

Report # 134

BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

Region: Southern Africa

Weekly Report: 22-28 August, 2010

Presentation: 01 September, 2010

Zahid Aqil

Table of Contents

Summary of Report.....	04-08
Detailed Report.....	09-39

Headlines

Elections & Governance

- Madagascar sentences former leader in absentia.....09
- Research Shows Substandard Conditions for Malawi's Journalists.....09
- Zimbabwe's Mugabe Says No to More Political Reform.....10
- Zimbabwe election body says poll unlikely in 2011.....11
- Women Candidates Hard Hit by Election Postponement.....12

Politics

- **Opposition Said Disappointed Over Alleged Mutharika Threat to Donors.....14**
- **Mugabe Refused Hero Status for MDC Leader.....15**
- **Exiled Madagascan leader Ravalomanana sentenced.....16**

Economy & Energy

- **S. Africa state workers defy court order, arrests made.....17**
- **S. Africa miners' union threatens strike on Thursday.....18**
- **South Africa's Zuma criticizes strike and hopes for deal.....20**
- **South African Miners to Join Strike Next Week.....21**
- **Zuma: South Africa Wants to Join BRIC Nations.....22**
- **South Africa Strike Set to Expand.....22**
- **ZIMBABWE: Diamonds sales a false economic dawn.....23**

Human Rights, Social Issues & Developments

- **SOUTH AFRICA: Army steps into the breach.....25**
- **SWAZILAND: Trade in albino body parts moving south.....27**

Food Security & Health Issues

- **ZIMBABWE: Pregnancy need not put an end to education.....29**
- **UNICEF welcomes new initiative to boost maternal and infant health in Angola.....30**
- **Children Crossing Borders in Search of HIV Treatment.....31**

US-Africa Relations

- **US Will Give Mozambique \$1 Billion to Fight HIV.....33**

China-Africa Relations

- **South Africa's Zuma looks to China to boost trade.....34**
- **South African President Zuma Ends Three-Day Visit to China.....35**

Militancy

- **ANGOLA: Cabindan separatists under new management.....37**

Refugees/IDPs & Migration

- **Zimbabwe Police Raze Shack Dwellings Making Scores Homeless.....38**

Summary of Report

Elections & Governance

Madagascar sentences former leader in absentia

A Madagascar court sentenced deposed leader Marc Ravalomanana in absentia on Saturday to forced labor for the deaths of dozens of protesters during a march on the presidential palace last year.

Research Shows Substandard Conditions for Malawi's Journalists

A new study by the Journalists Union of Malawi (JUMA) says over 80 percent of the journalists employed in the country's media houses work under "demeaning and exploitative" conditions.

Zimbabwe's Mugabe Says No to More Political Reform

Days after hopes were raised at the Southern Africa Development Community summit that Zimbabwe is set to make substantial political progress, President Robert Mugabe has once again turned his back on reforms he signed to nearly two years ago.

Zimbabwe election body says poll unlikely in 2011

Zimbabwe's electoral body does not expect elections planned for next year to take place because it still needs to carry out reforms and is not adequately funded to hold a credible vote, its chief told state media on Friday.

Women Candidates Hard Hit by Election Postponement

News that Malawi's November local government elections are to be postponed yet again has hit female candidates hard – and mostly in their pockets. And it could mean that the country will have less female candidates to vote for when they finally go to the polls.

Politics

Opposition Said Disappointed Over Alleged Mutharika Threat to Donors

The director of research for Malawi's opposition United Democratic Front (UDF) party has expressed shock after President Bingu Wa Mutharika allegedly threatened to expel donors and close down newspapers for reporting that about one million Malawians were in need of food aid.

Mugabe Refused Hero Status for MDC Leader

The two Movement for Democratic Change parties have united in anger against Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe's refusal to accord national hero status to Gibson Sibanda, a founding MDC leader who died earlier this week.

Exiled Madagascan leader Ravalomanana sentenced

Madagascar's exiled former president has been sentenced to life in prison with hard labour for ordering the killing of opposition supporters.

Economy & Energy

S. Africa state workers defy court order, arrests made

Striking South African state workers defied a court order to return to work on Monday and police fired rubber bullets to disperse strikers who were blocking entrances to a Johannesburg hospital. More than 60 protesters were arrested nationwide for obstructing roads and destroying property in violent demonstrations.

S. Africa miners' union threatens strike on Thursday

South Africa's largest union threatened Friday to bring gold and platinum mining and other industries to a halt next week in a strike to support a labor stoppage by 1.3 million state workers.

South Africa's Zuma criticizes strike and hopes for deal

South African President Jacob Zuma on Saturday accused striking state workers of abandoning the sick at hospitals and said he expected a deal to be reached soon to end the labor action by about 1.3 million.

South African Miners to Join Strike Next Week

South African miners say they will join public service workers on strike for one day next week in a show of solidarity if the government refuses to increase pay.

Zuma: South Africa Wants to Join BRIC Nations

South African President Jacob Zuma says his country wants to join the informal group of major emerging economies that includes Brazil, Russia, India and China.

South Africa Strike Set to Expand

As South Africa's public service strike enters its second week, the country's largest trade's union federation has called for other unions to join the action unless the government accedes to wage demands.

ZIMBABWE: Diamonds sales a false economic dawn

An auction of Zimbabwean diamonds has created an air of expectation that the country's economic plight will be eased or even improved, but the stones realized as little as a fifth of their value, and most of the proceeds are expected to benefit controversial mining companies.

Human Rights, Social Issues & Developments

SOUTH AFRICA: Army steps into the breach

The army has deployed more 1,800 medical staff to 47 public hospitals throughout South Africa to substitute for striking doctors and nurses as the nine-day industrial action becomes increasingly ill-tempered.

SWAZILAND: Trade in albino body parts moving south

The recent killing of two albino Swazi children within a few days of each other is raising fears that the practice of murdering people with the genetically inherited condition to sell their body parts for “muti” (medicine) is migrating southwards.

Food Security & Health Issues

ZIMBABWE: Pregnancy need not put an end to education

Falling pregnant used to mean the end of school – and of much more - for girls in Zimbabwe, so a new regulation replacing immediate expulsion with maternity leave has been welcomed.

UNICEF welcomes new initiative to boost maternal and infant health in Angola

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has welcomed a new campaign launched by the Angolan Government to reduce maternal and infant mortality, and encouraged authorities to ensure the necessary budget resources to improve health for women and children.

Children Crossing Borders in Search of HIV Treatment

A new type of migration is taking place in Zimbabwe. While in the past people crossed the borders into South Africa and Botswana seeking work and fleeing from their repressive circumstances, now a silent migration of HIV-positive children seeking antiretroviral treatment (ART) is taking place.

US-Africa Relations

US Will Give Mozambique \$1 Billion to Fight HIV

The United States says it will provide \$1 billion over the next five years to help fight AIDS in Mozambique, where some 1.5 million people are living with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

China-Africa Relations

South Africa's Zuma looks to China to boost trade

On Monday on a trip to China, South African President Jacob Zuma seeks to boost trade. South Africa aims to tap trade and investment in "BRIC" economies Brazil, Russia, India and China to make up for the downturn in traditional markets in weakly recovering Europe. There is a national consensus in South Africa that wants the country to be part of the BRICs, and this visit to China is part of achieving that goal.

South African President Zuma Ends Three-Day Visit to China

South African President Jacob Zuma ended his visit to China Thursday, signing trade agreements relating to minerals, the environment and transportation.

Militancy

ANGOLA: Cabindan separatists under new management

After a recent mass defection from its senior ranks, the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC) has announced that the separatist movement in exile is now under new management, and called on the population of the Angolan enclave to continue fighting for their sovereignty.

Refugees/IDPs & Migration

Zimbabwe Police Raze Shack Dwellings Making Scores Homeless

In a pre-dawn raid this week, Zimbabwe Republic Police bashed down an informal settlement in Harare making scores of people, including children, homeless. Many of those whose shacks were destroyed by police were refugees from similar massive attacks on urban dwellings five years ago.

Detailed Report

Elections & Governance

Madagascar sentences former leader in absentia

(Reuters)

28 August 2010

(Reuters) - A Madagascar court sentenced deposed leader Marc Ravalomanana in absentia on Saturday to forced labor for the deaths of dozens of protesters during a march on the presidential palace last year.

