

Report # 132

**BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD**

***Region: Southern Africa***

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## **Summary of Report**

### **Elections & Governance**

#### **Madagascar Parties, President Sign Deal on Elections**

Madagascar President Andry Rajoelina has signed an agreement with least 90 minor political parties setting dates for a constitutional referendum, and parliamentary and presidential elections.

#### **South African Media Group to Fight Proposed Regulation of Journalists**

The deputy chairperson of the South African National Editors Forum (SANEF) said her organization will do everything possible to stop a proposed media tribunal to regulate the work of journalists.

#### **Madagascar govt, minor parties agree new poll dates**

Madagascar's government has agreed new election dates with minor political parties, but without the three main opposition parties the latest bid to end a dragging political crisis could fail.

### **Politics**

#### **Rivals shun Madagascar leader's pact with parties**

Madagascar's President Andry Rajoelina signed a deal late on Friday with dozens of minor parties aimed at ending a protracted political crisis, but the pact was rejected by the country's main opposition leaders.

#### **Madagascar leader signs deal with minor parties**

Madagascar's President Andry Rajoelina signed a deal late on Friday with dozens of minor parties aimed at ending a protracted political crisis, but the pact was rejected by the country's main opposition leaders.

## **Economy & Energy**

### **South Africa Increases Offer to Public Service Union**

The South African government has increased its offer to more than one million public service workers who are threatening to strike. The government increased its monthly housing allowance offer to \$95 from about \$87. But the government did not change its pay raise offer of 7 percent.

### **South Africa Union and Government Officials to Meet over Wage Dispute**

A meeting of South African Trade Union and government officials over wage dispute is going to be held on Thursday. The spokesman for the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) says his group will demand a bigger pay increase at a scheduled meeting with senior government officials Thursday.

### **Zimbabwe Begins Sale of Controversial Diamonds**

Zimbabwe has sold millions of carats of rough diamonds Wednesday that are part of a stockpile of diamonds from controversial diamond fields in southeastern Zimbabwe. The Kimberley Process has certified about \$100 million of diamonds which were sold to private buyers.

### **EIB loans Mozambique 45 mln euros for electric grid**

The European Investment Bank has approved a 45 million euro loan to assist Mozambique's power utility Electricidade de Mocambique supply electricity to cities, towns and villages.

### **S. Africa gov't, unions plan deadline strike talks**

South African unions representing more than 1 million civil servants and the government plan wage talks on Thursday, hours before a union deadline to reach a deal that would avert a prolonged strike.

### **S. Africa state workers stage mass one-day strike**

South Africa public sector unions representing more than a million workers staged a one-day strike on Tuesday, threatening an extended labour stoppage this week that could deal a blow to Africa's largest economy.

## Human Rights, Social Issues & Developments

### **ZIMBABWE: Children doing time with their mothers**

In Zimbabwe, adults, juveniles and mothers with babies share the same jail, awaiting trial for crimes ranging from murder to pick-pocketing. "There are about 15 mothers with children whose ages range from just-born babies to five-year-old. Children living with their imprisoned mothers are in a sorry state; they are serving sentences for crimes they never committed." Infants share crowded cells with their mothers until they are four years old; they are then placed in a juvenile section and regularly visit their mothers. Due to the weak economic condition of the country, children neither have access to sufficient food nor to the health facilities. And this condition leads to the death of several children, who are in prison with their mothers.

### **Activist Urges SADC Ministers to Address Human Rights Concerns**

The Executive Director of Namibia's National Society for Human Rights (NSHR) said his organization will pressure the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to address what he says are the killings and inhumane treatment of human rights defenders.

## Food Security & Health Issues

### **Sony helps Africa combat the spread of AIDS during 2010 FIFA World Cup**

Sony in collaboration with UNDP and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) launched the "Public Viewing" project in Africa during 2010 FIFA world cup. Under this project they brought 26 matches live to 24,000 people living in Cameroon and Ghana. The viewings launched an AIDS awareness campaign aiming to bring health information to vulnerable communities in these countries, and contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

### **ZIMBABWE: More food production, but not enough**

According to a report ("national crop and food security situation") of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP), Zimbabwe's production of maize, its staple food, has improved "significantly", but the country is still food insecure and about 1.68 million people will require assistance in the first quarter of 2011.

### **Zimbabwe Needs Food Aid for 1.7 Million People Next Year**

A new U.N. report says that although Zimbabwe's food security situation is improved significantly, yet about 1.7 million people will still need assistance.

## **Food Security in Zimbabwe Improves, Many Still in Need**

A new United Nations report finds food security in Zimbabwe has improved significantly, following government efforts to curb the food problem and international funding to subsidize farmers. But, the report finds nearly 1.7 million people in the country still will need food aid next year. The findings are based on a report by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization and World Food Program, who sent a joint food assessment mission to Zimbabwe in June.

## **Madagascar's farms threatened by locust plague, UN agency cautions**

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) today warned that Madagascar is at risk of a crop-eating locust plague, potentially jeopardizing the livelihoods of 460,000 rural families.

## **External help raises Zimbabwe's food production but some still hungry – UN**

According to the United Nations Agency, an estimated 1.68 million Zimbabweans still require agricultural assistance and food aid despite an improvement in the country's food production.

## **Shortage of Skills for Reproductive Health**

Across Africa, there is an acute shortage of specialists in women's reproductive health. If governments are serious about achieving development goals on maternal mortality and women's reproductive health, they will have to find ways to improve the numbers and distribution of skills in the public health service.

## **MADAGASCAR: Drought, cyclones, political crisis and now locusts**

Swarms of locusts have been forming in the South Madagascar for months threatening the livelihoods of hundreds and thousands of Malagasy and if a major control campaign is not set up quick infestations could reach "plague proportions," the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has warned.

## **Militancy**

### **Angolan landmines kill 166 people in four years**

Landmines left behind by Angola's three-decade long civil war have killed 166 people and injured hundreds more in the last four years, a study showed on Monday.

## **Detailed Report**

### **Elections & Governance**

#### **Madagascar Parties, President Sign Deal on Elections**

(Voice of America)

14 August 2010

Madagascar President Andry Rajoelina has signed an agreement with at least 90 minor political parties setting dates for a constitutional referendum, and parliamentary and presidential elections.

The agreement was signed in a ceremony in the capital Antananarivo late Friday. The signatories included representatives of three former presidents, including Marc Ravalomanana, the man Rajoelina ousted in a coup last year.

Under the agreement, a referendum on a new constitution will be held November 17. The referendum, seen as a key step in ending the country's political crisis, had been scheduled for this week, but election officials said the new document had not been finalized.

Friday's agreement also calls for parliamentary elections to be held on March 16, 2011, and presidential elections to be held on May 4, 2011, with Rajoelina remaining in power until a new president is elected.

