



Zimbabwe Election Period: Weekly Situation Report

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I. SITUATION ANALYSIS

OCHA is planning a three day in-country Humanitarian Response Planning Workshop, to review humanitarian needs and gaps for the next six months. The overall aim of this exercise is seeking a way forward to guarantee unfettered humanitarian access as well as a commitment by humanitarians and the Government of Zimbabwe - at all levels- to facilitate access to people in need in a context without political violence.

The workshop will bring together Government officials, Civil Society and the UN to review needs and constraints to humanitarian action, gaps and funding requirements, if all parties agree to hold this workshop. A review of the existing coordination mechanisms as well as humanitarian response plans will be undertaken. The workshop should take place in early August.

As part of efforts to improve access, OCHA has received five humanitarian assistance distribution requests from NGOs to be presented to the Director of Social Welfare Services, covering activities that are not affected by the 4 June suspension and as clarified by the Letter issued on 13 June, but which is often not accepted at field level. These activities include HIV/AIDS and supplementary feeding. NGOs with this type of programming have continued to report blockage of humanitarian assistance due to misinterpretation of the extent of the suspension.

Identified priorities are:

- Continued advocacy for opening of humanitarian space
- Carrying out needs assessments
- 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.

A Joint field assessment report on two provinces where the people being offered temporary shelter at the National Rehabilitation Centre in Ruwa, originated from was presented to the Stakeholders Committee that is overseeing the safe return of the affected people. The assessment was carried out by the Government, UN, IOM and the Zimbabwe Red Cross with the Government acting as team leaders. The Stakeholders Committee immediately asked the site management committee to start planning the voluntary return of the displaced. The UN has indicated that it is willing to provide food and non-food items as part of return package for the affected people. The Stakeholders Committee has asked the Government to consider alternative temporary accommodation for some of the people who have indicated unwillingness to return to their place of initial displacement.

Observed impacts as a result of continued restriction of humanitarian access:

- 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

- If not lifted soon, the current suspension of field operations mean that hundreds of thousands of households will not receive agricultural input support for the 2008/09 season, condemning them to another food insecure year due to untimely delivery of inputs.
- 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 as a result of negotiations.

II. UPDATE ON HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES

Food Security

- For WFP, the continued suspension of NGO operations has serious implications on the upcoming large-scale emergency food distribution programme, expected to start as early as August 2008. Despite the suspension, VGF preparatory planning is underway and WFP and CPs are actively engaging local authorities to use any window of opportunity for resumption of NGO field work in the coming weeks.
- In July, WFP aims to continue with its safety-net/health-based activities, though the government NGO suspension could affect distribution plans that seek to reach some 318,000 beneficiaries. WFP is working with local authorities to resume food assistance activities that target school children, mobile and vulnerable populations and HIV/AIDS affected.

- Food insecurity continues to worsen. In the last weeks a marked price increase has been observed in all commodities and services. The hyperinflation erodes the purchasing power of households to food access. Households are increasingly adopting negative coping strategies such as reducing the quality and quantity of meals to deal with the worsening economic conditions.
- A shortage of essential commodities and raw materials such as wheat has been observed. The shortage is so severe that some bakeries have temporarily closed down which has worsened shortage of bread in the market

Protection

- Reports of intimidation and violence continue to be received from various parts of the country, but with the current access restrictions, it has been difficult to get a clear picture of the extent and trend of the violations. There are reports that youth militias are not yet disbanded in several areas and that targeted violence is on the rise.
- The fact-finding teams that have assessed the feasibility of returning of the caseloads of displaced people in Ruwa to their preferred areas of return highlighted the existence of serious protection concerns and stressed that any return at this point must be voluntary.
- The total number of displaced people due to the politically motivated violence is estimated at 36,000; with 16,844 confirmed, and 9,425 assisted by one implementing partner.
- There is a need to provide guidance to partners working with affected populations so as to ensure a protection- and rights-based approach on the question of return is followed.
- There is need to include psycho social support in interventions to help affected populations deal with effects of trauma and stress they faced and or are still facing due to the displacements and violence. Special focus should be given to sexual violence.