The verdict could open a fresh challenge to an African Union-backed effort to end the Indian Ocean island's political crisis that followed Ravalomanana's removal by President Andry Rajoelina.

"Marc Ravalomanana, General Heriniaina Roelina and Colonel Anatole Ramlamboarison are guilty of complicity to murder," Raboana Rasamison Mauricette, the president of Antananarivo's court, said.

"Each of them is condemned to a sentence of forced labor for the rest of their lives. An arrest warrant is out for them," she added, reading out her ruling in court.

Rajoelina had called a march on the presidential palace on February 7 last year during which security forces opened fire, killing about 30 people.

Ravalomanana, who lives in exile in South Africa, was not present at the trial.

Nineteen months of political turmoil have 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 mere 0.8 percent this year after a period of steady growth.

The main opposition leaders rejected a deal signed by Rajoelina with dozens of minor parties to end the crisis.

Research Shows Substandard Conditions for Malawi's Journalists

(Voice of America)

26 August 2010

A new study by the Journalists Union of Malawi (JUMA) says over 80 percent of the journalists employed in the country's media houses work under "demeaning and exploitative" conditions.

The report says journalists in some media organizations, mostly private radio stations, earn less than (US) \$66 [or 10,000 Malawi kwacha] per month but work long hours like other journalists.

“Journalists are generally mistreated,” says the study. “In some cases, such as the Malawi News Agency, some journalists have been on internship for more than ten years, and senior reporters and editors still earn less than (US)\$200 (K30,000) per month.

It says some journalists work as “volunteers” for religious and community media, where they receive meager wages and often no pay for working overtime.

Other studies indicate African journalists are generally paid less than other professionals. Worldwide, there is no standard system for determining minimum salaries for reporters.

The Journalists’ Union of Malawi says it will push for a minimum wage for journalists and frequent raises to meet the rising cost of living.

“Presently JUMA proposes a minimum of (US)\$333 [K50, 000] to respond to the cost of living in Malawi,” says the research.

JUMA will lead a sensitization campaign of journalists and media owners relating to laws protecting workers, says Levi Zeleza Manda, the president of the union and national coordinator for the research project.

For example, he says, Malawi’s Employment Act states that as long as an employer hires someone for more than six months, that person should know in writing the job he or she is expected to do, and how much pay the work entails.

Zimbabwe's Mugabe Says No to More Political Reform

(Voice of America)

23 August 2010

Days after hopes were raised at the Southern Africa Development Community summit that Zimbabwe is set to make substantial political progress, President Robert Mugabe has once again turned his back on reforms he signed to nearly two years ago.

In remarks at a closed-door meeting of ZANU-PF's politburo, following last week's SADC summit in Windhoek, Namibia, Mr. Mugabe said he will not concede to more political reform until U.S. and EU sanctions are lifted. His words were published in last week's pro-ZANU-PF Sunday Mail newspaper.

The sanctions on Mr. Mugabe, his colleagues in ZANU-PF and some companies they control were imposed in 2002, following violent Zimbabwe elections.

In Windhoek, the SADC facilitator on Zimbabwe, South African President Jacob Zuma presented his report and a plan for resolution of outstanding political reforms agreed to by Mr.

Mugabe nearly two years ago. The political agreement is the foundation upon which Zimbabwe's unity government was formed last year.

In his report, Mr. Zuma said 24 out of 27 outstanding issues have been agreed to by Movement for Democratic Change leader Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai and Mr. Mugabe. Mr. Zuma suggested that within a month from the SADC summit the leaders would try to find agreement on the outstanding issues.

Those include the position of attorney general, the post of governor of Zimbabwe's central bank, and Mr. Mugabe's refusal to sign MDC treasurer Roy Bennett in to office as deputy agriculture minister.

Since returning from Namibia last week, Mr. Mugabe says he will not appoint any MDC leaders to powerful positions as provincial governors, even though, as Mr. Zuma noted in his report, the present ZANU-PF incumbent's contracts expired last month.

The Sunday Mail reported Mr. Mugabe told his 150-member politburo that Prime Minister Tsvangirai had failed to fulfill his side of the political agreement to ensure the largely personal Western sanctions against the president and his colleagues were lifted.

The Movement for Democratic Change says it has no control over foreign governments. U.S. Ambassador to Zimbabwe Charles Ray told journalists at a briefing last week the United States would not lift sanctions until the political agreement is fulfilled.

Zimbabwe election body says poll unlikely in 2011

(Alert Net)

27 August 2010

HARARE, Aug 27 (Reuters) - Zimbabwe's electoral body does not expect elections planned for next year to take place because it still needs to carry out reforms and is not adequately funded to hold a credible vote, its chief told state media on Friday.

Under the power-sharing arrangement between President Robert Mugabe and Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, fresh elections were set for next year after a referendum on a new constitution.

But the process to write a new charter is nearly a year behind schedule, government officials have said.

"The timeframe is no longer what appears to be envisaged by the political parties because we have a very big task. The biggest challenge is financial resources to conduct elections," Simpson Mutambanengwe, Zimbabwe Electoral Commission chairman was quoted as saying by the Chronicle newspaper.

"We are engaging various stakeholders ... and the political parties over electoral reforms. As it is, the voters' roll is in disarray," Mutambanengwe said.

Zimbabwe's last election in 2008 ended in dispute after Tsvangirai defeated Mugabe but election officials withheld results for five weeks, only to call for a run-off vote which Tsvangirai boycotted blaming violence against his supporters.

Mugabe and Tsvangirai have separately said elections will go ahead next year. Analysts believe the polls could be much later. (Writing by MacDonald Dzirutwe; Editing by Jon Herskovitz and Louise Ireland)

Women Candidates Hard Hit by Election Postponement

(IPS)

26 August 2010

LILONGWE, Aug 26 (IPS) - News that Malawi's November local government elections are to be postponed yet again has hit female candidates hard – and mostly in their pockets. And it could mean that the country will have less female candidates to vote for when they finally go to the polls.

Many women candidates feel short-changed with the decision by the Malawi Election Commission (MEC) to postpone the Nov. 23 elections. On Aug. 23 the MEC announced the elections will now be held on Apr. 20, 2011.

But women candidates, just like their male contenders, have already started campaigning and spent money buying handouts for voters. In Malawi election campaigns are expensive; most potential voters expect candidates to give them handouts, such as T-Shirts, cloth, food items and even money during campaign rallies and door-to-door campaigning.

The freebies are seen as a sign of 'compassion' and are an unofficial requirement when contesting elections in Malawi. Some female candidates have even invested their life savings into their campaigns and many fear they will not have the funds to continue until 2011.

Jane Wandidya, a female candidate who had set her eyes on contesting the local polls in Mkanda, Mulanje – a district in southern Malawi – expressed her disappointment over the postponement of the elections. Wandidya, a livestock farmer, has been campaigning since April. She told IPS that she has since sold 20 of her 28 goats and 54 of her 70 chickens to raise money for her campaign - especially for buying freebies for potential voters.

"I have spent all the money I raised from selling the livestock. I am running out of steam as well. I am not sure if indeed the elections will be held on the new date. All the zeal I had has faded. I am not sure if I will regain the energy to continue campaigning," she said.

But the postponement should come as no surprise as local polls in Malawi have been continually postponed for a decade since 2000. Since the country attained democracy in 1994, Malawi has conducted local government elections only once in 2000.

Until it was changed in Dec. 2009, the country's Constitution had prescribed that under Section 147, the local polls would take place in the third week of May in the year following the national

general elections. Ideally, the first local government elections were to be held in May 1995 a year after Malawi ushered in democracy. But this failed to happen until 2000. The local elections also failed to take place in 2005 and the country has had no elections since then.

Though in Dec. 2009, the country's Parliament, amended Section 147 of the Constitution and gave President Bingu wa Mutharika the power of deciding when the local elections will be held.

Beauty Kasonde, a 24-year-old woman from Mpanje village in the lakeshore district of Salima, Central Malawi, has been campaigning for the position of local councillor since April. She is also disappointed that the election date has been moved forward.

She told IPS that she did not have enough money to satisfy voter's demands for freebies and has been dedicating time and energy in coming up with alternative ways of campaigning which, she said, were becoming effective as many people indicated interest in her.

