



Zimbabwe Election Period: Bi-Weekly Situation Report

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I. SITUATION OVERVIEW

The voluntary return of 487 displaced people temporarily sheltered at the Ruwa Rehabilitation Centre to their areas of origin or preferred destination is nearly complete with only 62 individuals, representing 33 households remaining at the site. The Ruwa Stakeholders Committee, comprising of UN HCT and Government of Zimbabwe counterparts, is now moving focus to the re-integration progress by asking the Receiving Committees established at the district level to report on the reintegration of the returnees and humanitarian needs on the ground. Reports will start to be received this week.

The CAP 2009 workshop will be held on 10 and 11 September 2008. CAP for Zimbabwe will seek to identify a strategic approach for galvanising a strong humanitarian response and livelihood support programme. It will therefore be inclusive and representative of the various stakeholders in the country and reflect the reality on the ground.

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

- Food security at household level continues to deteriorate. Positive coping strategies have been exhausted leading to adoption of distress strategies such as skipping meals and disposal of productive assets.
- The absence of partners on the ground is affecting flow of information.
- Lack of comprehensive assessments makes it difficult to map out impacts and plan adequate response.

Foreseen impacts

- If not lifted soon, the current suspension will constrain about 270,000 communal farming households from accessing agricultural inputs support for the 2008/9 season.
- Prolonged suspension of NGOs / PVOs under investigations for alleged involvement in politics.
- Possible new restrictive measures being implemented on NGO operations in the event of the lift of the suspension.
- Possible diversion of humanitarian resources to other emergencies in the region.

The following still remain as identified priorities 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.
- Scale up the immediate humanitarian response for programmes not covered by the suspension.
- Developing strategies for mitigating the increased shortages of basic commodities and food insecurity, considering the early warning raised by the latest CFSAM.

II. HUMANITARIAN Update

Food Security

As of Mid-August, the country has a stock of 315MT (total in-country stocks minus total consumption so far). Considering monthly national requirement/consumption of 147.75MT, if no more imports are done, the in-country stocks will run out by Mid-October. This is so assuming equitable and efficient distribution of the in-country stocks.

In order to cover the deficit (793,000MT), food has to be imported at the monthly rate of about 113,000 MT, a logistics exercise of considerable dimensions. The country risks not being able to "feed itself" and fall into the negative from Mid-October, onwards unless the imports are carried out.

Grain is generally not available in most areas, and where it is available it is priced well beyond the reach of many. Organizations present noted that terms of trade are seriously in favour of those with grain. This is a sign of worsening food security and possible exploitation, as households might sell their assets out of desperation for little money. In some areas, a beast is being traded for 200Kg of maize or one goat for 17Kg of maize.

Last minute update

The Government of Zimbabwe has lifted suspension of NGOs and Private Voluntary Organisations (PVOs) field operations with immediate effect. NGOs and PVOs operating in the following areas are free to resume operations: a) Humanitarian assistance, food aid, recovery and development b) Family and child care and protection, c) Care and protection of older persons; d) Rights and empowerment of people with disabilities; and e) HIV and Aids treatment, care and related support services.

The country is facing a significant cereal deficit and the food security situation is expected to become critical in some parts of the country. WFP/FAO Crop and Food Supply Assessment, released in June 2008 estimated that about 2 million people will be food insecure in the third quarter of this year. This figure is projected to increase to 3.8 million in the fourth quarter and in the first quarter of 2009, to about 5.1 million people.

In order to implement its emergency Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme, WFP requires the immediate lifting of the NGO field operation suspension. The continued delay, at a time when WFP and Cooperating Partners should be in the field registering households, threatens the effectiveness of the intervention. WFP is working on district-specific contingency plans, together with cooperating partners on acceptable alternatives in order to establish an adequate response should suspension not be lifted throughout September. Registration of persons expected to benefit from the VGF is planned to take place in September.

IOM and its implementing partners is currently negotiating for more access to provide assistance to Mobile and Vulnerable Populations (MVP) communities throughout the country.

Protection

No reports have been received of new displacements and incidents of political violence taking place during the reporting period. However, agencies continue to report displaced persons approaching humanitarian agencies for assistance for the first time. Reports have also been received of a few isolated cases of displaced people who returned back to their home areas, coming back to 'safe houses' after facing intimidations upon their return. The persons concerned did not report the perpetration of actual violence against them, though.

In view of the problems faced with deploying the ProCap officer and the continued need to strengthen the Protection Sector in Zimbabwe, the PWG discussed and agreed to seek advice on the way forward from the Humanitarian Coordinator.

Nutrition

Preliminary findings of the July assessment of the Food and Nutrition Sentinel Site Surveillance are expected to be released by the end of this week.

Some 450 cartons of F-75 formula for therapeutic feeding arrived this week and will be distributed along with RUTF to hospitals already trained in the management of acute malnutrition.

Training of enumerators and pretesting of questionnaires for Knowledge, Attitude and Behaviour (KAB) survey on exclusive breastfeeding took place on 21 and 22 August.

Distribution of essential drugs procured by UNICEF under the joint donor programme for procurement of essential drugs to regional stores and facilities is expected to begin next week. So far 21 containers have been received in the country. An additional 14 containers with essential drugs are expected to arrive by 30 August.