The signatory political parties will determine candidates for the post of prime minister.

Madagascar has been in political turmoil since March 2009 when Mr. Rajoelina toppled President Ravalomanana with the support of the military.

The African Union has refused to recognize Mr. Rajoelina as president of the Indian Ocean island nation.

International mediators have brokered several deals that envision power sharing between Mr. Rajoelina and three of the country's former leaders. The deals have all collapsed because the four could not agree on how to divide the top posts.

#### **South African Media Group to Fight Proposed Regulation of Journalists**

(Voice of America)

11 August 2010

The deputy chairperson of the South African National Editors Forum (SANEF) said her organization will do everything possible to stop a proposed media tribunal to regulate the work of journalists.

This comes after the ruling African National Congress (ANC) proposed a Media Appeals Tribunal that would investigate complaints of inaccurate or unfair reporting and hold journalists accountable.

SANEF deputy chairperson Mary Papayya said a government-controlled tribunal would undermine media freedom guaranteed under the constitution.

“We are totally opposed to any form of state-controlled or state regulation of the media. At SANEF we are fully behind the concept of self-regulation. We believe that the South African concept of self-regulation through a press ombudsman has been working very well. We think that it is very worrying that there are talks of a state or ANC-controlled tribunal. We think that this flies in the face of media freedom, and that it is unconstitutional and it has no place in our democracy,” she said.

ANC officials have criticized South African journalists for allegedly flawed reporting and what they called a lack of ethics.

Papayya said there are options for recourse for those who feel they might have been wronged by the media.

“We do have the print ombudsman if it is a print inaccuracy; we have the broadcast Complaints Commission if it is broadcast inaccuracy, and thirdly we have the courts. And we find that in all aspects those have been tried, and individuals had gone ahead and use either of those three bodies to get recourse to inaccuracies or problems,” Papayya said.

She expressed regrets that too often those with complaints of media inaccuracies have chosen not to take their concerns first to editors.

Papayya also criticized a legislation currently being considered in the South African parliament that would allow the government to classify a broad range of material that is not currently considered secret.

“That particular bill can have severe consequences for journalists. It means that there will be no access to certain types of information that is regarded as a state secret. It could lend journalists in jail for up to 25 years if they do break the law,” Papayya said.

She said SANEF has embarked on a campaign to fight the proposed media tribunal and in particular the Protection of Information Bill.

“We are embarking on a lobbying campaign against these kinds of punitive legislation and also against any state-controlled measure that would want to control media or the registration of journalists because we think that it is unconstitutional,” she said.

Papayya said the South African National Editors Forum believes that no journalist is above the law and that it is imperative for the media to run retractions and corrections when a mistake has been made in their reporting.

## **Madagascar govt, minor parties agree new poll dates**

(Alert Net)

11 August 2010

ANTANANARIVO, Aug 11 (Reuters) - Madagascar's government has agreed new election dates with minor political parties, but without the three main opposition parties the latest bid to end a dragging political crisis could fail.

The Indian Ocean island has been mired in political turmoil since President Andry Rajoelina unseated former leader Marc Ravalomanana with military backing, stunting economic growth as donors froze aid worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

Rajoelina's interim government is holding talks with scores of minor political parties aimed at producing a new roadmap to restoring constitutional order in the world's largest vanilla producer.

However, the three main opposition parties are boycotting the discussions and analysts say a resolution of the political standoff is unlikely without their active participation.

"We have agreed on organising presidential elections for July 1, 2011. Legislative elections ought to take place on April 13 in the same year," local mediator Benjamina Ramanantsoa told Reuters late on Tuesday night.

A referendum on a new constitution, originally slated for this month but postponed back in June because the new basic law had not been completed, will take place on Nov. 17.

The opposition leaders have said they will only contest elections that are organised by all key parties and not unilaterally by Rajoelina's administration.

International mediators brokered a string of power-sharing deals between Rajoelina, Ravalomanana and two other former presidents last year, but they all collapsed after the bitter rivals failed to agree on how to share out the top posts.

## **Politics**

### **Rivals shun Madagascar leader's pact with parties**

(Alert Net)

14 August 2010

ANTANANARIVO, Aug 14 (Reuters) - Madagascar's President Andry Rajoelina signed a deal late on Friday with dozens of minor parties aimed at ending a protracted political crisis, but the pact was rejected by the country's main opposition leaders.

Political analysts said it was unlikely the Indian Ocean island's regional neighbours and donor countries would accept the agreement without Rajoelina's rivals supporting it.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Rajoelina said it marked a step towards a new constitution for the country, adding: "Our signatures take us in that direction."

The agreement between the 36-year-old former disc jockey and 99 parties confirmed him as president, giving him the power to appoint ministers on the recommendation of party leaders and members of the interim two-chamber parliament.

A referendum on a new constitution will be held as planned on Nov. 17 this year. A legislative election will now take place on March 16 next year and a presidential ballot on May 4.

"No one can any longer criticise the path we have taken as unilateralist," Rajoelina said.

The legislative elections, if held on the agreed date, would take place exactly two years after dissident troops backing Rajoelina stormed one of Antananarivo's two presidential palaces, forcing incumbent President Marc Ravalomanana's departure into exile.

Rajoelina's takeover was branded a coup by regional neighbours and donors froze budgetary assistance and aid worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

Retired General Guy Ratimoarivony, a director at Madagascar's Centre of Diplomatic and Strategic Studies, said the deal was likely to fall short of the consensus government donor countries and some African powers had urged.

#### AU MEMBERSHIP SUSPENDED

"As it stands, I do not think the international community will accept this agreement ... (it) wants a government of national unity. It could perhaps accept this if the three (opposition) movements were on board," Ratimoarivony said.

The African Union has suspended Madagascar's membership and in March imposed sanctions against Rajoelina and more than 100 other people who backed his seizure of power, including military officers.

Nineteen months of political turmoil has stunted economic growth on an island known for its deposits of oil, coal, uranium, chrome, nickel and cobalt. The economy is expected to expand by a meagre 0.8 percent this year after years of steady growth.

International mediators brokered a series of power sharing agreements between Rajoelina, Ravalomanana and two other former presidents, but they all collapsed in bickering over the allocation of ministerial posts.

"This is unilateralism once again and does not respect the principle of inclusivity," said Ange Andrianarisoa, head of the former President Didier Ratsiraka's political movement.

The parties of Ravalomanana, Ratsiraka and former President Albert Zafy rejected Friday's agreement, although some party members did put their names to the deal.

"It is wrong to say that the Ravalomanana, Zafy and Ratsiraka movements signed the agreement. Those who penned their signature did so in their own name," said Andrianarisoa.