"I do not have money to spend on buying materials for distribution. I was going around in local gatherings such as funerals, weddings and even initiation ceremonies to campaign. I was looking forward to contesting in the November elections since I noticed that people wanted to elect me as their local representative," she told IPS.

"It is so disappointing that after spending so much time and energy the elections have been postponed. Time is money and I have spent it all for nothing," worried Kasonde.

The MEC's spokesman Richard Mveriwa told the local media that the elections had to be postponed after the electoral body realised that it would have challenges meeting the calendar of events for the elections.

Mveriwa disclosed that a new draft calendar indicates that the official campaign for next year's election will start on February 18 and end on April 18, 2011. "The electoral calendar is still being worked on and will be sent to the president so that he sets the date," said Mveriwa.

But Jailos Chatela, a potential voter in Blantyre, Malawi's commercial capital, is unhappy with the postponement and not satisfied with the conduct of the MEC. He says he does not believe the elections will take place after all the postponements that have happened before.

"As local people, we continue to get denied a chance to choose development projects that are needed in our local councils. There's is no local representation in the district and town assemblies and this means our communities will still not get the local development we desperately need," Chatela told IPS.

Politics

Opposition Said Disappointed Over Alleged Mutharika Threat to Donors

(Voice of America)

26 August 2010

The director of research for Malawi's opposition United Democratic Front (UDF) party has expressed shock after President Bingu Wa Mutharika allegedly threatened to expel donors and close down newspapers for reporting that about one million Malawians were in need of food aid.

Humphrey Mvula described President Mutharika's threats as unfortunate, adding that Malawi could be plunged into crisis if donors pull out their financial support for the country's budget.

"Our president (was) expressing anger (and) disappointment and possibly indicating that look, I've invested so much into this project... I don't think a newspaper will print a report generated by itself. It will print a report coming off from a researcher or a research organization. So, a newspaper is only a messenger (and) you should not kill a messenger," he said.

Mr. Mutharika was reportedly displeased with a newspaper report that Malawi faces a food crisis due to crop failure.

Observers say the report undermines Mr. Mutharika's food security policy which initially attracted both local and international recognition.

Some economists say Malawi's economy could face serious difficulty if donors withheld their financial support.

The country relies heavily on international aid according for an estimated 40 percent of the budget.

The donors include the Common Approach to Budget Support group (Cabs), a donor grouping of Britain, the European Commission, Norway, Germany, the World Bank and the African Development Bank.

Opposition researcher Mvula said donor support is essential to Malawi's budget.

"Technically, we cannot do without donors for the moment. We have a 30 percent deficit on our budget. We still have so many humanitarian aid that come off from our donors. So, there is no way we will wish them away from this country. We cannot do that for the moment," Mvula said.

He also expressed hope that President Mutharika will quickly amend the possible rift with the country's donor community over his alleged threats.

Opposition researcher Mvula urged the donor community to transcend President Mutharika's pronouncement, saying their financial support is for the betterment of the ordinary poor Malawian.

Mugabe Refused Hero Status for MDC Leader

(Voice of America)

25 August 2010

The two Movement for Democratic Change parties have united in anger against Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe's refusal to accord national hero status to Gibson Sibanda, a founding MDC leader who died earlier this week.

Gibson Sibanda, who died at age 66 in his home city, Bulawayo, was a life-long fighter for democracy, a former legislator, and a trade unionist who was detained for his activism by both Rhodesia and Mr. Mugabe's ZANU-PF administration.

Sibanda was the deputy president of the MDC when it became a political party 10 years ago, and had been on a committee promoting national healing and reconciliation within the 18-month-old unity government when he died.

Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, who is also president of the main MDC party, said Sibanda's name "shall remain an indelible imprint in the sad narrative of our determined and brave march towards a new Zimbabwe."

Tsvangirai spokesman Nelson Chamisa said Mr. Mugabe's refusal to declare Sibanda a national hero was motivated by "cruelty, contempt and revenge."

In a recent interview with VOA in Harare, Sibanda recalled his detention in the former white-ruled Rhodesia and his eventual release when former Prime Minister Ian Smith and Abel Muzorewa were leading a transitional government as peace talks to end the civil war began in London in 1979.

SIBANDA: "I was charged with high treason with some other guys, and subsequently, and came to the high court and we defended successfully. And we were discharged, but soon after being discharged we were served with indeterminate detention until 1979, during the Smith-Muzorewa coalition. That is the one which reviewed our detention orders, but the talks were already under way."

Education minister David Coltart says in 1997 Sibanda led the biggest anti-government demonstration he had ever seen in Zimbabwe.

"Gibson Sibanda deserves to be recognized as a national hero, because for the last 40 years he has persistently and consistently fought within the country for the promotion of human rights and for a new democratic Zimbabwe," explained Coltart. "He did so against the white minority government and he has done so for the last 30 years. He was also president of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and during his tenure, he was responsible, with others, for building it up to a very powerful organization. So, on that basis alone he should be declared a national hero."

Priscilla Misihairabwi, the deputy-secretary general of the smaller MDC faction said hero status is confined to members of Mr. Mugabe's ZANU-PF Party. She said Mr. Mugabe should tell taxpayers, who fund state funerals, that they have been supporting "a ZANU-PF burial society."

Mr. Mugabe's sister, Sabina, who political historians say played no role against white rule nor any significant part in post-1980 independent Zimbabwe was declared a national hero and buried with a state funeral last month at Hero's Acre.

Mr. Mugabe told the pro-ZANU-PF daily newspaper, The Herald, he regretted Sibanda's death and the state would assist with his private burial.

Exiled Madagascan leader Ravalomanana sentenced

(BBC News)

28 August 2010

Madagascar's exiled former president has been sentenced to life in prison with hard labour for ordering the killing of opposition supporters.

Marc Ravalomanana was sentenced in absentia for the February 2009 murders of at least 30 people by his presidential guard.

Mr Ravalomanana has been living in South Africa since March 2009.

Those killed were supporters of Andry Rajoelina, who has now taken over the government.

Mr Ravalomanana was charged with murder and being an accessory to murder, along with 18 other people, some of whom are also in exile.

Crisis

The former president's defence lawyers walked out on the trial shortly after the hearings began, saying the court was being used by Mr Rajoelina's administration.

"The aim is to sentence him so he can't return to Madagascar and run in future elections," lawyer Hanitra Razafimanantsoa told news agency AFP.

Madagascar has been in the midst of a political crisis for the past 19 months.

It is the third sentence given to Mr Ravalomanana by a court since he left the country.

Economy & Energy

S. Africa state workers defy court order, arrests made

(Reuters)

23 August 2010

(Reuters) - Striking South African state workers defied a court order to return to work on Monday and police fired rubber bullets to disperse strikers who were blocking entrances to a Johannesburg hospital.

More than 60 protesters were arrested nationwide for obstructing roads and destroying property in violent demonstrations.

A labor court on Saturday ordered thousands of health care workers and others deemed as providing essential services to return to their jobs to lesson the blow of a walkout that has shut schools and caused chaos at hospitals.

"There is no one who is expected to be going back to work today. We will challenge that court order if its intention is to intimidate our members into submission," said Sizwe Pamla, a spokesman for healthcare workers' union NEHAWU.

Police fired rubber bullets at workers blocking access to a Johannesburg hospital.

"The strikers resisted arrest at one hospital and police fired rubber bullets to disperse the crowd. We are not aware of any injuries," said Colonel Eugene Opperman, a Gauteng police spokesman.

The strike started last Wednesday among a coalition of unions representing 1.3 million state workers that include teachers, police, prison guards, immigration officials and clerks.

The court order applies to a portion of the total, mostly health workers and other sectors seen as "essential."

The injunction also prevents the striking workers from assaulting colleagues who report to work and intimidating members of the public who are seeking services.

Protests turned violent last week, leading police to fire rubber bullets at protesters blocking roads and hospitals.

COSTLY DEAL

The image of the unions has taken a blow, with the health minister calling strikers "murderers" for abandoning care of the sick. They have angered parents who have been forced to care for children who would normally be in school.

Analysts expect a deal before September, which would minimize the impact of the strike in Africa's largest economy.

The African National Congress government is under pressure to reach a deal in order to appease its long-standing ally of organized labor, while unions are facing pressure to reach an agreement from rank and file members losing pay for being off the job.

