



Zimbabwe Election Period: Weekly Situation Report

Issue Number 17

Reporting Period 23-29 July 2008

I. SITUATION ANALYSIS

Constrained humanitarian access continues to be a challenge throughout the country. Currently, access is being granted on a case by case basis through negotiations at both central and local levels although none of the humanitarian actors has been able to operate at the pre-suspension levels. Absence of humanitarian actors in the field means that it is not possible to collect data for planning humanitarian interventions despite the rising vulnerabilities as indicated in the recent CFSAM survey.

The UN and its humanitarian partners continue to raise the issue of humanitarian access and suspension of NGOs with the Government. Feedback received over the last few weeks indicate that the suspension is supposed to be lifted in the near future and is pegged to a Cabinet meeting that is expected to review the earlier decision to suspend NGO field operations.

Identified priorities for the humanitarian community are:

- Continued advocacy for opening of humanitarian space
- Carrying out needs assessments and starting urgent preparations for the large Vulnerable Group Feeding Programme.
- Addressing the immediate humanitarian needs of vulnerable populations such as food, shelter, ART among others.
- Developing strategies for mitigating the increased shortages of basic commodities and food insecurity, considering the early warning raised by the latest CFSAM.

Humanitarian actors in Zimbabwe have expressed concerns that a provision in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) guiding the talks on power sharing between Zanu-PF and MDC regarding humanitarian assistance for the displaced persons is likely to further politicise humanitarian assistance in the country. The clause provides that: *"The Parties agree that, in the interim, they will work together to ensure the safety of any displaced persons and their safe return home and that humanitarian and social welfare organizations are enabled to render such assistance as might be required."*

Formation of Receiving Committees has started in various parts of the country. OCHA accompanied the Director of Social Services on two field missions to discuss the introduction of such committees. The committees' main task will be to facilitate the return and reintegration of people who had fled political violence and sought refuge at the South African Embassy, in Harare. The close to 500 people were later given temporary shelter at the Ruwa Rehabilitation Centre. Their return is being managed by a Stakeholders Committee that comprise of the Government and the Humanitarian CT as well as the Red Cross. The Stakeholders have agreed to extend assistance to the Receiving Committees who are also tasked with identifying other people affected by the violence but who did not flee their homes. Reconstruction of homes will be considered if it can be verified that someone lost a home due to political arson activities.

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

- Humanitarian space is still 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 thereby increasingly adopting negative coping strategies as is already evident in the most vulnerable populations.
- 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

Though the NGO suspension on field operations has not been lifted, WFP in July has resumed some of its distributions as per the 12 June GoZ exemption clarification letter and where authorization was given by local government. Assistance to mobile and vulnerable populations, urban highly vulnerable households in Harare and the home-based care caseload in Zvishavane district is still under suspension. Negotiations for these caseloads continue with the government and local authorities. By the end of the month, WFP hopes to reach an estimated 70 percent of the planned 318,425 beneficiaries.

In preparation for the Vulnerable Group Feeding, the first national level training took place last week for WFP partners that will be involved in the programme. In addition, WFP is continuing to hold local stakeholder consultations to obtain necessary authorizations for the VGF programme.

Access to food and other basic commodities continues to worsen as hyperinflation continues unabated, reducing the purchasing power of households.

Protection

Due to the access problems it is difficult to get specific information on the level and intensity of political violence; but cases of political violence continue to be reported. According to Counselling Services Unit (CSU), two cases of death were recorded last week. Both deaths were attributed to injuries sustained by the victims before June 27 elections.

There are no changes to the total number of displaced people, and no unusual cross border movements have been observed. One implementing partner has reported assisting 9,900 victims of displacement in the country.

An Organisation working with children reported it received requests for assistance from five children who have separated from their families currently sheltered at Ruwa. Given that there are reports of larger family separations throughout the provinces, there is a need to identify appropriate networks to track and re-unify the separated children with their families.

As preparations are underway for the return of the displaced people in Ruwa, who have expressed a desire to return to the region of origin or other preferred areas of return, there is a need to ensure the all relevant guidelines and principles regarding voluntary return are adhered to so that the safety and security of the returnees can be assured.

Nutrition

Data collection for the Food and Nutrition Sentinel Site Surveillance is underway in 7 districts identified as most vulnerable based on levels of acute malnutrition from the October 2007 National Nutrition Assessment. Capacity constraints within the Food and Nutrition Council have meant that 7 out of the 10 districts planned districts for the assessment have been included. Data collection should be completed by Thursday the 31st July and preliminary findings available by mid August. UNICEF has been able to supervise teams of enumerators in the field.

As part of emergency preparedness should the nutrition situation deteriorate the Nutrition Cluster is holding a 3 day training on nutrition in emergencies from the 29th to 31st July. Materials from the Harmonized Training Package on Nutrition in Emergencies developed by the Global Nutrition Cluster are being used. There has been an overwhelming interest and 40 staff from 30 different NGOs are participating.

WASH

Most NGOs remain unable to carry out field operations; however, a few have negotiated with local district authorities and have resumed some activities, albeit under close Government supervision.

All 20 boreholes in Mabvuku and Tafara have been drilled. Fitting of hand pumps has started. However the two suburbs have had no water in the pipes now for four weeks. ZINWA have drilled and fitted seven boreholes, but unfortunately six are already dry. Water tankering continues to both Mabvuku and Tafara as well as Ruwa centre.

The cluster has developed a training programme for members in emergency response, due to be held 12-14 August. In addition, a joint initiative between WASH and Health Clusters is being formed to strengthen capacity for preparedness and response to Cholera outbreaks.

Health

National completeness and timeliness of information on health was 14% and 17% respectively. This level of reporting is too low to serve as an early warning system in disease surveillance as it is not sensitive enough to reflect the actual situation on the ground. Factors which include lack of efficient communication systems like telephones, internet and e-mail connectivity, transport and a high staff attrition rate in MOH and CW have a negative impact on the effectiveness of the health information system.

The last case of cholera was reported on 27 April 2008. During this year a total of 991 cases out of which 120 died, were reported. This gives us a fatality rate of (CFR) 12.1%. According to WHO standards, this high case fatality rate is not acceptable. The approaching rain season provides suitable conditions for high diarrhoeal disease transmission, hence the need to have diarrhoea and cholera preparedness plan ready.

Diarrhoea: A total of 1337 cases were reported, 674 were under five years. The highest number of cases was reported in Mashonaland East province with 513 followed by Mashonaland Central with 455. The cumulative figures for diarrhoea is 52 868 and 123 deaths (CFR 0.23)

On reported cases of Dysentery, 89 clinical dysentery cases were reported this month. Mashonaland Central reported the highest number of cases (39) followed by Mashobnaland East (30). The cumulative figures for dysentery are 5 434 cases and 1 death (CFR 0.02)

Mobile and Vulnerable Populations

IOM and partners continue to assist mobile and vulnerable persons in Zimbabwe with non-food items, temporary shelter and water and sanitation. To date 9,936 individuals have been assisted. In the past week, 45 individuals, a majority of whom were suffering acute respiratory infection were provided with medical assistance. IOM's mobile clinic continues to provide assistance to MVP communities on a regular schedule.

Refugees

UNHCR's 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.

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. At the time of writing, 98 Zimbabweans are reported to have applied for asylum in Mozambique, 43 in Zambia and over 750 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. Monthly 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