## **Madagascar leader signs deal with minor parties**

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Speaking at the signing ceremony, Rajoelina said it marked a step towards a new constitution for the country, adding: "Our signatures take us in that direction."

The agreement between the 36-year-old former disc jockey and 99 parties confirmed him as president, giving him the power to appoint ministers on the recommendation of party leaders and members of the interim two-chamber parliament.

The deal also changed election dates that were initially agreed earlier this week.

A referendum on a new constitution will be held as planned on Nov. 17 this year. A legislative election will take place on March 16 next year and a presidential ballot on May 4.

"No one can any longer criticise the path we have taken as unilateralist. We have already made budget allowances to finance the polls," Rajoelina told reporters.

The legislative elections, if held on the agreed date, would take place exactly two years after dissident troops backing Rajoelina stormed one of Antananarivo's two presidential palaces, forcing incumbent President Marc Ravalomanana's departure into exile.

Nineteen months of political turmoil has stunted economic growth on an island known for its deposits of oil, coal, uranium, chrome, nickel and cobalt. The economy is expected to expand by a meagre 0.8 percent this year after years of steady growth.

Rajoelina's takeover was branded a coup by foreign powers and regional neighbours and the African Union suspended the membership of Madagascar, the world's fourth largest island.

International mediators brokered a series of power sharing agreements between Rajoelina, Ravalomanana and two other former presidents, but they all collapsed in bickering over the allocation of ministerial posts.

The opposition and some donor countries previously accused Rajoelina of acting on his own and said they would accept only an electoral process that involved all sides.

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## **Economy & Energy**

### **South Africa Increases Offer to Public Service Union**

(Voice of America)

13 August 2010

The South African government has increased its offer to more than one million public service workers who are threatening to strike.

Following negotiations with union representatives Thursday, the government increased its monthly housing allowance offer to \$95 from about \$87. But the government did not change its pay raise offer of 7 percent.

The unions are demanding a pay raise of 8.6 percent, more than twice the rate of inflation, in addition to a higher housing allowance.

On Tuesday, civil service workers staged a one-day strike and held marches in Cape Town and Pretoria.

Officials say the strike affected schools and public offices, although essential services such as police and hospitals ran on reduced staffing.

Three years ago, public workers staged a crippling strike that shut down many schools and forced some hospitals to operate with minimal staff for several weeks.

### **South Africa Union and Government Officials to Meet over Wage Dispute**

(Voice of America)

11 August 2010

The spokesman for the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) says his group will demand a bigger pay increase at a scheduled meeting with senior government officials Thursday.

Patrick Craven said there is a need for President Jacob Zuma's government to improve upon its previous pay offer.

"The strike has been suspended while we wait to see what he [Minister Richard Baloyi] proposes at a meeting which is being held today, Thursday at 6pm, South African time. And, we obviously all hope that he will come up with some big improvements in the government offer, which can be recommended to the membership for acceptance," he said.

COSATU reportedly suspended a nationwide strike after Richard Baloyi, the Public Service and Administration Minister, called for a meeting to negotiate with officials of the trade unions over their demands.

On Tuesday, an estimated one million public service workers went on a one-day strike to press home their demand for a pay increase.

The workers want an 8.6 percent pay raise, about a double the current inflation rate of 4.2 per cent, as well as a 1,000 rand (\$137.22) monthly housing allowance.

But, the South African government offered the workers a 7 percent increase and 630 rand (\$86.44) monthly housing allowance.

Analysts say the government wants to avert a prolonged nation-wide strike that could potentially impede South Africa's burgeoning economy.

Observers say the ruling African National Congress Party (ANC), which draws considerable support from COSATU, will want to resolve the stalemate ahead of the party's policy-setting meeting which is scheduled for next month.

COSATU spokesman Craven said the group stands by its demands.

"The union has always pushed any employer as far as possible and the government is no exception. We have, from the outset, not accepted the argument that there is no money available. This is the government that has wasted millions of rands on World Cup tickets for its top officials and five-star hotel accommodations for the government ministers and senior civil servants," Craven said.

He also said that the government has misplaced its priorities by spending lavishly on senior government officials rather than paying reasonable wages to hard-working public sector employees.

## **Zimbabwe Begins Sale of Controversial Diamonds**

(Voice of America)

11 August 2010

Zimbabwe has sold millions of carats of rough diamonds Wednesday that are part of a stockpile of diamonds from controversial diamond fields in southeastern Zimbabwe. The Kimberley Process has certified about \$100 million of diamonds which were sold to private buyers.

Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai attended the lavish event at Harare's old domestic terminal at the main airport Wednesday, where several private jets brought buyers from Israel, India, Lebanon and Russia.

Abbey Chikane, Zimbabwe monitor of the world diamond control body, certified the diamonds ready for export on Wednesday, having said controversy-plagued diamonds from eastern Zimbabwe met minimum international standards.

People on the streets of Harare were pleased with the certification. But, some stressed that the revenue from the export of the rough stones should be used to reconstruct Zimbabwe's devastated infrastructure, and not to line the pockets of individuals. No estimated value was given for all the stones in the Marange fields, although unofficial estimates range up to \$2 billion.

Caleb Sibanda, a statistician at a Zimbabwe bank, said he was happy the stones are now legal.

"We do support selling diamonds in Zimbabwe but as long as it is to enrich the entire nation. Let the people be the owners of these fields and the people choose which sectors they want to be improved," said Sibanda.

The deal by the Kimberley Process to allow the export of about \$100 million of diamonds was agreed to at a meeting in Saint Petersburg, Russia last month.

Another sale is scheduled for next month. The Kimberley Process will then decide on September 30 whether Zimbabwe can regularly export diamonds without special monitoring.

International and domestic human rights groups maintain Marange's rough stones certified Wednesday are from diamond fields where gross human rights abuses have taken place, particularly in late 2008.

The groups, such as Global Witness, said the diamond fields are ultimately controlled by military chiefs loyal to President Robert Mugabe. Mr. Mugabe is presently traveling in China.

The alluvial rough stones certified Wednesday come from two diamond fields which the Harare High court has ruled belong to British company African Consolidated Resources.

The stones certified were sold by two Zimbabwe companies in partnership with the ZANU-PF mining ministry. The two companies, Mbada Mining and Canadile were financially backed by South African and Mauritian financiers.

African Consolidated's chief executive, Andrew Cranswick, says he wants Zimbabwe to benefit from the legal sale of diamonds but has warned that whoever buys them is trading in stolen goods.

While some of the stockpiled stones are now legally sold, diamond industry experts in Zimbabwe say there is substantial evidence that many of the most valuable diamonds from the eastern diamond fields are still being smuggled out of Zimbabwe. They say they are being sold illegally by Mr. Mugabe's allies in the security forces in neighboring Mozambique.

