



Zimbabwe Election Period: Bi-Weekly Situation Report

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I. SITUATION OVERVIEW

So far some 262 internally displaced people temporarily sheltered at the Ruwa Rehabilitation Centre were assisted to voluntary return to their places of origin and other preferred locations in various parts of the country. They were re-united with family members en-route to their homes raising the number of those assisted to return to 329. This leaves a balance of 125 people at Ruwa. IOM staff accompanied the returnees and reported warm reception by the Receiving Committees (RC) established at the district level to ensure their safe re-integration. The RC had representation from the two major political parties. Lessons learnt from this operation will serve as a basis for broader response to other victims of politically motivated violence as agreed through an MOU signed between the major political parties.

The UN HCT in Zimbabwe has offered to assist the Government and the local Receiving Committees to ensure safe re-integration of the displaced and assistance to other people affected by political violence. The Stakeholders Committee overseeing the safe return and reintegration is working through the Receiving Committees to manage expectations of the returnees and other affected people. IOM was appointed the Focal Point for liaison between the Stakeholders Committee and the RCs.

There has been no progress on the issue of suspension of NGOs operations, despite indications that it was now a matter of time before the suspension was lifted.

An Interim Rural Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC) was successfully completed. The assessment covering all rural districts in the country took place on 30 July to 9 August 2008. An in-country briefing on the results will be held on 22 August.

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

- Humanitarian space is still constrained.
- 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.

The following points remain a priority for the humanitarian community:

- Continued advocacy for opening up 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.

II. HUMANITARIAN OVERVIEW

Food Security

The immediate lifting of the NGO operations suspension will give WFP an opportunity to carry out the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) emergency programme. The continued delay, at a time when WFP and co-operating partners should be in the field registering households, threatens effective and rapid implementation of the interventions. The NGO suspension has also negatively affected pledges to the operation, as donors are unwilling to give food to Zimbabwe whilst field operations are for most part on hold, with some even contemplating to possibly diversion of food commodities earmarked for Zimbabwe to other countries in the region to meet their emergency needs.

WFP's food security monitoring highlights an increasing level of concern with respect to the food security situation in Zimbabwe. The country is still facing a huge cereal deficit and the food security situation is expected to become critical in some parts of the country. Cereal prices continue to rise across Zimbabwe in both nominal ZWD and real USD terms. Prices continue to rise in defiance of regional and global trends, the continued price rises further highlighting the severe supply deficit in the country.

In addition to the above, the recent currency devaluation has affected market efficiency putting many prices out of the reach of most Zimbabweans. Basic commodities continue to be in short supply, and the few available items found on the market are highly priced.

As a follow-up to the Geographical Targeting Workshop held on July 10th, FAO presented the current coverage of humanitarian assistance in agricultural input assistance programmes for the coming summer season. According to the data submitted by 24 NGOs, plans are in place to assist over 240,000 HHs through seed/fertiliser distributions (173,000), Conservation Agriculture (49,500) and seed fairs (17,000). A total of 51 districts are targeted to receive assistance. To avoid overlapping, a map of current coverage, graduated according to the current presence, was produced and shared. NGOs planning to work in the same area were alerted and invited to liaise with each other to make sure that different wards were covered.

The current data on food security and vulnerability does not allow easy quantification of households (HH) in need of agricultural inputs assistance. Therefore, CFSAM estimation of people in need of food aid will be followed as a general guide. The just concluded ZimVAC (with the Integrated Phase Classification, IPC) should improve the quality of information and ultimately programming. FAO will assist 40,000 HHs. A second Geographical Targeting Workshop will be organised to consolidate and share information. Organisations are invited to make use of the FAO agricultural database and its mapping services.

Protection

Although reports of political violence have reduced, isolated cases of targeted violence continue to be reported in some parts of the country. In addition, incidences of sexual violence against children at the peak of political violence, between March and June 2008, are now being uncovered in various parts of the country through information filtering through to partners. However, the extent and magnitude remains to be verified.