"Government wishes to reassure South Africans that the impasse will be resolved sooner rather than later," government spokesman Themba Maseko told reporters.

Financial traders say the strike has not affected the rand or bond market but they are worried about the economic impact of a labor stoppage that extends into next month.

Any agreement to end the dispute is likely to swell state spending by about 1 to 2 percent, forcing the government to find new funds just as it tries to bring a deficit totaling 6.7 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).

The unions are demanding an 8.6 percent wage rise, more than double the inflation rate, and 1,000 rand (\$137.1) a month as a housing allowance.

The government says it cannot afford the demands and has offered a 7 percent wage hike and 700 rand for housing. No new talks between the unions and government have been scheduled to date.

In industrial unrest, more than 600 workers at Exxaro's mineral sands unit in South Africa went on strike on Monday, a union said, while 1,700 planned to do the same at a Rio Tinto-BHP Billiton joint venture.

The National Union of Mineworkers said workers at Exxaro's KwaZulu Natal sand units were demanding a 14 percent rise in wages.

S. Africa miners' union threatens strike on Thursday

(Reuters)

27 August 2010

(Reuters) - South Africa's largest union threatened Friday to bring gold and platinum mining and other industries to a halt next week in a strike to support a labor stoppage by 1.3 million state workers.

The strike by state workers seeking pay raises more than double the inflation rate started last week and has led to school closures, prevented medical treatment and caused bodies to pile up at state-run morgues.

The National Union of Mineworkers said its members would launch the solidarity strike next Thursday, limited to one day for now but it could be prolonged, which would deal a blow to the mining sector in Africa's largest economy -- responsible for 5 to 6 percent of South Africa's gross domestic product.

NUM is the biggest union in the country's largest labor federation COSATU, which says it has 2 million members and on Thursday filed seven-day strike notices that would allow members in affiliated unions to strike..

"The NUM fully supports the public sector strike and would next week Thursday ensure that every mining operation, every construction site and every energy worker joins the public sector strike in different forms," it said in a statement.

South Africa is the world's fourth largest gold producer and largest platinum producer, with mines turning out about 488 kg (1,076 lb) of gold and 385 kg of platinum a day.

The country's biggest firms, such as Anglo Platinum, Impala Platinum and Harmony Gold Mining, have stockpiles of the precious metal and would not be hard-hit if it was a one-day work stoppage.

The NUM said Friday some workers at a Rio Tinto-BHP Billiton titanium joint venture had also downed tools in a dispute over wages.

Thousands of municipal workers defied a court order and staged a one-day sympathy strike Friday that slowed garbage collection in major cities.

Public Service and Administration Minister Richard Baloyi repeated a call for essential workers including security guards, nurses, daycare providers and sewerage maintenance workers, to obey a court order compelling them to go back to work.

Thousands have defied the order and risk losing their jobs if the government decides to seek punishment.

A spokesman for the minister said there were no formal plans for negotiations but the lines of communication had been open.

"There are concerned engagements as part of the effort to end this strike," Dumisani Nkwamba told Reuters.

BUDGET STRAIN

The government has said it cannot afford the state workers' demand of an 8.6 percent wage rise, more than double the inflation rate, and 1,000 rand (\$137) a month as a housing allowance. It has offered 7 percent and 700 rand.

Any agreement to end the dispute is likely to swell state spending by about 1 to 2 percent, forcing the government to find new funds just as it tries to bring down a deficit totaling 6.7 percent of gross domestic product.

Spending on personnel is the biggest category of state expenditure, taking up about a third of the budget. In 2006/07, about 35 percent of tax revenue went to paying state employees and that rose to about 46 percent in 2009/10, which means any wage deal could lead to increased taxes.

Jasson Urbach, an economist with the Free Market Foundation, estimated the work stoppage was costing the economy about \$150 million a day.

An expanded strike would add to worries about prospects for growth after the economy slowed more than expected in the second quarter of 2010 as mining contracted and manufacturing expanded at a slower pace.

Pressure is mounting on the government to reach a deal before it deals a significant blow to Africa's largest economy, which might also help it mend ties with COSATU, which has said their decades-long alliance was in jeopardy of rupture.

The unions are under the gun to reach a deal with public opinion turning against them after strikers harassed students trying to go to school and blocked the sick from seeking medical care, which health officials said led to several deaths.

South Africa's Zuma criticizes strike and hopes for deal

(Reuters)

28 August 2010

(Reuters) - South African President Jacob Zuma on Saturday accused striking state workers of abandoning the sick at hospitals and said he expected a deal to be reached soon to end the labor action by about 1.3 million.

The strike by state workers seeking pay rises more than double the inflation rate started last week and has led to school closures, prevented medical treatment and caused bodies to pile up at state-run morgues.

"The abandonment of patients, including babies in incubators, as well as school children, is difficult to comprehend and accept, no matter how sympathetic one is to the needs of workers," Zuma said at the eulogy for Joe Matthews, a prominent figure in the struggle to end apartheid.

"We are confident that negotiators on both sides will find a solution soon, and help the country to get out of this unpleasant situation as quickly as possible," Zuma said.

The strike is expected to intensify next week after the country's largest labor confederation COSATU threatened to join the action and grind key industries to a temporary halt in Africa's largest economy, including mining.

An expanded strike would add to worries about prospects for growth after the economy slowed more than expected in the second quarter of 2010 as mining contracted and manufacturing expanded at a slower pace.

Zuma, who spent most of the week on a state visit to major trade and investment partner China, has not made many comments about the strike that has posed one of the most serious domestic problems he has faced since taking office about a year ago.

The government has said it cannot afford the state workers' demand of an 8.6 percent wage rise, more than double the inflation rate, and 1,000 rand (\$137) a month as a housing allowance. It has offered 7 percent and 700 rand.

Any agreement to end the dispute is likely to swell state spending by about 1 to 2 percent, forcing the government to find new funds just as it tries to bring down a deficit totaling 6.7 percent of gross domestic product.

Zuma's ruling African National Congress is under pressure to reach a deal to appease its governing partner and long-time ally in organized labor, which last week threatened to break up the partnership that has delivered large blocks of votes to the ANC.

Zuma also does not want to have the dispute hanging over him heading into an ANC policy-setting meeting in late September.

South African Miners to Join Strike Next Week

(Voice of America)

27 August 2010

South African miners say they will join public service workers on strike for one day next week in a show of solidarity if the government refuses to increase pay.

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), South Africa's largest union, said Friday the action is planned for Thursday.

Thousands of South African public service workers marched in major cities this week-- as a civil servants strike entered its second week.

On Thursday, the country's main labor federation, COSATU, threatened to break its alliance with the ruling African National Congress. Unions are widely credited with helping to elect President Jacob Zuma.

A police union representing 145,000 officers announced plans to join strikers on Saturday, though a labor court has banned them from walking off the job because they perform essential services.

The public service workers unions are demanding an 8.6 percent pay increase and a higher housing allowance.

The government has said its final offer is 7 percent and an increase in housing allowance.

Zuma: South Africa Wants to Join BRIC Nations

(Voice of America)

25 August 2010

South African President Jacob Zuma says his country wants to join the informal group of major emerging economies that includes Brazil, Russia, India and China.

Speaking to reporters in Beijing Wednesday, Mr. Zuma said he has expressed a desire to be part of the group during visits to all four nations, which are collectively known as BRIC.

The four nations have called for developing countries to play a bigger role in global financial institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

Mr. Zuma is on a three-day visit to China aimed at increasing bilateral trade and investment.

In a separate speech Wednesday, Mr. Zuma said South Africa aims to achieve annual economic growth of seven percent. He said the country hopes to reach that goal through heavy investments in electricity, education, and transportation.

Mr. Zuma was accompanied to China by more than 200 South African business leaders, who are scheduled to meet with and sign deals with their Chinese counterparts.

He met Tuesday with President Hu Jintao and was also scheduled to see other Chinese leaders including Premier Wen Jiabao during the visit.

Bilateral trade between South Africa and China topped \$16 billion in 2009. However, South Africa recorded a \$2.7 billion trade deficit with China last year, a gap Mr. Zuma said he will try to narrow.

China has invested tens of billions of dollars across Africa over the past decade, as it seeks materials and markets for its growing economy.