### **EIB loans Mozambique 45 mln euros for electric grid**

(Alert Net)

12 August 2010

MAPUTO, Aug 12 (Reuters) - The European Investment Bank has approved a 45 million euro loan to assist Mozambique's power utility Electricidade de Mocambique supply electricity to cities, towns and villages, an official said on Thursday.

David White, EIB head of regional representation for Southern Africa and Indian Ocean, told reporters that an agreement formalising the deal would be signed soon.

The EIB said earlier this year it would spend up to 104 million euros to improve the electrical grid in the southern African country to increase access to power to homes and businesses.

Mozambique is one of Africa's fastest growing economies and needs to improve its electrical grid to sustain the expansion, White said.

But it also ranks near the bottom in the world in terms of per capita gross domestic product.

### **S. Africa gov't, unions plan deadline strike talks**

(Alert Net)

11 August 2010

JOHANNESBURG, Aug 11 (Reuters) - South African unions representing more than 1 million civil servants and the government plan wage talks on Thursday, hours before a union deadline to reach a deal that would avert a prolonged strike.

"We are optimistic that the government will come back to us with a significant offer. Our members want to avoid protracted strike action," Sizwe Pamla, a spokesman for the public sector union NEHAWU, said on Wednesday. The group is a part of the country's largest umbrella labour group, COSATU.

COSATU unions and other civil service labour groups staged a one-day strike on Tuesday, seeking an 8.6 percent pay rise, twice the current rate of inflation, and a 1,000 rand (\$138) monthly housing allowance. [ID:nLDE6790H6]

They threatened a prolonged strike they said would bring the government to a halt unless a deal is reached by Thursday.

The action increased pressure on President Jacob Zuma's government to prevent a repeat of a massive public sector strike three years ago that dented the economy and support for his predecessor, analysts said.

The government has offered 7 percent and 630 rand for housing, but analysts believe it is likely to raise its offer rather than risk a strike just before a policy-setting meeting next month of the ruling African National Congress.

Analysts expect the ANC, which has a longstanding alliance with organised labour, to give in to the unions' demands. Such a deal would make it hard to bring the budget deficit down from 6.7 percent of gross domestic product without spending cutbacks elsewhere. [ID:nLDE66S194]

Separately, South African auto workers seeking pay increases of more than triple the inflation rate went on an indefinite strike on Wednesday, hitting production.

## **S. Africa state workers stage mass one-day strike**

(Alert Net)

10 August 2010

JOHANNESBURG, Aug 10 (Reuters) - South Africa public sector unions representing more than a million workers staged a one-day strike on Tuesday, threatening an extended labour stoppage this week that could deal a blow to Africa's largest economy.

Tuesday's action increases pressure on President Jacob Zuma's government to reach a deal by a Thursday deadline set by the unions to prevent a repeat of a prolonged public sector strike three years ago that dented the economy and damaged support for Zuma's predecessor.

Marches were held in Cape Town and Pretoria, South Africa's administrative capital, as part of a "total shut-down of the public service", according to the country's largest umbrella labour organisation COSATU.

Everything from schools to public offices was affected, although essential services such as police and hospitals were running on reduced staffing.

The Department of Home Affairs said immigration services at ports and airports had not been affected and measures had been taken at major airports to ensure minimal disruption.

TALKS TO RESUME

Unions and government negotiators planned talks later in the day, after the protest marches were over, union officials said.

"In a strike of this magnitude it is difficult to make sufficient contingency plans to ensure business runs as usual but we have employed contract workers to make sure government departments will not be closed," said Dumisani Nkwamba, a spokesman for the public service ministry.

Unions want an 8.6 percent pay hike, twice the current rate of inflation, and a 1,000 rand (\$138) monthly housing allowance.

"Failure to meet these demands by 12 August 2010 will result in indefinite labour action by all unions until the demands are met," COSATU-affiliated unions said in a statement. [ID:nWEB4785]

The government is offering 7 percent and 630 rand for housing, although analysts believe it is likely to raise its offer rather than risk a walk-out that would damage the economy.

"I think in two weeks or so it will be finished. If the strike keeps going on past September, then they are dangerous," said Gary van Staden, a political analyst at independent economists NKC.

Analysts expect the ruling African National Congress, which has a longstanding alliance with organised labour, to give in to the unions' demands. But such a deal will make it hard to bring the deficit down from 6.7 percent of GDP without spending cutbacks elsewhere. [ID:nLDE66S194]

The government, which budgeted for wage increases based on a 5.2 percent inflation projection, has not said how much more it would spend under its offer or the deal sought by the unions.

In an indication of how costly the deal could be, just the 1,000 rand monthly housing allowance sought by the unions could account for more than one percent of the state budget.

The government said its offer package would amount to an average 9 percent increase for 1.3 million unionised public servants. [ID:nLDE6790PF]

A mid-grade public sector employee makes on average 8,800 rand a month in salary and benefits, above the national average wage of 6,383 rand, according to government figures.

The central bank has also expressed concern about elevated pay increases stoking inflation in the wider economy, putting upward pressure on interest rates.

## Human Rights, Social Issues & Developments

### ZIMBABWE: Children doing time with their mothers

(IRIN)

11 August 2010

HARARE, 11 August 2010 (IRIN) - Sarah Moyo, 24 - not her real name - clasps her stunted one-year-old child to her chest as she talks to her visiting husband through a chain-link fence at the Central Remand Prison, on the eastern fringe of Zimbabwe's capital, Harare.

Moyo has spent three months awaiting trial for throwing scalding water on her husband's lover, and she forces a smile at him and the two female friends accompanying him on the lunchtime visit.

Ignoring his two friends she fixes her gaze on her husband and says: "The child tends to vomit all the time I give him the food from prison. It would be better if the prison officials allowed you to bring along good food for the baby, because he could get sick any time and I wouldn't know what to do with him."

Zimbabwean jails have not escaped the country's decade-long economic malaise and food is in short supply. A prison official who declined to be identified told IRIN that diseases such as tuberculosis and kwashiorkor, which affects mainly children and is caused by severe protein malnutrition, and pellagra, a vitamin deficiency disease, were prevalent.

Moyo told IRIN that the three months of incarceration were taking their toll on her and the child. "I just wish I could have a good lawyer who will successfully apply for bail for me - raising a child in this situation is like living in hell," she said.

Inside the high walls crowned with razor wire, prison officers keenly watch the visitors and inmates; a woman in the compound sits and prays beside her coughing child of about two years, another woman prisoner breastfeeds her daughter while talking in hushed tones to a man.

