

HIGHLIGHTS

• **Regional:** Acute malnutrition is on the rise in a number of countries in the region. Without comprehensive multi-sectoral programming the situation is likely to worsen. Meanwhile, DfID has substantially increased its assistance to the region. Agricultural preparations are in full swing and good rains have been received in most parts of the region. WFP announced substantial procurement figures in South Africa. Their main worry is currently on the logistical front. Measures have been put in place to address the situation.

• **Zimbabwe:** The Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Jan Egeland visited Zimbabwe and South Africa from 3 to 7 December. In Zimbabwe he held discussions with the President of Zimbabwe, Ministers, civil society and UN representatives in country. He managed to agree on a number of issues with the President that should help to bring the humanitarian agenda forward. In South Africa Mr Egeland met with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and discussed the humanitarian reform agenda.

• **Zambia:** Reports on the humanitarian situation in Zambia are getting more worrisome. Assistance has been requested but any response now will inevitably be late. Nutrition surveys indicate an increase in acute malnutrition.



Southern African Humanitarian Crisis Update

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REGIONAL OVERVIEW

Nutritional assessments undertaken in a number of countries over the past month show an increase in acute malnutrition. In the drought affected areas in Mozambique, acute malnutrition records 5%; the food insecure districts in Zambia show acute malnutrition figures of 7.7%; in Malawi the centre and southern parts recorded increased number of admissions to Nutritional Rehabilitation Units compared to last year; in Zimbabwe vulnerable districts recorded acute malnutrition rates of 9% and in Madagascar, acute malnutrition rates doubled since 1997 to 14% country wide. A number of countries are carrying out additional comprehensive nutritional surveys in December.



Nutritional Rehabilitation Centre in Malawi

It is expected that the fragile nutritional situation in the region can only get worse as the hunger season progresses. Food assistance is but one component of addressing malnutrition. Food diversification, management of child illnesses, mothers/caretakers nutrition education and hygiene (water and sanitation) are other vital components. The under funding of activities in these areas are worrisome.

Meanwhile, DfID has announced some substantial increases in their support to the region. In Malawi, DfID donated an additional US\$ 5 million, which will be used to support the Government's food voucher scheme as well as UN Agencies' and NGO interventions to treat acute malnutrition. In Zambia, DfID donated US\$ 7 million, of which most will go to WFP (some US\$ 5 million), while the rest will be in support of NGO activities and the treatment of acute malnutrition. Finally, DfID announced additional support to WFPs activities in Zimbabwe for a total of US\$ 17.6 million.

Good rains have been recorded for most of the region and preparations for the agricultural season are, in most areas, well underway or completed. Exceptions are northern Mozambique, the Namibia-Angola border and some parts of Swaziland where rainfall has been below normal. Some countries (Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia) reported insufficient agricultural inputs which may affect next year's harvest.

¹ RIACSO is a partnership comprising of regional offices of UN Agencies and key NGOs that are part of the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC). RIACSO supports the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Humanitarian Needs in Southern Africa, Mr. James Morris, in his mandate to raise awareness of the situation in the region and provide recommendations regarding the response.

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- **Malawi:** The number of vulnerable people continues to rise and WFP has been requested to increase its caseload. UNICEF is assisting with supplementary feeding. Meanwhile access to food is getting more difficult: maize on the markets is becoming scarcer due to logistical constraints, pushing up prices. The nutritional situation is deteriorating. Water quality in a number of areas is bad and a number of cholera outbreaks have been confirmed. UNICEF is responding to the situation.
- **Mozambique:** FEWSNet issued a warning for Mozambique because of a deteriorating food security situation. Government, NGO partners and UN agencies are responding to the situation.
- **Madagascar:** A response to the nutritional crisis in Vangaindrano is underway. The situation in the district is illustrative for the deteriorating nutritional situation in the country as a whole.
- **Comoros:** The eruption of the Karthala volcano has polluted the living area of some 245,000 people.

FAO has completed in Harare today a 15-week intensive course in the planning, design and implementation of smallholder irrigation schemes with farmer participation for 18 participants from the irrigation departments of eight SADC countries. It is the sixth such course that FAO has run in response to the priority areas identified by the Heads of State of the African Union when they met in Maputo in July 2003, and brings the total number of officers trained up to 112.