South Africa Strike Set to Expand

(Voice of America)

25 August 2010

As South Africa's public service strike enters its second week, the country's largest trade's union federation has called for other unions to join the action unless the government accedes to wage demands.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions has urged member unions to stage secondary or sympathy strikes in support of striking public servants. The union representing municipal workers says its members will stage a one-day strike on Friday and the unions representing police officers, prison warders and military personnel have urged their members to engage in legal protest.

The unions are also targeting volunteers. Speaking at a news conference, COSATU General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi offered a thinly veiled threat to volunteers.

"Volunteering is equal to scabbing, and scabbing does deepen frustrations and anger amongst workers. This is what normally creates violence between workers on the strike and those seen by workers to be taking their jobs and undermining their legitimate demands," Vavi said.

The unions are smarting because the tide of public sympathy has turned against them. South Africans are especially angry at the widespread intimidation and violence perpetrated by protesting workers. But more than that, people are furious that patients have been prevented from entering hospitals or, like 53 seriously ill babies at one hospital, simply abandoned.

Health minister Aaron Motsoaledi told parliament such actions threaten the fabric of South African society.

"Long after this strike is forgotten we must still have health workers who are human beings, who you know if you leave your relatives there, you have got nothing to fear about," he said. "But what I have seen last week, my blood went chilly."

The African National Congress has rejected suggestions that President Jacob Zuma should intervene to resolve the crisis. The party general secretary told a news conference the strike was not a political matter and said unions are making the environment for a settlement impossible. COSATU is in a political alliance with the ANC.

ZIMBABWE: Diamonds sales a false economic dawn

(Alert Net)

23 August 2010

HARARE, 23 August 2010 (IRIN) - An auction of Zimbabwean diamonds has created an air of expectation that the country's economic plight will be eased or even improved, but the stones realized as little as a fifth of their value, and most of the proceeds are expected to benefit controversial mining companies.

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme - an initiative to prevent conflict diamonds from entering the multibillion dollar global market - allowed Zimbabwe to sell diamonds from the Chiadzwa area of Marange in Manicaland Province. The diamond fields - reputedly the largest find in a century - have been mired in controversy, with constant allegations of human rights abuses since they were discovered in 2006.

Amnesty International has reported that soldiers deployed to guard the diamond fields have forced people to mine the diamonds, which were then smuggled out of the country, while other reports have indicated that security forces were killing illegal miners.

Primrose Mudzengi, 38, a teacher in the capital, Harare, earns a US\$150 a month, which she has to juggle to cover the rent, school fees for her two children, food and transport.

"Civil servants like me are virtually living on slave wages. I am confident that our salaries will improve significantly once diamonds are mined and sold on a large scale, and the government can spare more money for us," Mudzengi told IRIN. "I will be able to take my children on holiday as I used to do before the economy started sliding, and stop living like a beggar."

Dickson Chofamba, a Harare-based government mechanic, told IRIN: "Civil servants have suffered for too long, and the discovery of the diamonds should give us a chance to restore our dignity at the workplace. The PSA [Public Service Association, which represents government employees,] should ensure that we get most of the money."

The president of the Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ), Raymond Majongwe, was more pragmatic. It would be "folly for civil servants to think that the diamonds would improve their lives", he told IRIN.

Poor returns

"There are sharks out there who want to line their pockets first and, as it stands, there is a lack of clarity on how much the diamonds would give to our economy by way of job creation, and the value of the diamond deposits is not known," he said.

It is estimated that Zimbabwe would need about US\$8 billion dollars to resuscitate the economy. According to mining minister Obert Mpofu the auction raised US\$56.4 million, of which the government will receive US\$30 million, compared to an earlier estimate by finance minister Tendai Biti that the auction raised US\$46 million, with US\$15 million coming into government coffers.

Eric Bloch, an economic analyst, told IRIN that ahead of the auction it was hoped the diamonds would sell for US\$400 to US\$500 per carat, but only "around US\$80 per carat" was achieved.

"Contrary to the current popular feeling, there is little evidence that diamonds will translate into our economic panacea," Bloch told IRIN. "Hopes can easily turn into disillusionment; the economy will not turn around overnight, and the gains will be minimal for some time."

The government will receive 10 percent in royalties and 25 percent as corporate tax from profits made by the mining companies, while the Zimbabwe Mining Development Corporation (ZMDC), a government parastatal, will get a small dividend, Bloch said.

"What many people are failing to realize is that the bulk of the money will not be going to government, but to the mining companies. It is important to develop the other sectors of the economy if the economic situation is to improve," he commented.

Mbada Diamonds and Canadile Miners entered into joint ventures with the Zimbabwe Mining Development Corporation to exploit the diamond concessions, but Annie Dunnebacke, a campaigner for Global Witness, told IRIN that the nature of these deals remained "opaque".

'Drug traffickers, smugglers or plain crooks'

"According to first-hand accounts obtained by Global Witness, as well as media reports, Minister Mpfu told the [Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Mines and Energy] hearing that he was aware of the 'shady business deals' of some Mbada and Canadile investors, and his own research showed 'that people in the diamond business globally are drug-traffickers, smugglers, or plain crooks,'" Global witness said in a recent report: *The Return of the Blood Diamond*.

Mbada chairman Robert Mhlanga told participants at the auction that his company would ensure that "every carat of diamonds mined by Mbada Diamonds shall be accounted for", while the Zimbabwe Diamond Technology Centre, a newly formed company, announced in a recent statement that it would ensure that "leakages are minimized, accountability enhanced, and compliance made much more easier".

Innocent Makwiramiti, a Harare-based economist and former chief executive officer of the Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce (ZNCC), warned that leakages of diamonds would continue, and could result in the reversal of certification for future diamond sales.

"There are powerful people who are likely to use their positions to smuggle the diamonds out of the country, while illegal mining might continue for some time. In addition, authorities mandated to oversee the mining and sale of the mineral can take advantage of their offices and use all means to understate the amount and quality of diamonds for personal gain," Makwiramiti told IRIN.

Another auction for the sale of 4.4 million carats is scheduled for September 2010, from which government expects to raise US\$1.7 billion, but not all industry players support the KPCS recommendation to give Zimbabwe the opportunity to auction the Marange diamond stockpile.

The influential New York-based Rapaport Diamond Trading Network (Rapnet) has threatened its members with expulsion. "Rapaport strongly advises all diamond buyers not to trade in KP certified diamonds from Marange, and to request written assurance from their suppliers that their diamonds have not been sourced from Marange," Rapnet said in a statement.

"Members found to have knowingly offered Marange diamonds for sale on Rapnet will be expelled."

Human Rights, Social Issues & Developments

SOUTH AFRICA: Army steps into the breach

(IRIN)

26 August 2010

JOHANNESBURG, 26 August 2010 (IRIN) - The army has deployed more 1,800 medical staff to 47 public hospitals throughout South Africa to substitute for striking doctors and nurses as the nine-day industrial action becomes increasingly ill-tempered.

Thousands of public servants marched in South African cities on 26 August, pushing for an 8.6 percent salary increase and a R1,000 (US\$136) housing allowance, which the government has steadfastly refused, citing public spending limitations, and has offered a 7 percent raise and R700 (\$95) in housing allowance. Inflation is at 3.7 percent.

Simpiwe Dlamini, spokesman for the South African National Defence Force, told IRIN that more than 2,800 personnel had been deployed to medical facilities, of which 1,800 were providing direct medical assistance, including doctors, nurses and pharmacists.

It was "far from the truth", he said, that a call for a national strike in support of public sector workers would see army medical staff withdrawing their services. The army maintained a "huge capacity" to deploy more medical staff to hospitals, if required, and they were on standby.

Zwelinzima Vavi, general secretary of the country's largest union federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), told a rally in Johannesburg: "All COSATU unions will be organizing all their workers to issue notices to employers that they will be joining the public sector strike."

In terms of South African labour law, workers can give seven days' notice to embark on secondary strike action in support of other workers' demands. Should the call for a general strike be heeded, the industrial action, which has so far not had a debilitating economic impact, would spill over into the private sector.

Unionists have threatened "total anarchy", and the strike has already resulted in numerous incidents of violence and intimidation, such as strikers blocking patients from entering medical facilities - an action described by health minister Aaron Motsoaledi as tantamount "to murder".

"Our major concern is to protect life, and ensure that patients get the care they need," Motsoaledi told parliament. "It is critical for the strike to end immediately, as lives are being lost."