The MoHCW has forecasted a gap in the supply of cotrimoxazole of 187,217 bottles of tablets and 1,896,517 units of syrup and have requested support from partners.

Save the Children –Norway has reported resumption of the Child Supplementary Feeding Programme activities in Chimanimani district. The programme resumed with effect from 15 August 2008. The project expects to reach more than 49,725 children under the age of five, orphans and vulnerable children. The programme covers the entire district's 23 wards.

WASH

The cluster has undertaken an emergency preparedness training for 30 members including representatives from NGOs, city councils, government and the UN last 19-22 August. Already some key action points have emerged from this training: the standardization of Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials and assessment tools. Two small groups have been established to take this issue forward.

On Water and Environmental Sanitation, water trucking in Mabvuku and Tafara has been reduced from 190,000 litres to 140,000 litres following installation of pumps and completion of drainage aprons on the new boreholes. Water trucking will stop at the end of this month when all the boreholes will be completed.

In the meantime, UNICEF continues to truck water to the 91 people remaining at the temporary shelter for Internally Displaced Persons in Ruwa. IOM carried out a Participatory Health & Hygiene Education (PHHE) refresher course in Bulawayo last week and also intends to drill two boreholes in Hatcliffe. UNICEF will loan IOM the necessary borehole casing in order to expedite this activity. A small number of NGOs (one or two) have managed to carry out some "hardware" activities such as pump repairs and drilling in Bulawayo although all other NGOs remain suspended.

Education

At a recent education partners' meeting, participants confirmed that several areas are still tense particularly in Buhera. Prior to the school holidays, teachers' attendance at schools throughout the country was erratic due to low motivation and the prevailing unstable learning and teaching environment. Partners indicated the potential for an increase in child labour in the country due

to the shortage of food and the harsh economic environment. The suspension of NGO field activities, denying children access to humanitarian assistance will have a substantial impact on many children's access to education.

Health

A WHO representative held a meeting with the Deputy Director, Disease Prevention and Control (DDDPC) in MOH&CW on 25 August 2008 to discuss challenges in the health information unit, and how best to resolve these, health coordination issues and the cluster approach.

Health workers from all parts of the country are participating in a workshop in Kadoma (25-29 August) on development of IEC materials for diarrhoea and cholera prevention and control. This is part of preparations for an effective response in case of diarrhoea and cholera outbreak in the country during the coming rain season.

WHO supported an IDSR workshop for health workers from urban local authorities on 18 - 22 August, 2008. In addition, WHO will facilitate the second health cluster meeting on 28 August 2008. A major Health Cluster Workshop intended to create a shared understanding among governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as UN agencies is scheduled for 17 & 18 September 2008. WHO is working with NGO partners and the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare to ensure an effective health coordination mechanism in Zimbabwe.

OCHA, UNFPA, IOM, Civil Protection Unit, National AIDS Council and UNAIDS conducted two trainings on "Mainstreaming gender and HIV in emergency settings" in Chinhoyi and Mutare between 3 to 8 August 2008. The main objective of the training was to develop capacity of key humanitarian and AIDS actors to address HIV and AIDS needs in humanitarian and emergencies with an understanding of gender issues in such situations. A total of 53 participants from the two districts took part. They included local humanitarian and NGOs, National AIDS Council, MoHCW, the Armed Forces, Zimbabwe Republic Police, District Administrators and members of the Civil Protection Committees at district level. In 2008 a total of five decentralised trainings have been conducted covering more than 170 participants throughout the country.

The mobile clinics continued to provide health services to Harare per-urban sites. HIV and AIDS, and GBV mainstreaming was also undertaken, as well as IEC materials on HIV and AIDS, diarrhoea, condoms, malaria, sexually transmitted infections and nutrition were distributed.

Partners working in HIV and AIDS programming have expressed concerns that the suspension of NGO field operations could deny the country the opportunity to access the Global Fund support under round 8 that will be taking place soon.

Mobile and Vulnerable Populations

Assistance to Vulnerable Populations is on-going through provision of food packs and transport assistance. In the meantime, IOM and partners are going on with negotiations with respective authorities to seek access to vulnerable mobile populations and hosting communities. At the district level, livelihood and shelter activities are continuing in select districts in the country.

Refugees

UNHCR's programme in the 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. The Zimbabwe Refugee Committee – RSD body - held its sessions at Tongogara refugee camp from 18 to 22 August interviewing a total of 91 asylum-seekers. UNHCR and the Commissioner for Refugees' office has started planning and preparations for the verification exercise of refugees and asylum-seekers expected to take place in early October

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. OCHA has a co-location agreement with WFP during the period, including essential NGO Staff.
2. 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.
3. Humanitarian analysis, monitoring and advocacy are being strengthened in view of increasing vulnerabilities and prevailing access limitations.
4. A Stakeholders 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.
5. Emergency Focal points contact list updated. [Posted on http://ochaonline.un.org/zimbabwe](http://ochaonline.un.org/zimbabwe)

6. The IASC is meeting regularly and NGOs participation has been extended. Donors are also briefed regularly.
7. 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.
8. 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.

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