Nutrition

Plans for the first round of the Food and Nutrition Sentinel Site Surveillance in 10 districts are still on schedule. A training of 10 national supervisors from the MoHCW, FNS and CSO was conducted this week. A questionnaire for use during the survey is being tested in Goromonzi. Although implemented through the FNC, there are concerns of access which will be raised at the training of enumerators on the 21st to 23rd July. It is unlikely that *Child Health Days* will be used as a mechanism for screening for malnutrition, mostly because of capacity issues.

As part of scale up of support to the treatment of severe acute malnutrition UNICEF has urgently ordered 3.7MT of therapeutic milk F75 that will be brought into the country by air. The consignment is expected to cover an acute shortage of therapeutic milk in hospitals and stabilisation centres, especially in districts with high rates of acute malnutrition. The rest of emergency therapeutic commodities which also include Plumpynut will be shipped by sea given that the current stock level and pipeline are adequate to cover the needs for the next three months. Preparations are on the way for a cascade training of health professionals which aims at revitalising all the therapeutic feeding units in different hospitals throughout the country, and at expanding the community based programme in most vulnerable districts. Dates for training are being finalised this week.

WASH

With the suspension of NGO field operations still in place, NGO partners continue to be confined to offices there are no on-going Emergency WASH operations at present.

UNICEF continues to truck 20,000 litres of water per day to the Ruwa based IDPs (ex SA Embassy) having provided tanks and tap stands as well as sanitation at the site. Solid waste disposal, as well as insecticide for lice treatment is also being supported. UNICEF is also on standby to provide immediate WASH support to other situations of a similar nature whenever they occur.

Water trucking continues in Mabvuku and Tafara (190,000 l/day) where the borehole completion programme is running at a slow pace. Nevertheless, 10 boreholes have now been drilled and are having final works completed.

The WASH Crisis Task force meets weekly and is concentrating on strengthening the cluster's Rapid Response capabilities. 1) Developing training programmes for NGOs in setting up of emergency water and sanitation systems; 2) continuing the collection of available resource data as well as sharing inventories and supply lists/suppliers to improve compatibility of equipment and 3) developing assessment tools for when organisations are able start field operations.

Mobile and Vulnerable Populations

- IOM and its partners have assisted 9,866 individuals with humanitarian assistance. IOM mobile clinics continue to provide assistance in peri-urban areas, with an increase in lower respiratory infections and burns seen possibly due to the cold weather.
- UNFPA and its partners continue to provide referral services and mobile counselling for GBV survivors. New hotline numbers procured through Musasa for counselling as well as referral services are 0912100051 / 52 / 53 / 54 / 60 / 61. A total of about 20 people are provided with counselling and referred for further assistance be it legal or medical on a weekly basis through the hotlines
- Health services were mobilized following the security incident in Ruwa on July 8th and normal services including antennal care, immunizations, and anti-retroviral therapy were provided in the past week. Ruwa clinic provided immunizations for children less than 5 yrs of age.

Refugees

- UNHCR's refugee programme at the Tongogara refugee camp has remained largely unaffected by the post-election crisis. Urban-based refugees have not reported facing any major protection concerns as a result of recent events. 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 at just under 5,000 persons.
- Since March 29th there has been an increase in the numbers of Zimbabweans seeking asylum in neighbouring countries, as reported by UNHCR's offices in the region. To date, 68 applications have been lodged in Mozambique, 43 in Zambia and 740 in Botswana. No confirmed figures were available for numbers of applications received in South Africa at the time of writing.

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.

CONTACT DETAILS

Georges Tadonki

Head of Office (Harare), +263 4 792681

Alfred Nabeta

Desk Officer (Geneva), +41 22 917 2732

Mette Tangen

Desk Officer (New York), +1 917 367 3001

Elizabeth Byrs,

Press contact (Geneva), +41 22 917 2653

Stephanie Bunker,

Press contact (New York), +917 367 5126