More than two thirds of the 385 displaced people sheltered at the Ruwa Rehabilitation Centre have been assisted to return to their areas of origin with no immediate protection-related challenges being encountered. There are 125 people remaining in Ruwa, of whom 36 have expressed a desire to return to their areas of origin. The situation of those already returned needs to be followed up to ensure that they are protected against any violence or harassment. Lessons learned from this successful exercise should be considered for a broader response to people affected by political violence.

There are no reports of new displacements and unusual cross border movements.

Counselling and psychosocial support is being offered on an individual and group basis to families and children who have been forced to flee their homes. Such services are being offered through church groups and local partners. Training is also being provided in basic counseling skills; individual and family follow up, psychosocial play activity and identification of vulnerable parents and children. This training is for people who are formally or informally (through established church and other networks) working directly with families who have been displaced or affected by the recent situation.

Nutrition

As part of the Child Health Days (CHDs) nutritional screening of all children under 5 years was undertaken in seven of the most vulnerable districts according to levels of acute malnutrition from the October 2007 round of surveillance. The screening was supported by MSF Luxembourg in Buhera District and MSF Spain in Tsholotsho, Beitbridge and Bulawayo Districts

World breastfeeding week was launched on 1 August in Harare with road shows on the importance of exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months. The shows were held in Budiriro and organized by Population Services International (PSI).

The data collection for the National Food and Nutrition Sentinel Sites Surveillance for the selected seven districts is complete. Preliminary results should be available on 22 August.

UNICEF and the National Nutrition Unit conducted a training of health professionals on the integrated management of acute malnutrition in Harare from 4 - 8 August 2008. At least 40 physicians and senior nurses attended the training which aimed to increase the government's capacity to treat cases of severe acute malnutrition. The training also aimed to expand treatment to additional hospitals and clinics in areas hosting vulnerable children.

UNICEF conducted a "Nutrition in Emergencies" training between 29 - 31 July in Harare. A total of 39 participants from 30 NGOs and UN agencies participated in the training. The "Harmonised Training Package on Nutrition in Emergencies" compiled by the Global Nutrition Cluster was used for the training. Interest in the training was overwhelming and UNICEF is considering holding another training in the coming months for organizations that were unable to participate.

WASH

NGOs involved in WASH programs continue to report being unable to carry out field activities, however, a few of them are negotiating access with local authorities. In at least two cases they have been allowed to re-start limited activities such as joint assessments with the government.

Of the 20 boreholes drilled in Mabvuku/Tafara, four have had hand-pumps fitted and are now operational. The 20 boreholes will provide water to 76,000 people. An additional 10 boreholes are expected to be fully functional by mid-August. In the meantime, water transport continues to Mabvuku and Tafara townships as well as at the Ruwa Rehabilitation, in the outskirts of Harare, where some internally displaced persons have been temporarily sheltered. Since IDPs are returning to their home areas, plans are underway to wind down water and sanitation support activities. The two tanks on site will be donated to the Centre and will be managed by the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare and Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare.

The WASH cluster is finalizing emergency response training between 19 - 22 August and establishing a joint WASH and Health cluster cholera preparedness and response group.

Education

Schools closed on 7 August and will resume on 2 September, one week before the usual opening dates for schools in order to cover up for lost time during the election period. According to the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, the schools remained functional with no major incidences as children and teachers reported for school up to the end of the second school term in the year. The Ministry has asked partners to share any information they have received on incidences affecting normal school activities. Regarding the suspension of NGO activities, the Education Ministry has referred its partners to Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare indicating that the latter is responsible for NGO activities.

Health

Some 1.7 million children under five received vaccinations and vitamin A supplements between 4 to 8 August during the Child Health Days (CHDs) in- country. The CHDs were accompanied by a nationwide mobilization campaign using both print and broadcast media outlets.

Meanwhile, an additional fourteen containers with emergency drugs and medical supplies worth over US\$ 1 million were cleared in Beira, Mozambique and began moving towards Zimbabwe by road on 6 August. The distribution of other medicines and supplies from 11 containers received by regional stores in the past 2-3 weeks began on 8 August.

