

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT
POOR PLANNING ADDS TO STORM DISTRESS

1. On Thursday 28 August 2008, government in the Western Cape started moving hundreds of displaced people into two camps, despite a the biggest storm in years being forecast and the camp infrastructure not being far from ready for new residents. Although storms are acts of nature, when one is forecast plans for moving large numbers of people to exposed sites should be tailored accordingly. In addition, at least 1000 other people had to leave their homes because of the rain and floods.
2. Civil society organisations and independent volunteers have expressed the following concerns with the way the consolidation process has been handled over the stormy and rainy weekend:
 - The Provincial Government of the Western Cape and the City of Cape Town have to operate according to their “Guidelines for Emergencies”, adopted 25 August 2008. (See attached document).
 - According to monitors and individuals at the camps, these guidelines have not been met.
 - There has been a consistent lack of proper consultation with IDPs by government and the UNHCR despite repeated requests for this (and despite the UN's own guidelines on conflict resolution). This lack of dialogue makes government's plans untenable, as they are far less likely to be accepted by displaced people, as well as demonstrating a marked lack of respect and dignity.
 - People were moved from community halls to camps that are far from work and schools, making reintegration very difficult.
 - At some sites, over the weekend, what little remains of people’s belongings were transported on open trucks in the rain.
 - On 8 July 2008 The UNHCR stated publicly that they ‘had no tents available for winter or arctic conditions’, and yet the Western Cape government requisitioned UNHCR tents unsuitable for extended inhabitation which leaked and then fell apart in the storm. On Friday 29 August the first of these tents were erected at Blue Waters, where it was discovered that the tent pegs were too short, and unable to anchor the tents in the loose sand.
 - The two camps into which people were moved were inadequately prepared: tents were not erected, at the new site at Blue Waters there are no showers or laundry facilities, nor enough toilets, the food is cold and delivered at inappropriate times, ablution facilities are inadequate, especially for those observing Ramadaan, and toilets have been placed in areas that are dangerous at night.
 - Children have not been prioritised for dietary requirements and recreation facilities. Although some adults are fasting according to Ramadaan, children are not fasting, and provision should have been made for them to feed. After the storm, women and children had to stay in large tents together with men, a threat to their safety and security.

- Government, according to reports, still intend moving large numbers of people into the camps despite further bad weather being predicted.
 - At Silwerstroom camp, 83 people have been left without food and water for six days, including 41 children, and have been forced to shelter in toilet blocks as the tents were destroyed in the storm.
3. Civil society calls on government to implement the emergency guidelines with immediate effect, and that they not use tented camps as a solution for shelter. If tented camps are to be used they need to be adequately reinforced. Ideally people should be housed in solid structures.
 4. The UNHCR should work together with the city and provincial governments in resolving logistical problems in the camps, and providing advice, information and practical support to people according to its mandate.
 5. Displaced people and their representative leadership must be consulted regarding all decisions made by government about them, in order to restore dignity and to 'boost morale and prevent panic'- as referred to in the guidelines.
 6. Preparation must be made for meteorological variations of all kinds.
 7. Government must source secure shelters. Should appropriate temporary shelters not be available, community halls must be opened.

For further details, contact
Scott Dunlop
(021) 422 1490
084 719 8258

This press statement is jointly endorsed by:

Treatment Action Campaign
AIDS Law Project
Displaced Refugee Network
Social Justice Coalition
and independent volunteers:
Tracey Saunders
Sam Pearce

Below please find photographs of the aftermath of the storm, including pictures of obliterated UNHCR tents.

<http://picasaweb.google.com/peace4africa/Bluewaters31August2008>