

# Zimbabwe update

This month's update covers; SADC Mediation, the ZANU-PF Congress, Mugabe's presence at the UN Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen, Zimbabwe and "blood diamonds" and the new AIDS Free World report on use of systematic rape in Zimbabwe. It also covers in brief; humanitarian need, jailing of teachers goods in shops, and the Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) bi-annual congress.

You can find more details about all of the stories covered on the [ACTSA website](#).

## **SADC mediation; will Zimbabwe crisis impact on World Cup 2010?**

In efforts to overcome the current political impasse the negotiators of the three political parties are expected to report before the end of 2009. It is anticipated that unresolved issues will be referred to South Africa, mediating on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The South African facilitation team went to Harare in the week beginning 11 December and reportedly told the Zimbabwean Government to resolve the outstanding issues in the Global Political Agreement ahead of the 2010 World Cup. The facilitation team met with President Mugabe and Prime Minister Tsvangirai and told them that President Zuma was under pressure internally and externally to bring a resolution to the crisis in Zimbabwe. James Maridadi, spokesperson for Tsvangirai, explained that the facilitators expressed that South Africa considered the current crisis in Zimbabwe could be a direct threat to the 2010 World Cup competition. "Several issues were brought up by the facilitators including the real possibility of an outbreak of xenophobic attacks during the World Cup if political stability is not restored in Zimbabwe."

## **Mugabe tells ZANU-PF Congress to prepare for election**

Robert Mugabe was re-elected as President of ZANU-PF at the party's congress held in Harare on Saturday 12 December. He told delegates that the Inclusive Government was only a short term measure and that his party should be defiant. Mr Mugabe admitted for the first time that he lost the elections and blamed it on mounting factionalism. "The reason why we lost in March last year was because of factions...When it comes to elections, the party strangles itself." he said. Mugabe strongly encouraged his members to prepare for the next elections and to ensure they regain the constituencies they lost in 2008: "Let's begin to work for the party and to organise it strongly. Elections are not very far off," Mugabe told ZANU-PF members at the end of a two-day congress. However, political commentators have stated that it seems unlikely that ZANU-PF will be able to regain its lost ground, leaving a likely MDC success at the next elections. The next election is expected to be held after a new constitution is drafted.

## **UN and Zimbabwe's diamond issues**

The UN General Assembly has been criticised by the US and EU for ignoring reports of Zimbabwe's alleged failure to comply with the Kimberley Process safeguards to eradicate the country's trade in "blood diamonds". Namibia's report to Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon expressed concerns that there were "credible indications of significant non-compliance with the minimum requirements of the Kimberley Process by Zimbabwe".

## **NEWS IN BRIEF**

### **Humanitarian need and assistance:**

Following a recent US \$378 million appeal, the Zimbabwe Red Cross has requested another US \$33 million to sustain its emergency food distributions and other aid in 2010. According to the Red Cross, the situation in Zimbabwe has improved slightly over the past year, however "There remain serious concerns about the continued impact of hunger on vulnerable communities across Zimbabwe." It is estimated three million Zimbabweans may require food aid in 2010 compared to seven million in 2009

### **Teachers sent to jail**

Two members of the Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ) were sentenced to 18 months in jail after being found guilty of inciting violence in the run up to the Presidential election run off election in 2008. The women teachers, Isee Makhuyana and Moreblessing Hliziyo, were found guilty on 8 December. Critics of the operation of the judicial system in Zimbabwe pointed out that hundreds of MDC supporters have been killed, thousands raped, kidnapped, assaulted and tortured, but none of the perpetrators widely assumed to be ZANU-PF members, supporters have been brought to justice.