Adults, juveniles and mothers with babies share the same jail, awaiting trial for crimes ranging from murder to pick-pocketing. "There are about 15 mothers with children whose ages range from just-born babies to five-year-olds," the prison official told IRIN.

"Five mothers did not come out to meet their relatives today because they are in the prison hospital, since they or their children are seriously ill."

One of the "longest serving" child inmates is a four-year-old, born within days of the mother being remanded; the prison officer said she was awaiting trial in the overcrowded prison for murder.

"The prison tries as much as possible to provide baby food to the children living with their mothers, and some well-wishers have stepped in to supply the food, but it quickly runs out and

there is a general shortage. In some cases, the mothers feed on their babies' food because they are also starving," the official said.

"I have worked at several prisons in the last seven years and the situation is pretty much the same in all jails. Children living with their imprisoned mothers are in a sorry state; they are serving sentences for crimes they never committed."

In nearby Harare Prison, where those convicted of their crimes serve their sentences, infants share crowded cells with their mothers until they are four years old; they are then placed in a juvenile section and regularly visit their mothers, a prison officer at the jail, who declined to be identified, told IRIN.

### **HIV-positive mothers**

"The mothers do their laundry and sometimes feed those in the juvenile section, but there are cases where the fathers successfully apply to have the children under their custody," the prison officer said.

"Where fathers do not come forward to claim their children, some foster homes accept the children, and we are more than ready to let them go because there are no resources to sustain them here."

There are also no educational facilities for the children and the official admitted that when they fell ill, prison doctors sometimes failed to react quickly enough. "I have a feeling that most of the children who die here could have survived if they enjoyed better health facilities," the official commented.

Most of the children who died in prison were given pauper burials, either because their next of kin was not known, or families did not offer to pay for their burial.

Sebastian Chenhaire, of the Zimbabwe Network of People Living with AIDS (ZNNP+), told IRIN that AIDS activists viewed the plight of children jailed with their mothers as a "serious problem" because their living conditions made it difficult for those who were HIV positive to obtain treatment.

"We are extremely concerned because it is a known fact that some of the children are born in prison to [HIV-]positive mothers and they also have the virus, while others go into the prisons already sick."

"Many positive children are dying in prison because they are failing to access treatment, and it is the responsibility of the government to make antiretroviral therapy accessible to them," Chenhaire said.

"It is also desirable to place jailed mothers on community service for offences that are not serious, and to consider putting others in open prisons where they can access treatment and other facilities more easily."

## **Activist Urges SADC Ministers to Address Human Rights Concerns**

(Voice of America)

09 August 2010

The Executive Director of Namibia's National Society for Human Rights (NSHR) said his organization will pressure the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to address what he says are the killings and inhumane treatment of human rights defenders.

Phil ya Nangoloh told VOA SADC leaders should come up with a pragmatic plan to resolve the deteriorating human rights conditions in the sub-region.

"We are concerned with the assassinations or murders of human rights defenders in the DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo). We are also going to talk about human rights defenders in Angola with regards to Cabinda in particular. We are equally concerned about the issue of (President Omar Hassan) al-Bashir because (Namibian) President Lukas Pohamba has agreed not to execute the (Darfur war crimes) arrest warrant of Mr. Bashir," he said.

Several ministers in the southern African region are participating in the Council of Ministers meeting in Namibia's capital, Windhoek.

The meeting, which began Monday, is scheduled to end on 17th August. High on the agenda is food security, as well as the implications of the recent global economic crisis on the sub-region.

According to the regional bloc, other issues to be discussed include institutional arrangements for the SADC Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), a report on the EPA processes, and progress made in the Eastern and Southern Africa and East African Community EPA.

But, executive director ya Nangoloh said that rights groups in the region are displeased with the "lackadaisical attitude" of officials in the region towards human right issues.

"We are going into the streets to demonstrate to make our voices heard. We are going to place newspaper advertisement(s) about the same issues. We are going to use all possible legal means to make our voices heard. It's not going to be business as usual. As a matter of fact, it's going to be business as unusual," ya Nangoloh said.

He also said there are human rights concerns in Zimbabwe, the Kingdom of Swaziland and South Africa.

Ya Nangoloh said new media laws currently under consideration in South Africa could undermine efforts of human rights defenders in that country. Critics of the new proposals have reportedly likened them to media laws in effect during the apartheid years.

## Food Security & Health Issues

### **Sony helps Africa combat the spread of AIDS during 2010 FIFA World Cup**

(UNDP)

11 August 2010

The “Public Viewing in Africa” partnership project between Sony Corporation, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) brought 26 World Cup matches live to 24,000 people living in Cameroon and Ghana. The viewings launched an AIDS-awareness campaign aiming to bring health information to vulnerable communities in these countries, and contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The MDGs are eight internationally-agreed targets which aim to reduce poverty, hunger, maternal and child deaths, disease, inadequate shelter, gender inequality and environmental degradation by 2015.

Sony set up large screen visual equipment, including a 200 inch screen, projector, Blu-Ray disc player and waterproof speakers, and aired, for free, 26 live matches of the 2010 FIFA World Cup™, at locations with limited access to television, while UNDP, JICA and local partners offered the viewers HIV and AIDS counseling and advocacy materials. Activities included drama performances, quizzes and song contests relating to HIV and AIDS prevention, as well as the free distribution of condoms.

Despite the widespread popularity of football across Cameroon and Ghana, low household TV penetration, at approximately 20 percent, and the lack of electricity in certain regions prevents many communities from watching their teams on TV.

In Cameroon, UNDP mobilized approximately 5,350 people to five venues in four regions, while in Ghana, JICA brought together 18,650 people at 18 venues across 15 regions. In addition, 1,800 people in Cameroon and 3,000 people in Ghana took HIV tests. In both instances, more than double the number of people expected participated.

During the screenings, “Join the Team!” footballs, made from environmentally conscious and durable material produced by Sony were also distributed.

As part of its efforts to harness sustainable energy sources, Sony also piloted in Ghana a combined solar power and lithium-ion storage battery system\*, which provided enough electric power to screen more than two hours of football broadcasts for public viewing in the evening.

UNDP and JICA work with the private sector to accelerate progress towards the MDGs by 2015, by promoting inclusive growth, and sharing best practice on how businesses can be profitable while fighting poverty.

Under the theme “For the Next Generation”, the Sony Group is aiming to collaborate with external organizations to leverage the company’s strengths in meeting the needs of today’s society, while aiming to contribute to social sustainability and the development of the next generation. In recent years, Sony has also supported various activities in Africa with the aim of contributing to the MDGs.

## **ZIMBABWE: More food production, but not enough**

(IRIN)

10 August 2010

JOHANNESBURG, 10 August 2010 (IRIN) - Zimbabwe's production of maize, its staple food, has improved "significantly", but the country is still food insecure and about 1.68 million people will require assistance in the first quarter of 2011, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP) said in a national crop and food security situation report released on 9 August.