WFP continues to procure food at a very high rate in South Africa. In November, the organisation bought almost 79,000 tons of food, bringing the total for the past three months to over 240,000 tons, by far the highest on record for such a period. Logistics are the organisation's main challenge now. A number of initiatives have been launched to step up dispatch rates.

COUNTRY SPECIFIC HIGHLIGHTS

■ **Zimbabwe:** Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), Mr. Jan Egeland visited Zimbabwe from 3 to 7 December 2005. His visit was in follow up to a meeting between President Robert Mugabe and Secretary General Kofi Annan at the September World Summit. The goal of Mr. Egeland's mission was to discuss the humanitarian situation in the country and identify how the UN could be of help. To this effect, Mr Egeland had a two hour meeting with the President as well as meetings with Ministers, church leaders, civil society, donors and UN colleagues. He further went to a number of sites where he spoke with evictees and HIV orphans, among others. He described the situation in Zimbabwe as very serious and deteriorating and in need of UN assistance.

Mr. Egeland's main message to the President was that the humanitarian community stands ready to help but is currently not working to its full capacity due to a number of obstacles. On behalf of the humanitarian community, he appealed to the President "help us, to help you to help the people of Zimbabwe". Mr. Egeland admitted that there were differences of opinion in his discussion with the President, especially on how to address outstanding humanitarian needs. He however stressed the agreements that were reached. The most important ones being: (1) To set up a "one-stop-shop" to facilitate bureaucratic procedures for humanitarian organisations such as registration, work permits and memoranda of understanding. (2) To set up a joint Task Force on food security, comprising of key government ministries, the Reserve Bank, the office of the Presidency, FAO, WFP, the Humanitarian Coordinator and potentially some donors. (3) For the UN to build 2,500 semi-permanent structures, similar to those used for the Tsunami victims, to assist people displaced by operation restore order. Mr. Egeland however pointed out that shelter was the main issue of difference. The government maintains that it does not want assistance in the form of tents; whereas Mr. Egeland stressed that the construction of semi-permanent housing will take time and cannot be done on the scale currently needed.

Mr. Egeland's main message to the donor community in Zimbabwe was that they contributed to the polarisation of the humanitarian agenda. He stated that one could disagree with government policies and that one was free to be vocal about that but that assistance must be provided, in accordance with humanitarian principles.

On his way back from Zimbabwe, Mr. Egeland met with the South African Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Susan van der Merwe, to discuss the outcome of Mr. Egeland's visit to Zimbabwe and the global humanitarian reform agenda. The



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- **Lesotho:** Rains are sufficient in the country and planting is underway. Input trade fairs have ended and FAO is now monitoring the usage of the assistance provided. The government is providing free HIV counselling and testing in a bid to curb the epidemic.

- **Namibia:** A national plan for capacity building in disaster risk reduction, facilitated by UNDP/BCPR has been adopted. This is an interesting development in the southern African disaster management history where the focus tends to remain mainly on response.

- **Angola:** WFP has successfully expanded its school feeding programme in the country to cover 150,000 children. School attendance remained at over 80%.

IASC PARTNERS

- **IFRC:** The IFRC southern Africa Food Insecurity Emergency Appeal, launched on 18 October 2005 has so far received 17% funding. With the funding the organisation plans to undertake agricultural assistance programmes in seven countries and food assistance programmes in some district in Malawi.

Deputy Foreign Minister expressed interest in South Africa's participation in the proposed Task Force on food security in Zimbabwe. The ERC and the Deputy Foreign Minister further discussed the ERC's humanitarian reform agenda; specifically the proposed Central Emergency Response Fund, a US\$ 500 million grant and loan facility to jump start humanitarian action or assist chronically under funded operations. The Deputy Minister expressed interest in the proposal, but was unable to confirm South Africa's contribution. Finally, Mr. Egeland thanked South Africa for their generous contributions to the UN operations in the region and beyond.

■ **Zambia:** The President of Zambia has issued a further request to the international community for emergency support for health, nutrition, agriculture, water and sanitation interventions. This comes on top of the appeal for food aid made in October 2005. On the basis of this, FAO, in collaboration with the government, is planning emergency agricultural input provisions targeting 75,000 people in 36 rural districts. Of the US\$ 50 million required for this activity, the government of Zambia is providing US\$ 35 million. A further US\$ 15 million is sought from donors. However, with the onset of the hunger period and the agricultural season well underway, the response will inevitably be late. The situation in Zambia may thus be more problematic than in those countries where a response is well in progress.