There has been a flurry of court rulings against acts of intimidation and crimes of violence, and on 26 August the Labour Court granted an interim interdict preventing members of the SA Police Service (SAPS) from embarking on strike action.

School disruptions

Mugwena Maluleke, secretary general of the 240,000-strong South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), told IRIN that the strike had closed about 26,000 schools, affecting more than two million learners. "There is never a good time to strike in education - even if we struck in January, it will have affected learners," he commented.

The strike by teachers, after an extraordinary six-week holiday to accommodate hosting the soccer world cup, has thrown the year-end examinations into disarray. Preliminary examinations for the final school-leaving certificate examinations (Matric) in November are scheduled to begin in the next few weeks, but positions on both sides appear to be hardening.

Maluleke said the strike was about "bread and butter" issues and not politics - on average a teacher earns about R9,400 (\$1,285) per month before deductions - and if the pay increase is won, the average salary would rise to about R11,000 (\$1,500) per month.

COSATU is an alliance partner of the ruling African National Congress. Labour's support of Jacob Zuma is seen as pivotal in his election as president of the ANC, and then as President of South Africa, after he was fired by former President Thabo Mbeki on allegations of corruption.

SWAZILAND: Trade in albino body parts moving south

(IRIN)

25 August 2010

MBABANE, 25 August 2010 (IRIN) - The recent killing of two albino Swazi children within a few days of each other is raising fears that the practice of murdering people with the genetically inherited condition to sell their body parts for "muti" (medicine) is migrating southwards.

Incidents of albinos being dismembered have been well-documented in Tanzania and Burundi, among other countries, in a trade driven by the belief that those suffering from albinism - caused by the body's inability to produce the melanin pigment that helps the skin protect itself from the sun's damaging ultra violet rays - have a special potency when included in concoctions that claim to bestow almost everything from political power and wealth to curing HIV/AIDS.

Last week Banele Nxumalo, 11, was shot and carried away by a group of masked gunmen next to the Siguduma River in southern Swaziland's Shisweleni Region, in front of 20 adults and children. Her decapitated body was discovered a few hours later. The killing came a few days after another albino child of similar age was found murdered and mutilated in the same region.

The child's father, Luke Nxumalo, told local media, "I wonder why albinos are targeted, because they are just humans like us, and a gift from God."

Constance Dube, a child welfare councillor based in Manzini, Swaziland's second city, told IRIN: "We have never had these ritual killings specific to albino persons before, but we've never had an AIDS epidemic causing so much panic either."

One in four Swazis between the ages of 15 and 49 is living with HIV - at 26.1 percent the world's highest prevalence - in a population of about 1 million, of which about two-thirds are in a state of chronic poverty.

No longer exempt from albino killings

The government and NGOs have embarked on HIV/AIDS education programmes, but many people still have deep-seated superstitions. Muti murders of children are not uncommon, and various theories explain the rise of child rapes, such as that sex with a virgin cleanses one of HIV/AIDS, but the recent targeting of albino children has opened a new chapter in the mountain kingdom.

Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse, an NGO opposing the sexual abuse of women and children, said in a statement that the country could no longer claim immunity from the "ritual killings" most common in East Africa.

"Swaziland, therefore - which has been identified as a destination, source and transit point for human trafficking, which also occurs for trade in body parts - is clearly no longer exempt of this type of crime, where young albinos are being targeted," the statement said.

Thembile Msibi, a traditional healer in Hhelehele, a village about 30km from Manzini, told IRIN that the blood and body parts of albinos were believed to cure HIV/AIDS. "[The killers] probably went after these poor children because they are easier to kill than adults, but the power of the muti made from them is very strong," she said.

Between 2007 and 2009 at least 70 African albinos were killed in Burundi, Kenya and Tanzania; according to recent reports, a Tanzanian police officer estimated that a "complete set of albino body parts" - including all four limbs, genitals, ears, nose and tongue - can sell for about US\$75,000.

Trading in body parts

Under the Same Sun (USS), a Canadian faith-based NGO advocating the rights and protection of people with albinism, put unofficial estimates of the number of albinos killed in Tanzania and Burundi at more than 200 in the past two years, excluding others who have survived the hacking-off of limbs.

Earlier this month Tanzanian police arrested a 28-year-old Kenyan man in a sting operation near Mwanza, capital of the northeastern Mwanza Region, for attempting to sell a 20-year-old albino man for US\$250,000.

Peter Ash, founder of USS, told the Vancouver Sun newspaper in a recent interview that the practice of killing albinos had only begun in the last decade, and "the killing of albinos and trafficking in body parts appears to be centred ... in and around the city of Mwanza."

The United States, the European Union and other nations and civil society groups have condemned muti killings. In the ensuing outcry, Tanzania has so far sentenced seven people to death for the murder of albinos, according to reports. A Swazi police officer, who declined to be named, said the increased awareness of these killings may have forced the perpetrators to move to other states to "harvest" people.

There have been no reports of discrimination against albinos in Swaziland, but there is also no reliable data on their numbers, or any registered associations catering for their needs.

Since the two Swazi children were murdered, however, police have received requests from the parents and guardians of albino children for protection.

Food Security & Health Issues

ZIMBABWE: Pregnancy need not put an end to education

(IRIN)

25 August 2010

HARARE, 25 August 2010 (IRIN) - Falling pregnant used to mean the end of school – and of much more - for girls in Zimbabwe, so a new regulation replacing immediate expulsion with maternity leave has been welcomed.

In 2008 Sarudzai Gopoza, now 19, dropped out of school after falling pregnant. "He refused to marry me. My father said he could not look after me, so I had to look for a job. Luckily he let me leave the child under the custody of my mother," she told IRIN.

A government regulation stipulating that pregnant girls automatically be expelled from school meant that Gopoza - who was about to write O-Level examinations, a school-leaving certificate that would have greatly enhanced her job-finding prospects - had to work as a domestic worker.

"My life is ruined - as a housemaid I am earning hardly enough to buy food and clothes for my child, and I don't see myself being able to further my education and get a better job in the future. I will consider myself lucky to get a husband who will also accept my child and look after both of us," she said.

It is perhaps too late for Gopoza, but a new regulation by the Ministry of Education, Sport, Art and Culture states that girls who share her predicament will now get three months' leave, after which they will resume their studies. A male student responsible for the pregnancy will go on paternity leave for the same period.

"I am happy that the government has seen it fit to allow school children to go on maternity and paternity leave in the event of a female student falling pregnant," said Petronella Nyamapfene, director of the Justice for Children Trust.

"The new regulation ensures fairness in the sense that, unlike in the past, when the girl child was punished while the boy remained in school, both students will now be treated equally."

The director of Girl Child Network (GCN), Nyasha Mazango, whose organization has helped sexually abused girls return to school, said the new policy would be empowering.

"We view the issue of a female student falling pregnant as either an indication of immaturity or vulnerability, and support the new policy because it gives the girl child a second chance. We are already looking at how we can cooperate with school authorities and communities to ensure a smooth return of the students who have fallen pregnant," Mazango told IRIN.

"Some school authorities are known to be adverse to the idea of taking back these unfortunate girls, but we hope that they will cooperate. Parents and guardians would have invested a lot of

money in terms of school fees, uniforms and other educational costs, and allowing the children to continue will help avoid huge losses to them."

Girls returning to school after their maternity leave might encounter stigma. "From experience, students who are known by their peers to have been raped or sexually abused suffer a lot of stigmatization and usually perform badly at school," said Samuel Mbirimi, 48, a senior teacher at a secondary school in Chitungwiza, a town about 30km south of Harare.

"The situation could be worse where the girl is known to have become a teenage mother. In any case, she is distracted by her new role as a mother," he told IRIN.

Gordon Chavhunduka, a sociologist and former vice chancellor of the University of Zimbabwe, noted that "with this policy, the inequality between males and girls accessing education will be reduced".

However, he cautioned that the education ministry would have to "send a clear message that this policy is not giving school children the licence to make children at will, otherwise the education sector will be thrown into confusion".

The school curriculum should be expanded "to ensure that what the children learn includes great detail about pregnancy prevention, the dangers of premature pregnancies, and such other subjects like HIV and AIDS," Chavhunduka told IRIN.