"Compared with the poor 2008 season, when less than 500,000 metric tons of maize was harvested, production more than doubled in 2009 and 2010 to 1.27 and 1.35 million tons respectively," FAO/WFP said in a statement. In the first quarter of 2009 about 7 million people - more than half the population - depended on food assistance.

"Zimbabwe has only 1.66 million tons of cereals available, as against a total needs forecast of 2.09 million tons in marketing year 2010/11 (April/March). That leaves a 428,000 ton shortfall," Liliana Balbi, the team leader of the FAO Global Information and Early Warning System, said in a statement.

The increased maize production was also attributed to a subsidized government credit system for commercial farmers, as well as an agricultural input assistance programme by the government, UN agencies and other humanitarian organizations, which distributed nearly 140,000 tons of fertilizer and top dressing, and 22,373 tons of maize seed, to more than 700,000 households.

WFP spokesman Peter Smerdon said a greater number of people than the estimated 1.68 million could require food assistance during the "lean season" - the three months preceding the April 2011 harvest - depending on variables such as food price rises.

"Despite the improved availability of food, up to 1.68 million people will need food assistance because prices remain comparatively high for families with low incomes and little or no access to US dollars or South African rand," WFP's Jan Delbaere, co-author of the report, said in a statement.

The Zimbabwean dollar was discontinued in 2009 as a solution to hyperinflation, and replaced by "hard currencies", such as the US dollar, South African rand and Botswana pula, but unemployment levels are extremely high and many people do not have access to these currencies.

Smerdon said an appeal to donors for food assistance would be launched soon, and would be separate from the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), the humanitarian community's most important fundraising instrument.

On 3 August the CAP for Zimbabwe was revised upward by US\$100 million to US\$478 million as result of the dry spell that afflicted parts of the country between December 2009 and February 2010. As of 4 August, commitments to Zimbabwe's 2010 CAP amounted to less than 42 percent of the requested amount.

### **Long-term decline in maize production**

The 1.8 million hectares planted to maize was a 30-year "historical high", the report said, representing a 20 percent increase from the previous year, but Smerdon told IRIN the concern was that the greater amount of land under cultivation was not mirrored in production levels, which had only increased seven percent from the previous year. "The average [hectare] yield of maize has declined for the past 15 years," he commented.

The FAO/WFP report noted that "Nationally, maize yields decreased to 0.75 tons/ha, from 0.82 tons/ha recorded the last season. Yields decreased in all farming sectors, with the exception of ... commercial farms, which recorded an average increase of 6 percent over the previous season. Nationally, yields are just below the 10-year average (2000-2010) of 0.87 tons/ha. Similarly, millet and sorghum yields fell."

According to the report, the 15-year downward trend in maize production was attributed to the introduction of price controls, which prompted commercial farmers to grow non-price controlled crops such as tobacco, cotton and paprika.

The "more recent decline is due to the structural change precipitated by land tenure policies, lack of investment funds domestically and externally in agriculture sector, and overriding economic deterioration."

Some analysts also attribute the long-term decline in maize production to more frequent droughts, "combined with maize production being on more marginal lands of the communal farms, with little or no fertilizer," the report said.

President Robert Mugabe launched the fast-track land reform programme in 2000, which redistributed more than 4,000 white commercial farms to landless blacks, which set in motion a decade-long economic malaise from which the country has yet to emerge.

### **Zimbabwe Needs Food Aid for 1.7 Million People Next Year**

(Voice of America)

10 August 2010

There's good news and bad news about Zimbabwe's food security situation. A new U.N. report says while it's improved significantly, about 1.7 million people will still need assistance.

The report released Tuesday is based on an assessment mission by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food program (WFP).

### **The poorest of the poor**

WFP spokesman Peter Smerdon, in Nairobi, says, “It is still a mixed picture.” That’s despite government efforts and a (US) \$70 million international assistance program to subsidize farmers.

“The area planted under maize, which is Zimbabwe’s main staple, increased by 20 percent in 2010 to the highest level in 30 years. Production rose 7 percent over production in 2009. Therefore, although they planted 20 percent more, production only went up 7 percent,” he says.

While the figure is up from 2009 and a major improvement over the “disastrous” harvest of 2008, Smerdon says, “Zimbabwe still cannot feed itself. And therefore, in the coming year, they will need to feed 1.68 million people. That’s more than 10 percent of the entire population with food assistance, which will have to be brought in by international organizations. And this is mainly to feed the poorest of the poor.”

### **Humanitarian aid, yes...development, no**

“There has been a continued commitment to funding humanitarian operations in Zimbabwe, including food assistance. But the problem is that many donors are still not providing development aid,” he says.

Smerdon adds, “We are confident that our donors, who in the past years have provided hundreds of millions of dollars to WFP for life saving operations in Zimbabwe, will continue to support our operations there.”

He says despite the fact that there’s a unity government in Zimbabwe, donors remain reluctant to fund development programs. Many donor nations have been sharply critical of President Robert Mugabe’s policies. Mr. Mugabe, in turn, has blamed Zimbabwe’s economic woes on the West and its sanctions.

### **Buy local**

The WFP and FAO estimate 133,000 tons of food aid will be needed. Much of that aid may be close at hand, since Zimbabwe borders South Africa.

“There’s another record harvest coming up in South Africa now. What we would hope to do is buy (food) as close to Zimbabwe as possible because that obviously brings down transport costs, etc. And means that we can feed more people with the same amount of money,” he says.

Some donors, though, prefer giving food aid rather than cash.

“We wouldn’t refuse that. The United States, for instance, is a very large donor to our operations in Zimbabwe. So we would take both (food and cash), but we would prefer if possible to have

cash as that enables us to buy locally and help the regional economy development," says Smerdon.

## **Food Security in Zimbabwe Improves, Many Still in Need**

(Voice of America)

10 August 2010

A new United Nations report finds food security in Zimbabwe has improved significantly, following government efforts to curb the food problem and international funding to subsidize farmers. But, the report finds nearly 1.7 million people in the country still will need food aid next year. The findings are based on a report by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization and World Food Program, who sent a joint food assessment mission to Zimbabwe in June.

The report is a good news/bad news story. Zimbabwe has had several years of bad harvests. And, the country's critical food shortages worsened in 2008, when food prices soared around the world.

During the pre-harvest season in the early part of 2009, the World Food Program was feeding 5.3 million hungry people in Zimbabwe.

But World Food Program spokeswoman, Emilia Casella, says the number of aid recipients dipped to fewer than one million people a month last year, thanks to a notable improvement in crop yields.