Recent information regarding food insecurity and malnutrition in several parts of Zambia is becoming more alarming. An inter-agency nutrition survey, carried out in November 2005, indicates increased malnutrition rates between 2002 and 2005. The survey was conducted in a number of districts in the Eastern, Central, Southern and Western Provinces and covered 979 children between the ages of 6 months to 59 months in 823 households. The survey found a global acute malnutrition rate of 7.7% (wasting and kwashiorkor), which is an increase compared to the 5% average of the national 2001/02 Demographic Health Survey (DHS) and the combined NGO surveys carried out during the crisis in 2002/03. The 2005 survey also showed global chronic malnutrition of 33.3% (stunting). The report further showed a high prevalence of child illnesses, with nearly 50% of the children reporting fever and 34% reporting diarrhea in the weeks prior to the survey. In the absence of assistance - particularly food, water, sanitation and health assistance - malnutrition and disease incidences are likely to increase. A follow-up assessment in the worst affected areas of the Vulnerability Assessment Committee identified districts will be undertaken in December 2005.

■ **Malawi:** The number of people in need of food assistance continues to increase. WFP agreed to take on the extra responsibility to provide for 177,696 people in Mzimba district identified by the Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) as extremely food insecure. WFP and UNICEF have identified 17 priority districts for the expanded Supplementary Feeding Programme (SFP) targeting 134,000 moderately malnourished children, and pregnant and lactating women (49 percent of some 272,740 moderately malnourished women and children in total). WFP and UNICEF have also agreed to support Community Based Child Care Centres (normally relying on community support) in seven of the most affected districts in the South; (Thyolo, Chiradzulu, Mulanje, Phalombe, Zomba, Nsanje and Chikwawa), as the centres were threatening to close down. Some 8,000 children will benefit from this.

Maize prices in local markets are on the rise and demand at ADMAR (subsidised) markets exceeds supply. The slow rate at which maize is moving into the country for both the humanitarian and the commercial pipeline is complicating the situation.



COORDINATION

- **Cyclone preparedness:** OCHA organised a regional disaster response preparedness meeting to support national response efforts in Madagascar and Mozambique ahead of the cyclone season. OCHA has further been requested to join the disaster management mechanism of the Indian Ocean Island Committee (IOIC) designed to help strengthen early warning, preparedness and response procedures.
- **Avian influenza preparedness:** The Regional IASC task force on avian influenza developed a draft preparedness plan for possible humanitarian consequences of avian influenza and a human pandemic. The plan is based on the assumption that national authorities, supported by the specialised agencies WHO and FAO, are responsible for national prevention, mitigation and containment policies and that most programmatic actions for a humanitarian response will also be carried out at national level.
- **VAC:** Ausaid announced a donation of US\$ 500,000 per year for three years for the VAC.

Lack of transport and blockages of the transport corridors prove to be the main bottlenecks. The limited maize available in country has made it impossible to preposition food in the remote areas prior to the rains.

A rapid assessment carried out by the Integrated Nutrition and Food Security Surveillance System in October 2005 shows that wasting (a measurement of acute malnutrition) in the centre of the country has increased significantly (to around 7.6%), whereas the situation in the southern parts is comparable to last year (around 8%) and the situation in the north improved (to 3.6%). Meanwhile, UNICEF reports that admissions of severely malnourished children to Nutrition Rehabilitation Units (NRUs) for the month of October show a 4% increase nationwide as compared to last year with the highest increase recorded in the southern region at 14.5%.

Action against Hunger is supporting the Ministry of Health in 48 Nutrition Rehabilitation Units in the country. Community based management of severe cases of malnutrition programmes are conducted in 6 districts, supported by Concern Worldwide, Valid International and Management services for Health.

A comprehensive nationwide nutrition survey has started on 5 December. Results are expected by the end of December. A rapid health survey supported by WHO and UNFPA has been conducted in the Southern region at household level (data on mortality, access to health services, micronutrient deficiencies and micronutrient supplementation amongst pregnant women) and health facility level. Results are also expected by the end of December.