GCN's Mazango suggested that the government provide free or subsidized day-care centres for students with children, but admitted that "This will be a tall order, considering the fact that the social welfare department is currently battling with paying the school fees of disadvantaged children."

Zimbabwe's ailing education system, once a model for sub-Saharan Africa, has buckled and all but collapsed under the economic and political crises of the past decade, when widespread food shortages, hyperinflation, cholera outbreaks, and an almost year-long strike by teachers in 2008 led to a dramatic decline in the standard of learning.

UNICEF welcomes new initiative to boost maternal and infant health in Angola

(UN News Service)

26 August 2010

26 August 2010 – The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has welcomed a new campaign launched by the Angolan Government to reduce maternal and infant mortality, and encouraged authorities to ensure the necessary budget resources to improve health for women and children.

The campaign focuses on strengthening the health system at the municipal level by providing improved maternal and child health-care services, as well as teaching healthy habits for mothers and children at home.

A recent Angolan Government survey showed significant strides in reducing maternal and infant mortality since 2002. The rate of under-five deaths has dropped from 250 to 195 per 1,000 live births, while the maternal mortality rate decreased from 1,400 to 660 per 100,000 live births.

Despite the improvements, UNICEF stated in a news release that the situation remains unacceptable, noting that the figures put Angola on par with the world's poorest nations even though its per capita incomes are clearly higher.

The agency believes the new government initiative can lead to progress, and stressed the need to improve access to effective obstetric interventions, promoting maternal practices that protect a child's health, and ensuring that clinics have the necessary medicines and supplies.

Koen Vanormelingen, UNICEF Representative in Angola and UN Resident Coordinator, highlighted the need to ensure access to skilled birth attendants across the country, which is critical to reducing maternal and neonatal mortality.

UNICEF announced in June that Angola has made progress on several of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the global targets that include slashing extreme poverty, reducing maternal and child mortality rates and fighting diseases, all by 2015.

Preliminary data from a Government survey had found, for example, that malnutrition had dropped from 35 to 23 per cent, while school enrolment has surged to 76 per cent. Gender parity is also close to being achieved in schools, with 98 girls for every 100 boys attending classes.

At the same time, the agency noted that maternal mortality had not seen the same level of improvement as other areas, mainly because skilled attendants at birth continued to hover just below 48 per cent.

In light of the new campaign, UNICEF encouraged the Government to raise the proportion of the national budget devoted to health from 6.4 per cent to 15 per cent to ensure better health for the country's women and children.

Children Crossing Borders in Search of HIV Treatment

(IPS)

24 August 2010

PLUMTREE, Zimbabwe, Aug 24 (IPS) - A new type of migration is taking place in Zimbabwe. While in the past people crossed the borders into South Africa and Botswana seeking work and fleeing from their repressive circumstances, now a silent migration of HIV-positive children seeking antiretroviral treatment (ART) is taking place.

The deep rural plains of Ndolwane, Plumtree in south-west Zimbabwe share a border with Botswana. And from here, a growing number of families are taking their HIV-positive children into Botswana and South Africa to seek ART. This, some faith-based organisations (FBOs) report, has been spurred by the long waiting lists for antiretrovirals (ARVs) in Zimbabwe where

government programmes to provide free medication for HIV patients are reportedly failing to match demand.

"This is how desperate the people are to provide treatment for their children," said Khumbulani Khaphela, a pastor with an evangelical fellowship church working in rural Plumtree.

"Some families after hearing that others have sent their children across the border have approached us to assist them with going there as well," he said. The churches are expected to finance the medical trips as part of their contribution toward efforts to save the lives of HIV-positive children.

The people of Plumtree are no strangers to migration. Men and women have been forced to leave their poverty-stricken villages as the lack of access to running water, high unemployment, lack of medical care and a litany of woes hit the rural communities hard. Thousands left their homes to work in Botswana and South Africa while sending back a portion of their earnings to their families.

But this migration, HIV/AIDS researchers and local elders say, has contributed to the spread of the virus as husbands living and working away from their wives and families engaged in extramarital sexual relations and returned home HIV-positive. This resulted in the birth of a number of HIV-positive children.

The migration into bordering countries to seek medical attention for children has also been partially driven by the growing number of HIV-positive urban residents who flock to rural areas for ART. They have sought out treatment in rural hospitals where waiting lists for ARVs are deemed shorter than those in large towns like Bulawayo. However, the FBOs say there have also been reports of parents from urban centres, like Bulawayo, who have also resorted to transporting their children to neighbouring countries for treatment.

"From what we are hearing, it is easy for children with tuberculosis and HIV to be treated in South Africa's government hospitals," said Josphat Dakamela, a village elder in Plumtree. "What can we do? Everybody knows there are no medicines in the country (Zimbabwe) so what is happening here is no surprise."

This is despite assurances by authorities that HIV infections continue to dwindle in this impoverished southern African country. While the Zimbabwean government offers free ARV treatment, this is hard to come by for many living with the virus as patients also have to undergo rigorous vetting before they are placed on long waiting lists for ART. According to a United Nations report, for the approximately 160,000 children living with HIV in Zimbabwe only one in 16 have access to the life-prolonging drugs.

Local AIDS activists say that Zimbabwean nationals working in neighbouring countries have shunned seeking treatment there because they have no legal status and fear deportation. But for young children the situation is different as the South African and Botswana governments attempt to provide free health care for all children under their own Millennium Development Goal commitments.

"Many know that children's treatment in the countries they settled is free and have taken advantage of this to send sick children there," said Khaphela.

These parents are helped by the existence of cross-border transport operators who for years have exploited porous border posts to transport Zimbabweans to South Africa as they search for work. Now they also assist HIV-positive children. "Moving people across the border has never been a problem, but taking children as young as six to South Africa for treatment is something new," says cross-border transporter Mongameli Sibanda.

He says some of the children he transports are visibly in poor health. This has added an urgency to his work as never before. Now his cross-border errands are critical as he races to get children to South Africa. "It is sad when we have children seeking treatment outside the country. These things must be done here (Zimbabwe)," said Sibanda.

In the past frontline health workers have complained that Zimbabwean parents have left it until too late to seek treatment for children living with HIV. But this is slowly changing in some rural areas. These dire circumstances are indeed magnified among rural populations like those in Plumtree who are responding to the crisis by crossing the border to seek treatment.

"There is little we can do," said Khaphela. "We cannot fold our hands and watch children die when their families have these rather desperate alternatives. We will keep helping."

US-Africa Relations

US Will Give Mozambique \$1 Billion to Fight HIV

(Voice of America)

23 August 2010

The United States says it will provide \$1 billion over the next five years to help fight AIDS in Mozambique, where some 1.5 million people are living with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

U.S. and Mozambican officials signed a partnership agreement in Mozambique's capital, Maputo, on Monday. The U.S. embassy says the agreement is aimed at reducing new infections, strengthening Mozambique's health system, and improving access to treatment for people infected with HIV, and those suffering from AIDS.

It says another goal is for the government, aid groups, and private sector to harmonize their efforts to combat HIV and AIDS.

The funding will mostly be supplied by the United States' anti-AIDS initiative, PEPFAR, started under former president George W. Bush. The initiative dramatically increased the funding dispersed internationally to fight HIV and AIDS.

Since PEPFAR began in 2003, U.S. funding of anti-AIDS programs in Mozambique has increased from \$37.5 million in 2004 to around \$250 million in 2009.

In 2007, the United Nations estimated that about 12.5 percent of adults in Mozambique were living with HIV, and some 400,000 children had been orphaned by AIDS.

China-Africa Relations

South Africa's Zuma looks to China to boost trade

(Reuters)

22 August 2010

(Reuters) - South African President Jacob Zuma, struggling with sluggish growth and worker discontent at home, seeks to boost trade on Monday on a trip to China, the last of the four "BRIC" economies he has visited in little over a year since taking office..

South Africa aims to tap trade and investment in "BRIC" economies Brazil, Russia, India and China to make up for the downturn in traditional markets in weakly recovering Europe.

"There is a national consensus in South Africa that wants the country to be part of the BRICs, and this visit to China is part of achieving that goal," said Xu Weizhong, an Africa expert at the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations.

"South Africa also wants to be the bridge between Africa and China," he added.

For Beijing, the visit by Zuma will be an opportunity to consolidate ties with African countries, where China is increasingly turning for resources, markets and diplomatic support.

