the ballot paper on which they would have voted. This creates a more than remote possibility that in the event of an outbreak of retributive violence the violence can be executed in a targeted fashion and with a high degree of precision.

Health

- Consignments of medicines for rural health clinics procured through the emergency vital and essential medicines programme (Pooled fund: DFID, ECHO, IrishAid, CIDA supplying 80% of essential drugs for entire public sector in the country) have been distributed to all branch stores. The biggest challenge in distribution remains the availability of fuel resulting in non-deliveries from the branch stores to district levels. UNICEF is assessing and discussing a possibility of direct distributions from branches to clinics in most needed areas.

Mobile and Vulnerable Populations

- Mobile and vulnerable populations who took refuge at the Embassies of South Africa and Germany are now being assisted at the National Rehabilitation Centre in Ruwa. Support provided to this group consists of blankets, hygiene kits, food, condoms, as well as water, sanitation, and health services.
- Additionally, IOM and its partners continue to provide humanitarian assistance to a total of 8305 mobile and vulnerable populations.

Nutrition

- Preparations are now fully underway with Food & Nutrition Council for the upcoming nutrition surveillance exercise. The teams will go into the field on the 27th of July. The assessment will cover 10 districts and result in estimates that will be statistically representative at district level. The selected districts include the eight districts with worst nutrition levels in previous surveillance round and two additional districts.

WASH

- The situation still remains unclear regarding the operational space for NGO partners, and as a result, partners are not yet operating at community level. UNICEF together with Zimbabwe Red Cross Society (ZRCS) is providing assistance with water and sanitation facilities to over 390 displaced people who have been relocated at Ruwa Rehabilitation Centre from the South African and German Embassy. A total of 10,000 liters of water is being trucked on a daily basis and this is to be increased to 20,000 during the course of the week. Support also includes provision of plastic water containers for individual household water collection and storage as well as chloride of lime for disinfection. In addition, 14 movable latrines have been hired for use by the affected people as the water borne latrines at the center are not functional. Efforts are also underway to repair the broken down toilet facilities.
- Daily trucking of 135,000 liters of water continues to the two suburbs of Mabvuku and Tafara in Harare which continue to receive erratic water supplies.

Education

- Government closed all schools to make way for the elections as schools are used as polling venues. Schools will reopen on 2nd of July 2008. There have not been any reports from schools and partners since last Thursday.

Refugees

- UNHCR refugee programme in Tongogara refugee camp has remained largely unaffected thus far by the post-election crisis. Urban-based refugees have not reported facing any major protection concerns as a result of the ongoing situation. While new applications for asylum have continued to be lodged during this period, the total number of registered refugees and asylum-seekers in Zimbabwe has remained relatively steady so far this year at just under 5,000 persons.

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 remains up to 31 August 2008. This covers in space and time all possible outcomes of the electoral process, including the impacts of the presidential elections re-run and its aftermaths. 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 are being monitored, as well as needs for surge capacity from HQ and the regional level. This is in direct link with cluster implementation and the functioning of Working Groups and other coordination structures during and after the crisis.
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. A Stakeholder Committee has been formed at Head of Agency level, including the UN, Ministry of Public Services Labour and Social Welfare, IOM and the Zimbabwe Red Cross, to oversee humanitarian needs emerging from Ruwa, plan and facilitate the way forward for a safe return and reintegration of the displaced into their communities.
8. Emergency Focal points contact list updated. *Posted on <http://ochaonline.un.org/zimbabwe>*
9. Capacity mapping of the key humanitarian agencies/NGOs in Zimbabwe.
10. The IASC is meeting regularly and NGOs participation has been extended. Donors are also briefed regularly.
11. 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 2:00, 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.
12. Mapping and monitoring high-risk geographical areas.

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