Water quality tests and sanitary surveys to prevent cholera outbreaks have now been completed. The testing and surveys, which targeted NRUs, school feeding centres and health centres, were carried out in twelve districts. Analyses of over 3,000 water samples indicate that 42% of institutional water points and 54% of household water sources are contaminated. UNICEF has distributed 25 drums (50kg each) of chlorine to five districts; Mangochi, Zomba, Thyolo, Chikwawa and Lilongwe. An additional 460 drums of chlorine will be distributed to all health centres in 15 districts prone to cholera, with priority to Mangochi district which has been battling with a cholera outbreak since October 2005. As of 14 December, UNICEF also confirmed a cholera outbreak in Dezda district. The source of the outbreak is suspected to be from Malembo area in Mangochi. A support team has been deployed to two health centres in the area (Kaundu and Nakalanzi) to assist with case management, community mobilization and water chlorination.

■ **Mozambique:** In its November food security update, FEWSNET issued a warning for Mozambique. The organisation mentioned increasing market prices for maize, under funding of the WFP food aid pipeline and a limited coverage of the agricultural input trade fairs as the main contributors of the deteriorating food security situation. They further warned that the situation is worsening in the drought affected areas but also spreading to the northern regions.

Government, together with bilateral partners, NGOs and UN organisations will expand the number of food aid beneficiaries to 534,000; based on the increase in number of vulnerable people as assessed by SETSAN (Mozambique Vulnerability Assessment Committee). In addition, the Ministry of Health, WFP and UNICEF plan to assist up to 10,000 malnourished children through an integrated supplementary feeding programme. Some 127 water points are being constructed or repaired and extra water has been brought in to assist some 22,000 people. The country is however advocating for a more sustainable solution to adapt to drought conditions.



■ **Madagascar:** The response to the Vangaindrano nutritional crisis is taking shape. Government, WFP, UNICEF, CRC, CARITAS and AAA are working together in setting up 5 nutritional rehabilitation centres in 5 different locations. Logistical support is being provided by civil protection and the French military, which has helped in overcoming setbacks encountered as a result of inaccessible roads. FAO, CRS and USAID are looking at improving agricultural production in the region.

The deteriorating nutritional situation in Madagascar is in general a case of concern. According to statistics provided by the Demographic Health Survey (DHS) global acute malnutrition almost doubled in the country as a whole over the last six years, from 7.4% in 1997 to 14% in 2003/04.

■ **Comoros:** The Mount Karthala volcano on the main island erupted on 24 November 2005. Some 245,000 people were affected by the pollution of smoke and ashes, impacting public health, agriculture and livestock. The drinking water of some 175,000 people has been affected. A response is underway. It is not envisaged that an international appeal will be launched.

■ **Lesotho:** In most of the country rains have been good over the past few weeks and planting is ongoing in all areas. Inputs have been readily available although due to a decline in household income, access has been an issue. Input fairs ended in mid-November. Follow up of beneficiary farmers is currently underway to assess areas planted. With the onset of the rains, grazing conditions have improved and cattle are looking healthier.

In an attempt to draw attention to and reverse the spread of AIDS, the Government is offering free HIV testing to all citizens. The Government considers “door-to-door” knowledge of HIV a key component in preventing the spread of the disease and plans to employ 7,500 additional health workers to administer the testing.

■ **Namibia:** On 22 November 2005, stakeholders in Namibia adopted a national action plan for capacity building in disaster risk reduction, facilitated by UNDP/BCPR. The vision of the National Action Plan is that by 2015, Namibia has a functional national disaster risk reduction system that minimizes community vulnerability to hazards and effectively manages the impact of disasters within the context of sustainable development.

An important outcome of the process was that roles and responsibilities of disaster management units and other key partners in government and outside the government are now seen beyond emergency response and preparedness to include reducing risks within the context of sustainable development, including risk identification, risk management applications, information and knowledge management as well as institutional and legal systems. This is an interesting development in the southern African disaster management history where the focus tends to remain mainly on response.

It is expected that the costed National Action Plan will be presented to Cabinet at the end of the first quarter of 2006.

