

BILL WATCH SPECIAL

[18th June 2008]

In response to queries about the Suspension of NGO Humanitarian Field Operations, here is the full text of the letter from the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare and its attached Clarification.

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE, LABOUR AND SOCIAL WELFARE

Compensation House

P. Bag 7707, Causeway

Cnr Fourth Street/Central Avenue

Harare

Ref: SW/21/3

12 June 2008

All Private Voluntary Organisations (PVOs)/ Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Re: CLARIFICATION ON THE SUSPENSION OF FIELD OPERATIONS OF PVOs/NGOs

Reference is made to the meeting convened by OCHA on 12 June 2008, at UNICEF Offices, in Harare at which you sought Government clarification on the suspension of field operations of PVOs/NGOs.

Attached please find the response to issues raised.

I hope this will go a long way in clearing any misinterpretations.

[signed]

S.G. Mhishi (Mr)

ACTING PERMANENT SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC SERVICE, LABOUR AND SOCIAL WELFARE

CLARIFICATION OF SUSPENSION OF NGOS/PVOs FIELD OPERATIONS

A. BACKGROUND

On 12 June 2008, Office of the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) organized a meeting of UN Agencies and NGOs/PVOs to seek clarification from Government on the suspension of field operations of all NGOs/PVOs.

B. CLARIFICATION WAS SOUGHT ON THE FOLLOWING ISSUES:

- Definition of field operations
- Interpretation of suspension
- Reasons for suspension
- Duration of suspension

Definition of Field Operations

In terms of the suspension letter, field operations imply movement by NGOs/PVOs personnel into communities in order to mobilize, organize, or bring together large numbers of people.

Interpretation of Suspension

Suspension of field operations does not imply banning or deregistration of PVOs/NGOs.

Reason for suspension

Government has received information that some PVOs/NGOs involved in humanitarian operations are breaching the terms and conditions of their registration as embraced in the PVO Act by engaging in political activities. In order to allow for fair and transparent investigations, field operations of all PVOs/NGOs had to be suspended.

Duration of suspension

Government is desirous to dispense with investigations as soon as possible in order to allow PVOs/NGOs to resume their normal operations.

C. OTHER ISSUES RAISED BY NGOs/PVOs

- Implications of HIV/AIDS programmes
- Feeding of children
- Operations of Head Office, Regional and District offices of the NGOs/PVOs

- Position of churches with regard to the suspension

Implications of HIV and AIDS Programmes

- The suspension does not prohibit those on Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART) and those benefiting from Home Based Care (HBC) programmes to continue accessing drugs and therapeutic feeding from clinics and hospitals.

Supplementary Feeding Programme for Children

- This is a community based programme which does not entail community mobilization by NGOs/PVOs hence it falls outside the above given definition of suspension.

Operations of Head Offices, Regional and District Offices

- Since suspension does not imply banning operations at Head Offices, Regional and District Offices are not affected, except field operations.

Position of Churches

- The Zimbabwe Constitution guarantees freedom of worship and no church is registered in terms of the PVO Act. Therefore, in terms of this suspension, churches are not affected.