

Zimbabwe update

In a week marking the first hundred days of Zimbabwe's Government of National Unity, this month's update focuses on the continuing political and economic challenges facing the Government of National Unity.

This issue looks at South Africa's new visa waiver for Zimbabweans, the government's plan for economic revival and the continued call of teachers for decent pay and conditions. We also highlight the continuing cholera epidemic, the country's continued reliance on food aid and calls by women's rights groups for a truth, justice and reconciliation commission.

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

Tsvangirai launches plan for economic revival

Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai this month officially launched his government's 100-day action plan for economic revival. The government has raised over US\$1 billion in redevelopment credits it sought from African partners, but according to the planning minister it is insufficient to support ongoing government operations. US\$35 million has been received from South Africa and China to meet current expenses but international donors have been reluctant to directly fund the national unity government, until more proof of serious reform is given. Finance Minister Tendai Biti said the government urgently needs US\$200 million to pay civil servants, or the national revival could falter. Botswana has warned the Government of National Unity that the international community might withdraw pledges to help reconstruction if violations of the power sharing agreement continue.

Mugabe offers concessions over key government posts

The Zimbabwean government announced this month that the two MDC factions will hold six of the ten governorships and all five vacant ambassadorial jobs. In addition, President Mugabe has agreed to allow Roy Bennett to become Deputy Agriculture Minister. However, the parties have as yet failed to come to any agreement about the other key issues including the control of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, continuing land seizures and politically motivated arrests.

Teachers' strike called off

Zimbabwe's teachers unions called off a threatened strike at state schools, at the beginning of May, after the government agreed to scrap fees for children of teachers. Teachers were demanding an increase in their \$100 salaries which they say is too low to meet basic needs and pay school fees for their children. "We are going back to work although we did not have all our demands met," said PTUZ secretary-general Raymond Majongwe.

News in Brief

- The Australian government has promised to provide an additional A\$6 million to assist Zimbabwe in its rebuilding efforts. The money will go towards agriculture as well as water and sanitation.
- MDC-T's Minister of Constitutional and Parliamentary Affairs, was acquitted following accusations of inciting public violence in May 2008.
- Norway committed to donating \$9 million dollars to Zimbabwe, on the proviso that it would bypass state channels. The funding will be allocated via the United Nations, NGOs and the World Bank.

Women's rights groups call for truth, justice and reconciliation

Women's rights groups in Zimbabwe have urged the establishment of a Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission to bring to justice those who committed human rights violations in the run up to the second presidential vote in June 2008. Emilia Muchawa, Chair of the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe said "Any transitional process will not be effective unless it addresses the issues raised by those affected. Attempts of national healing and reconciliation without [justice] provide a short-lived remedy to conflict."

Risk of cholera remains high

The Zimbabwe Red Cross Society and the International Federation of the Red Cross anticipate that the number of Cholera cases in Zimbabwe will reach 100,000 in the coming days. The report, published this Tuesday, states that although rates of infection have dropped, the risk remains high. So far 98,309 cases have been reported, with some 4,283 deaths.

Access to food

Zimbabwe is preparing itself for another year of food insecurity. Accurate information on the 2009 main maize harvest is expected in June however it is believed the shortfall is between 600,000 and 1 million metric tons. The World Food Programme expects the coming winter wheat crop will be poor. High prices for seed, fertilisers and fuel is anticipated to continue the country's reliance on food aid. The hunger season peaked in March, when about 7 million people, more than half the population, were reliant on donated food.

Visa waiver welcomed by experts

South Africa's new 90 day visa waiver for Zimbabweans has resulted in an increase in traffic into and out of South Africa. According to Home Affairs statistics, the number crossing the border daily has increased from approximately 3,500 to 4,700, with almost the same number leaving South Africa for Zimbabwe. The new policy, which has been welcomed by migration experts, has allowed the South African government to monitor cross border flows and reduce the number of people risking their lives to enter or leave the country.

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 the Dignity! Period pages of the ACTSA website to make a donation or learn more.](#)

Women

Members of Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) staged a peaceful demonstration in Harare to deliver a list of demands to parliament including restoration of the rule of law, education and social welfare. The demands were presented to mark 100 days of the Government of National Unity.

Media

Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai has said that there have been "significant improvements in media freedom in the country" during an announcement on the outstanding issues of the Global Political Agreement this month.

Rights

Jestina Mukoko was again released from custody with 14 other human rights activists after a judge was forced to reverse her decision to revoke their bail. The activists had been charged with terrorism and released from custody in March. The charges, which have been widely denounced as baseless, provoked heavy criticism from human rights organisations. The decision was reversed under pressure from the MDC and rumoured pressure from the South African government.