### **Mugabe in Copenhagen for climate change summit**

Mugabe and a 59-member Zimbabwe delegation attended the Copenhagen UN Climate Change summit, despite European sanctions on his travel and public disapproval from Danish hosts. Commenting on his attendance Mugabe said: "I am a member of the world population. I'm only one dot in the population. I am a member of the world. Why should I feel isolated?" Morgan Tsvangirai explained that he aborted the trip to ensure there was only one delegation and a united voice from Harare at the summit. Mugabe's visit has inevitably caused controversy, Finance Minister Tendai Biti released figures two weeks ago revealing that foreign travel by Mugabe and members of his cabinet consumed US\$28.4 million or 22.5 percent of the US\$126.4 million allocated for ministries' operational expenses between January and October this year. Biti is now attempting to reduce business travel for ministers in 2010, by only providing monthly allowances. Mugabe defends his frequent travelling stating that they are beneficial for the country. It was expected that Mugabe and Jacob Zuma would hold discussions on the sidelines of the United Nations climate summit in Copenhagen regarding the negotiations of the inclusive government.

### **Sexual Terror in Mugabe's Zimbabwe? AIDS Free World present evidence of systematic rape during 2008 elections**

US-based advocacy group, AIDS-Free World called on African countries to censure Zimbabwe and hold the organisers and perpetrators of widespread violence in 2008 to account. Its report, 'Electing to Rape: Sexual Terror in Mugabe's Zimbabwe', includes more sworn affidavits of survivors and witnesses of systematic rape campaigns, it claims was led by ZANU-PF in 2008. All the women targeted were supporters of Morgan Tsvangirai's MDC party. The report states that the ZANU-PF government was well aware of the rape campaign that, along with the election violence, was masterminded by the Joint Operations Command (JOC). The report goes on to detail how Mugabe not only knew about the campaign, but also refused to prevent it or punish those responsible. Due to the severe limitations of legal accountability in Zimbabwe, the report suggests the perpetrators be prosecuted in another African state such as South Africa which has laws authorising the prosecution of international crimes such as crimes against humanity when the alleged perpetrators are in South African territory. "These are women and children whose lives have been ruined. This is not some trifling little matter, this is overwhelming," Lewis explains. "There is a vital responsibility for international and regional intervention in this case."

## **ACTION**

### **Dignity! Period**

Access to sanitary products for women in Zimbabwe is worse than ever, for many women sanitary protection is a luxury they can no longer afford. Women have been forced to use newspaper, rags or leaves as a substitute for sanitary pads which can cause serious infections for which there is no available medication.

ACTSA's Dignity! Period campaign provides sanitary towels to women in Zimbabwe, just £3 a month provides sanitary towels for 3 women for a year. Visit ACTSA's Dignity! Period web pages to make a donation or learn more.



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### **Shopping**

Francistown, situated on the border between Botswana and Zimbabwe, has noticed the absence of Zimbabweans shoppers this year. For the past decade, Francistown has been the first port of call for Zimbabweans, who were able to buy basic necessities such as food, petrol and even soap, when Zimbabwe's shops did not shelve them. "In the past, we used to get most of our money from Zimbabwean shoppers who would buy literally everything, from groceries to hardware and clothing items," said Ikalafeng Maruping, a Francistown vendor. The decline in commercial activity is a result of those basic amenities now being available in Zimbabwe. Many people now feel no need to travel to Francistown when they can buy their groceries at home albeit it a price but without the cost of getting to and from Francistown and the border crossing.

### **Zimbabwean or settler?**

At the recent ZANU-PF Congress President Mugabe called Roy Bennett, the MDC's choice for Deputy Agricultural Minister, an "offspring of a settler". Addressing the congress in Harare, the president stated: "To the MDC I say: Open your eyes. This is your country and not for whites. Not the Bennetts. They are settlers, even if they were born here they are offspring of settlers."

### **Students**

The Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) has held its bi-annual leadership Renewal Congress on the 19 December 2009 in Harare. The Congress took the theme "Harnessing Students Power for a Democratic Higher Education Transition". Delegates from 43 colleges were joined by student leaders from across SADC for the congress.