Late last year, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao offered Africa \$10 billion in concessional loans over three years.

Yet with GDP growth forecast at 2.3 percent this year, South Africa stacks up unfavorably against China and India, and Zuma will be looking to narrow his country's trade deficit with Beijing.

"South Africa wants Chinese investment, but at the same time is worried about the competition this will bring. South Africa is not well prepared for that," said Xu, the Chinese expert.

South Africa's ruling African National Congress (ANC) is soul-searching over development policies, in particular how to boost the economy, which has failed to grow at the pace needed to dent chronic unemployment.

Many ANC officials are starting to see the fast growth of China and other BRIC economies as proof that the state should be doing more to nurture growth -- a departure from the free-market orthodoxy that has prevailed since the end of apartheid in 1994.

While Zuma is in Beijing, China and South Africa are expected to sign agreements that will include cooperation on mineral resources and transport, and to address lopsided bilateral trade flows.

China is South Africa's largest trading partner, but last year South Africa ran a \$2.7 billion trade deficit with China.

A Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement that Zuma will sign is expected to address that, a South African government spokesman said.

"This agreement is expected to deal with the trade imbalance between the two countries and with the fact that South Africa still exports raw materials to China while importing finished products into our market," the government spokesman, Themba Maseko, said ahead of the visit.

Zuma will be shadowed by labor strains at home.

More than one million public sector workers in South Africa launched a strike last week, the latest in a wave of labor protests to hit the country since May and has involved teachers, police, health workers, customs officials and office staff.

A World Bank study published last week showed South African unit labor costs in 2008 were higher than any other mainstream emerging market apart from Morocco.

South African President Zuma Ends Three-Day Visit to China

(Voice of America)

26 August 2010

South African President Jacob Zuma ended his visit to China Thursday, signing trade agreements relating to minerals, the environment and transportation.

Mr. Zuma reportedly was accompanied by 17 cabinet ministers and about 300 business people.

Lots of potential

Jennifer Cooke, director of the Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, says, says South Africa's relationship with China holds much promise.

"Potentially it's tremendously important. Already they (China) are a fairly major investment in South Africa. The prospect of increased investment, trade, technical transfer and so forth and, really, political support as well, I think, loom very large," she says.

Cooke says Mr. Zuma has "made a fairly aggressive play to win that kind of a strategic partnership."

What's in it for China?

“South Africa,” she says, “is one of the best and largest performing economies in Africa. And China has made big plays within Africa more broadly,” she says.

However, it’s not an equal relationship.

“I think the relationship probably matters more for South Africa than for China. But China has been making big strides in trying to win commercial partners, political partners and strengthen cultural ties with a number of states in Africa,” she says.

South Africa is an attractive trading partner for China, says Cooke, because its economy helps boost all of Southern Africa. “They’re kind of a pillar state for China to partner with.”

BRIC

The major emerging economies – Brazil, Russia, India and China – have formed a bloc known as BRIC. Representatives from those countries have been invited to recent G8 summits, as has South Africa. But is South Africa strong enough to add an “S” to BRIC?

“It’s got a ways to go,” says Cooke, “but it certainly aspires to that status.... But has so many internal problems in terms of really this dual economy of a very sophisticated economy on the one hand, but then a very large informal economy, where unemployment is extremely high – 20 to 30 percent – poverty, really a crumbling education system and so forth.”

However, Cooke says that South Africa’s interests may not always align with those of BRIC.

“It may find it doesn’t want to be clumped with that group in certain circumstances. For example in global trade agreements, China is in such a very different position than South Africa is in terms of its interests in the global trade regime. South Africa might ally more in that instance with those of its African neighbors,” she says.

Cooke says South Africa has to play its alliances “carefully” and won’t want to be “locked in” to one particular grouping.

Long term view

Analysts say China, the world’s second largest economy, takes a long term view when investing in Africa, rather than looking for an immediate return.

“First it looks for resources, whether energy resources or mineral resources. But it also looks for markets. It looks for investment opportunities...areas, for example, of employment for Chinese workers. On many of the big infrastructure projects they’re investing in in Africa, it’s Chinese labor that does much of the work there,” she says.

She adds, “Ultimately, they do have this long, patient plan of building gradually commercial and diplomatic relationships that they believe I think over the long term will pay off both economically and politically.”

Militancy

ANGOLA: Cabindan separatists under new management

(IRIN)

26 August 2010

JOHANNESBURG, 26 August 2010 (IRIN) - After a recent mass defection from its senior ranks, the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC) has announced that the separatist movement in exile is now under new management, and called on the population of the Angolan enclave to continue fighting for their sovereignty.

"We urge [Cabindans] to remain firm in their fight against the occupying government of Angola, which practices state terrorism against the people of Cabinda ... and continues to deploy elite troops and warlike material," FLEC president Henrique N'Zita Tiago and other exiled leaders in France said in a statement on 26 August.

An offer of peace by senior FLEC officials on 29 June 2010, which seemingly ended the lengthy separatist conflict in northern Angola, was made without the knowledge or consent of Tiago, who described this olive branch as a "coup d'état" in an earlier interview with IRIN.

The statement "confirms the removal of Vice-President Alexander Tati, Chief of State Mayor Estanislau Boma, Chief of National Security Carlos Moises, and special Councillor to the President, Luis Veras Luemba."

These positions would be filled by Pastor Kitembo Antonio da Silva as Vice-President, Joel Betila as Secretary General, Barros Mangga, who would "organize the movement", and Afonso Massanga as Secretary for External Relations."

On 22 August the Angolan Defence minister, Candido Pereira Van-Dunem, told the Angolan state news agency, Angop, that "activities" between the Angolan Armed Forces and the "social community" in Cabinda were "healthy".

Cabinda provides around 60 percent of the oil production that makes Angola the largest producer in Africa, but is separated from the main territory of Angola by a narrow wedge of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Cabinda's mineral wealth includes gold, diamonds and uranium, as well as extensive reserves of tropical hardwoods.

Refugees/IDPs & Migration

Zimbabwe Police Raze Shack Dwellings Making Scores Homeless

(Voice of America)

27 August 2010

In a pre-dawn raid this week, Zimbabwe Republic Police bashed down an informal settlement in Harare making scores of people, including children, homeless. Many of those whose shacks were destroyed by police were refugees from similar massive attacks on urban dwellings five years ago.

The shack dwellers whose temporary homes were broken down by police this week were living on a race course in Harare's upmarket Borrowdale suburb, north of the city center.

The raid also affected some employees from the race course.

Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights condemned this week's raid. The group said about uniformed 30 policemen, accompanied by dogs, and some carrying guns, came from Harare Central Police Station.

Many of the temporary homes were set on fire by police and the homeless people were left in the open, in the cold of winter, and then taken to the police station.

Victims later told the rights lawyers that they were told to leave Harare and go and build homes in rural areas.

The rights lawyers say they managed to find 55 settlers at the police station, including five children. So far the total number of those whose shacks were destroyed is not known.

Police say they will charge the settlers whom were arrested during the raid.

Police report to the home affairs ministry, shared between President Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF party and the Movement for Democratic Change in the 18-month-old inclusive government.

Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights said the police acted both unlawfully and unprocedurally as no notice had been given, or alternative accommodation found before the raid.

The lawyers say many of the victims became homeless when the then ZANU-PF government launched Operation Murambatsvina, or clear out the trash, and demolished tens of thousands of homes and small businesses in 2005.

That campaign captured the attention of the United Nations, which condemned the raids.

The UN estimated more than two million people had been affected in Operation Murambatsvina.

Election results from 2000 show that the Movement for Democratic Change has overwhelming support in urban areas.

In south astern Zimbabwe, in controversial diamond fields in the Marange area, many families are being forced by mining companies to leave their homes.

Earlier this month, the mining companies held their first internationally approved auction in Harare and the mines ministry said foreign buyers spent about \$40 million.on rough stones from Marange.

About 4,000 poor people from the Marange area have been told by the mines ministry they will have to move.

The first to go have been relocated to shelter in old tobacco barns on a formerly white-owned farm seized several years ago by a state company, the Agricultural Rural Development Authority.

Those moved so far say they received some groceries and a small cash pay out, but they have no homes and there are no nearby schools or health facilities for their families.