"There has been a 20 percent increase in the planting area for maize in Zimbabwe and that is quite significant," Casella says. "It is the biggest amount of maize that was planted in Zimbabwe in the past 30 years. And that is a very encouraging change. It means that Zimbabwe in 2010 has had 1.35 million tons of maize harvested, and that is compared to less than half a million tons in 2008. This improvement is obviously going to help many people in Zimbabwe."

Nevertheless, Casella says there is still a big shortfall of food in the country. And, the high food prices are affecting the poorest people who cannot afford to buy what they need.

"So, we are anticipating that in the next pre-harvest season in the early part of the coming year, the World Food Program is expecting to have to provide assistance to 1.6 almost 1.7 million people during the lean season in the beginning of 2011," Casella adds. "So, Zimbabwe has shown great improvement, but there is still a great need."

The report notes the general poverty and chronic food insecurity in Zimbabwe has led to little diversity in the food people consume. It says the food shortages also have contributed to an increased prevalence of chronic malnutrition among young children.

## **Madagascar's farms threatened by locust plague, UN agency cautions**

(UN News Service)

12 August 2010

12 August 2010 – The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) today warned that Madagascar is at risk of a crop-eating locust plague, potentially jeopardizing the livelihoods of 460,000 rural families.

An unknown number of immature swarms of Malagasy Migratory Locust have moved out of the country's south-western corner, where they are usually contained, and have spread to the east and north.

FAO said today that a major air and ground control campaign lasting months is needed ahead of Madagascar's upcoming rainy season, which kicks off in mid-October, to stave off a potential plague.

The country is currently in its dry and cool season, which is unsuitable for locust breeding, but the wet and hot rainy season, which lasts until spring, favours rapid reproduction.

In suitable conditions, locusts can produce a new generation every two months and up to four annually.

FAO carried out a field assessment mission to Madagascar last week, in coordination with national authorities, which confirmed that the situation is serious and that aerial surveillance of the movement of the locusts must be initiated by early next month.

The agency said that \$15 million is urgently needed to mount a campaign on some 500,000 hectares of land.

Locusts do not always stay in swarms. In south-western Madagascar they typically live on their own as individuals.

But if their population density passes the tipping point, their body chemistry changes and they undergo a behavioural, ecological and physiological transformation.

After these changes, individual locusts begin to concentrate and act as a synchronized group of hopper bands, or wingless locusts, or as adult swarms, moving out en masse to find new food sources. Changes in their bodies allow them to fly over greater distances, up to 100 kilometres a day, as well as making them able to digest a wider range of vegetation and crops.

An adult locust can consume its own weight – roughly two grams – in fresh food daily. A very small part of an average swarm eats the same amount of food in one day as about 2,500 people.

## **External help raises Zimbabwe's food production but some still hungry – UN**

(UN News Service)

10 August 2010

10 August 2010 – An estimated 1.68 million Zimbabweans still require agricultural assistance and food aid despite an improvement in the country's food production thanks to Government efforts and a \$70 million international assistance programme for farmers in the Southern African nation, United Nations agencies said today.

According to a joint report by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the UN World Food Programme (WFP) based on assessments in June, the area planted with maize, Zimbabwe's staple food, increased by 20 per cent this year, the highest level in 30 years, and production was up seven per cent compared to last year.

Compared with 2008, a year of poor crop production when less than 500,000 tons of maize was harvested, production more than doubled to 1.27 million tons last year and 1.35 million tons this year.

“The generous international support for the 2009/2010 input campaign significantly contributed to this year's relatively good harvest results, even if in some areas of the country where rainfall distribution was uneven,” said Cristina Amaral, chief of FAO's emergency and rehabilitation operations in Africa.

“Despite the improved availability of food, up to 1.68 million people will need food assistance because prices remain comparatively high for families with low incomes and little or no access to US dollars or South African rand,” said WFP's Jan Delbaere, co-author of the report.

“Zimbabwe has only 1.66 million tons of cereals available against a total needs forecast of 2.09 million tons in marketing year 2010-2011 (April/March). That leaves a 428,000-ton shortfall,” said Liliana Balbi, the team leader of FAO's Global Information and Early Warning System.

Part of the shortfall will be covered by commercial imports, projected to total 317,000 tons of cereals, including 200,000 tons of maize.

The assessment mission estimated that 133,000 tons of food aid will be needed to feed those without enough to eat this year and next year.

According to the report, general poverty and chronic food insecurity had led to reduced diversity of consumption, and had also contributed to an increased prevalence of chronic malnutrition among young children. The report indicated that the lack of funds remained a constraint to accessing farm inputs, including tools, fertilizer, seed and pesticides.

The 2009-2010 input assistance programme, jointly formulated by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), FAO, the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and WFP, proposed a quick impact programme that aimed to substantively boost smallholder staple food production in Zimbabwe.

The international community responded well and FAO received contributions from a number of donors, including the European Union, the United States, the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain and Finland. The EU made the largest financial contribution under the EU Food Facility for Zimbabwe, totalling €15.4 million (\$20 million).

Some 51,500 tons of fertilizer and 6,500 tons of maize seeds were distributed to 738,000 households. FAO also promoted conservation agriculture that helped farmers to improve soil fertility through the use of techniques such as maintaining soil organic cover, reducing tillage and better crop rotation.

The programme also promoted the use of vouchers which farmers used to get the inputs they needed from local suppliers. The agricultural support programmes needed to be continued during the next planting season to consolidate the gains achieved so far, the agencies said.

## **Shortage of Skills for Reproductive Health**

(IPS)

13 August 2010

NAIROBI, Aug 13 (IPS) - Dr Geoffrey Kasembeli says he worked almost seven years without a day off: that's how severe the shortage of obstetricians and gynecologists in Kenya is. A similar situation prevails across the continent, a symptom of the weakness of reproductive health care in Africa.

Until the end of 2009, Paul Mitei was the only doctor specialising in reproductive health at the Kisumu Provincial Hospital, handling all referrals for an entire province. A second gynecologist has joined him at the hospital - working pro bono - but he says the workload is still very heavy.

"Wow, I am not sure how many patients I see in a day, after a while I lose count," he told IPS. "They are simply too many, almost overwhelming.

"I used to literally go for several months without being off-duty because I was the only gynecologist in the hospital. While other doctors and the mid-wives can help, there are essential specialised services that must be attended to by a gynecologist, so this meant I had to be at the hospital for long hours and days on end."

Across Africa, there is an acute shortage of specialists in women's reproductive health.

Professor Joseph Karanja of the University of Nairobi belongs to a regional association of obstetricians and gynaecologists in Eastern and Southern Africa. He says Uganda and Tanzania each have around 200 such specialists for populations of 33 and 45 million respectively. Zambia has 50 for its 13 million people. Lesotho can boast of only two or three for its nearly two million people.