■ **Angola:** At the end of the 2005 school year in November, WFP’s School Feeding programme was successful in attaining its main objectives. Results show that despite funding shortfalls and accessibility problems, WFP managed to extend the programme to more than 150,000 primary school children in five provinces, compared to 38,000 children in two provinces last year. The overall attendance



rate throughout the 2005 school year was kept above 80 percent and, an equal percentage of attendance for both boys and girls.

IASC PARTNERS SPECIFIC HIGHLIGHTS

IFRC regional food aid appeal

The IFRC southern Africa Food Insecurity Emergency Appeal, launched on 18 October 2005 has so far received 17% funding (from the US\$ 30 million requested). With the funds received, the IFRC has and will be distributing agricultural starter packs, of which 5,000 in Lesotho, 10,000 in Malawi, 1,600 in Mozambique, 2,000 in Namibia, 2,000 in Swaziland, 3,000 in Zambia and 19,000 in Zimbabwe. Packs will be distributed to Home Based Care clients and other vulnerable population groups in the districts where the IFRC is operational. In Malawi, the Federation will engage in a six-month complementary food distribution scheme. Coordination meetings with WFP and the Malawi Red Cross have taken place to avoid duplication and ensure maximum efficiency.

COORDINATION

Early Warning and preparedness for Indian Ocean cyclone season

The OCHA Regional Office organised a disaster response preparedness meeting in Johannesburg on 15 December 2005 designed to support national response efforts in those countries which are most exposed and vulnerable to cyclones - in particular Madagascar and Mozambique. Specific objectives of the meeting were to obtain an overview on the status of national disaster response preparedness and inter-agency contingency planning; get an overview on existing regional capacities; identify gaps and constraints in response preparedness; discuss how gaps and constraints can be addressed and what the requirements from a regional perspective are. Participants included representatives from the Government of both Mozambique and Madagascar, UN, NGOs and key donors. Outcomes from the meeting were agreements and understandings on how regional capacities could be used to support national response efforts specifically with respect to information management - including remote sensing services, access and use of air and other logistic support as well as the use and application of coordination support tools.

The OCHA Regional Office has further been requested to join the disaster management mechanism of the Indian Ocean Island Committee (IOIC) which is designed to help strengthen early warning, preparedness and response procedures across each of the five member countries (Mauritius, Comoros, Seychelles, Reunion, Madagascar). The office also met with PIROI, the Regional Platform for Intervention of the Red Cross Movement, and agreements were reached on steps to enhance coordination and in particular with respect to coordinating the use of regional stockpiles and logistic support for emergency response.

Avian Influenza

The Regional IASC (RIACSO) established a task force to develop a preparedness plan for the possible humanitarian consequences of avian influenza and a human pandemic. The task force has developed a first draft, which concentrates on actions to be taken with regards to staff, current programming and programming for a possible additional or changed humanitarian caseload. The actions are grouped under three possible scenarios. The first scenario assumes that there will be no avian influenza outbreak in the region and no human pandemic. Actions under this scenario are mainly concentrated on monitoring the situation and strengthening information sharing and preparedness. The second scenario describes a situation comparable to the one currently experienced in Asia, where there is an outbreak among birds, but human infections remain low. Under this scenario, actions



concentrate on mitigating the impact on food security and livelihoods. The third scenario examines a situation of a human pandemic. Actions under this scenario concentrate on support to national health systems in their response, as well as assessing and programming for humanitarian needs after the pandemic has subsided.

In all scenarios it is assumed that national authorities, supported by the specialised agencies WHO and FAO, are responsible for national prevention, mitigation and containment policies and actions. It is also assumed that most programmatic actions for a humanitarian response will be carried out by the UN agencies and NGO partners in the affected countries. To this extend, the regional IASC task force has been monitoring the actions undertaken by national authorities and UN/NGO partners in 11 countries in the region: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Most countries have by now established a national task force and in most countries a national action plan is available in draft format.

Funding for Vulnerability Assessment Committees

AusAID announced that it will support the Vulnerability Assessment Committees (VAC) with US\$ 500,000 each year for the following three years. In support of donor harmonisation efforts, AusAID is looking at providing this funding through the DfID support scheme to the VACs.

**Contributions for the next
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**Inputs for the next Bulletin
are due by
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