The second consignment of low osmolarity ORS and Zinc – enough to cover the needs of the country for nine months – has arrived in the country and been delivered to NatPharm. Combined with that second consignment, a total of 1,200 cartons of ORS and 37,460 packs of Zinc tablets have been received which will be enough for one year. A task force comprising UNICEF, WHO, University of Zimbabwe and MoHCW members is finalizing plans on orienting health workers on the use of these items.

UNAIDS in collaboration with IOM, UNFPA and OCHA conducted two trainings on Gender, HIV and AIDS and humanitarian issues in emergency settings. The trainings targeted humanitarian actors in Manicaland and Mashonaland West Provinces with a total of about 50 trained including the police and representatives from the District Administrators offices. The IASC guidelines for HIV / AIDS interventions in emergency settings, the Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action and the IASC guidelines for GBV Interventions in emergency settings were used for training. The training also included a session on the clinical management of rape which was facilitated by UNFPA. The training was well received and participants indicated a need for cascading the training to district level actors as well as all government departments involved in humanitarian activities.

Some members of the Health Cluster attended the WASH Cluster meeting on 31 July 2008 in order to discuss developing a joint cholera response plan in preparation for the coming rainy season which is usually characterized by cholera outbreaks. A smaller technical team will develop the plan.

The WCO facilitated the first “Health Cluster Meeting” on 8 August 2008. The meeting was attended by 12 NGO and UN partners, a significant turn out for the current operational realities of Zimbabwe. A presentation on the Humanitarian Reform and Cluster Approach was made in the meeting. The extensive lobbying and one-on-one discussions that the EHA team had made in the two weeks preceding the meeting appear to have contributed significantly for the encouraging response of NGO partners to the meeting. The EHA team will continue lobbying NGOs for proactive participation in the cluster coordination mechanism. This week, we plan to brief donor agencies on our activities and obtain information on their priorities for health sector support in Zimbabwe.

The IOM mobile clinic continued to provide health services without disruption in peri-urban Harare communities (Hatcliffe Extension, Epworth Belapaise, Manyame, Blackfordby, Whitecliffe, and Manyame) and supporting Dzivarasekwa and Hopley Static Clinics during this period.

A refresher training workshop on PHHE was held for 25 participants from 6 Mobile and Vulnerable Populations (MVP) communities (Cabatsha, Mzilikazi, Makokoba, Killarney, Treenamce, Ngozi Mine, and Sidojiwe) in Bulawayo during the week 4-8 August 2008.

Mobile and Vulnerable Populations

A total of 329 Victims of Political Violence were repatriated from Ruwa to Mashonaland East, Central, West, Manicaland, Bulawayo, and Harare provinces in the past week. Only those who requested to voluntary leave the Ruwa Centre were provided with transport options and a return package. At least 87% of these individuals elected to be assisted through the district receiving committees organized in their home locations, while 13 % mainly from Harare and Epworth opted for transport allowances to travel on their own. Families remained together, and children were accompanied by adults. Returnees with families outside the camp were encouraged to contact them either by phone or other means in an effort to reunite families.

Returnees were concern about shelter, livelihoods, food, access to health services, and access to schools when they return to their communities. Returnees requested for follow up support from IOM and other agencies to fill these gaps.

UNFPA and its partner, PADARE conducted a stakeholders meeting in Odzi, Kondozi farm to map way forward for sexual and gender based violence interventions for MVPs at the farm and surrounding areas. Participants included police, health service providers, local and traditions leadership and other community based organizations. Some of the activities agreed on include

awareness raising, provision of counseling as well as medical services and establishment of a referral system for survivors of GBV including sexual violence

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. A short humanitarian overview has been prepared for the rest of the year and is being reviewed by IASC members, as a further review of the CAP, reprioritized for the current situation and prior to the next CAP workshop.
5. Bi-Weekly situation reports will be issued 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. The IASC is meeting regularly and NGOs participation has been extended. Donors are also briefed regularly.
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 2:00, 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.

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