Namibia's medical directory lists 13 gynaecologists. In Oshakati, 750 kilometres from the Namibian capital Windhoek, Dr Innocent Mavetera can identify with his Kenyan counterparts.

"We are not enough, that's why there is now a situation where general practitioners are performing caesareans, taking advantage of the critical shortage, fuelling chances of complications during the operation," he said. "We are stretched, and are always fully booked. I am already fully booked until the end of October and this disadvantages patients."

Kenya has only 340 registered gynaecologists serving a population of 38 million. Karanja says the shortage of these highly-qualified personnel is exacerbated by the uneven distribution of the few who are available.

"With so few specialists, it means women in rural and peri-urban areas have no access to a gynaecologist because the few who are available are concentrated in urban areas and they are expensive," Karanja says.

Only a tiny proportion of African women have access to skilled medical care for a wide range of reproductive health issues including cervical and uterine cancer, problems with fertility, or reconstructive surgery for conditions like fistula.

The shortage also impacts on reducing maternal and infant mortality rates - in most countries, the women most likely to develop complications and need high-level intervention are also those unlikely to have timely access to such care.

In Windhoek, Dr E W Lisse told IPS, "We don't have enough gynaecologists in the country, especially at state hospitals. In cases of emergencies, patients have to be transferred long distances to get treatment. The impact is mostly on the indigenous population who also don't have medical aid and can't afford gynaecologists in private practice."

Where clinical officers, midwives and nurses are unable to offer the necessary care, they have to refer women to higher-level facilities. Time is of essence, for example when a labouring or post-partum woman is haemorrhaging, but too many never make it to a distant referral hospital.

The hospitals themselves are typically understaffed at all levels - Kenya's health ministry estimates that 17,000 more nurses are needed in that country - and there is typically just one resident obstetrician/gynaecologist.

"In cases of emergency, you need to have providers who can quickly spot danger signs and know exactly how to react. Some of the cases that are brought to the referral hospital often end in death but had the right decision been made from the on-set, the life of the woman would have been saved," Mitei says.

The shortage of healthcare workers is a global phenomenon. While wealthy Europe and the U.S. can afford to lure staff with lucrative pay, African countries often cannot compete and lose the limited numbers of trained personnel. Those willing to work for government hospitals such as

Mitei and Kasembeli face long hours for much lower pay than is offered in the West or the private sector.

If governments are serious about achieving development goals on maternal mortality and women's reproductive health, they will have to find ways to improve the numbers and distribution of skills in the public health service.

Karanja agrees with the view of the Kenya Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society that government will need to step up its effort to train clinical officers and midwives so they are able to perform many procedures that were previously the preserve of ob/gyns to improve reproductive healthcare.

\*Patience Nyangove in Windhoek contributed to this report.

## **MADAGASCAR: Drought, cyclones, political crisis and now locusts**

(IRIN)

13 August 2010

JOHANNESBURG, 13 August 2010 (IRIN) - Swarms of locusts have been forming in the South Madagascar for months threatening the livelihoods of hundreds and thousands of Malagasy and if a major control campaign is not set up quick infestations could reach "plague proportions," the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has warned.

"When there is a locust infestation, Malagasy farmers do not even sow any more as they know that their harvest will be destroyed," Alexandre Huynh, FAO's Emergency and Rehabilitation operations Coordinator in Madagascar, told IRIN.

Bad news in a region already hit hard: the south is chronically food insecure, malnutrition levels are high under normal conditions, cyclones are an annual occurrence and an ongoing political crisis has seen foreign aid cut to only emergency humanitarian aid, and only if justifiable.

In June 2010 the governments Early Warning System (SAP) recorded a record 65 communes, affecting some 866,000 Malagasy, fell into the "Food Insecure" category.

According to a FAO statement released on 12 August Madagascar is currently in its dry and cool season, "which is unsuitable for locust breeding. But the wet and hot weather of the rainy season - which lasts until spring - will favour rapid reproduction".

And given suitable conditions, this type of locusts (*Locusta migratoria capito*) can produce a new generation roughly every two months and up to four during one year.

The potential for damage is evident given their voracious appetite: a single locust can consume roughly its own weight in a day - about two grams. According to FAO one tonne of locusts which is considered a very small part of an average swarm, eats the same amount of food a day as about 2,500 people.

## **Caught off guard**

A natural occurrence in the south of Madagascar, locusts would normally be contained by the government's Locust Control Centre (CNA). Underfunded and unable to adequately monitor the spread of the animals, the agency was unaware that massive swarms were forming by the end of April 2010.

"During the 2009-10 rainy season, the CNA, weakened as a result of the socio-political situation in the country, and consequently was not in the position to appropriately manage all locust data," a FAO document, titled Emergency assistance to locust control in Madagascar, said.

It was only when swarms were observed moving out of their traditional breeding areas beyond the South-West of the Island that authorities became aware of the magnitude of the problem. A June evaluation by the CNA estimated that over 460,000 rural Malagasy households were at risk.

## **If you think it's expensive now...**

FAO estimated that around 15 million USD would be urgently needed to mount a major campaign by ground and by air on an estimated half a million hectares of land.

Huynh said FAO had already secured some \$500,000 through its Technical Cooperation Emergency program, a \$6,5 million contribution through the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund was being finalized and for the balance: "discussions with donors are ongoing."

He insisted there was no time to waste: "we have to start operations by mid-September. If the response is delayed food production will be directly impacted and the necessary anti-locust campaign would be much more costly and would spread on several years."

## **Militancy**

### **Angolan landmines kill 166 people in four years**

(Reuters)

09 August 2010

LUANDA, Aug 9 (Reuters) - Landmines left behind by Angola's three-decade long civil war have killed 166 people and injured hundreds more in the last four years, a study showed on Monday.

The war, which turned into one of the longest Cold War conflicts, resulted in half a million dead and hundreds of thousands of landmine injuries. Angola still has the largest number of landmines in the world after Afghanistan.

Since the war ended in 2002, Angola has invested millions of dollars to clear landmines and pave the way for new roads and bridges to revive its once prosperous farming sector.

Still, 166 people were killed and 313 injured by landmines in Angola from 2006 to 2010, according to the study by its De-Mining Commission. However, only five people have died this year from landmines, it showed.

The U.N. estimates that millions of landmines remain scattered across Angola. Large stretches of the country are still out of bounds, too dangerous to farm or to travel through.

Every year, Angola hosts the "Miss Landmine Survivor" beauty contest for women injured by mines.

The civil war pitted the ruling MPLA party, backed then by the Soviet Union and Cuba, against the main opposition UNITA party, supported by the United States and South Africa.