

District Meeting Minutes  
07 June 2008

Meeting begins: Evan acts as chairman.

Purpose of today's meeting: see what were successes and shortcomings of the last week in setting things up for the refugees – monetary, advocacy, reporting on the ground, at a sub-district level.

District reports back:

**Khayelitsha district:**

- Poor attendance at meeting on Monday at Sonke office.
- Task of monitoring difficult.
- Elroy was in touch with Khayelitsha Crisis Committee, saying that if they can identify their gaps, then the task team can fill in the gaps.
- Zackie suggested that the TAC Khayelitsha office could call people together to improve meeting attendance.
- Suggestion: need to reconvene with the sub-district in Khayelitsha because it's difficult for people to get to town.

**Southern district:**

- had meeting on Tuesday evening at UCT.
    - no coordinators attended
  - lots of people want to get involved – need to set up contact people for different particular areas
  - health should tie around SHAWCO clinics
    - SHAWCO has volunteered to set up a new collection and donation point
- 1) Advocacy: heard a report from Regis about TAC Re: advocacy, but no one in the sub-district had capacity to take on advocacy work.
  - 2) Information: no centralized info point or call center, which some people have started to look into. No one had the kind of info they wanted from the gov't side or big donor side. Need better info sharing.
  - 3) Names – people trying to find each other across various camps.
- visit to Soetwater: people at camp don't have very good info about what's going on outside of camps, including the coordinators
- maybe a short newsletter or pamphlet?
  - Regis said TAC was potentially working on that.
- need someone to be a contact person for each area of involvement, but everyone at meeting was UCT student or staff with “day jobs” to do – no one on the team to spend every day all day working on this stuff.
- No capacity to do own advocacy, etc. Just trying to set up coordinators to help organize.

Suggestion: organizing frequency on radio instead of trying to send out paper and documents; just have someone reading stuff over broadcast, in different languages  
-Response: UCT student doing research on related issues; working on plans to set up radio stations at Soetwater and Muizenberg

**Western district:**

- Silverstroom camp representatives have disappeared; no contact since last Saturday
  - Majority of places in district are mosques and churches, community halls, seem to be under control.
  - Major issue: Sense pending burnout from volunteers.
    - Need to work out who's going to relieve those people and continue to provide leadership.
  - Foreshore – Home Affairs buses trying to move protest pick-up point into area w/ no toilets, shelter, etc.
  - Team confident that they will continue to make progress on their task – just need to get back in touch with Silverstroom reps.
  - All sites on list have been visited.
- Visitors to Soetwater report same issues of burnout/exhaustion among volunteers.

**Mitchell's Plain district:**

- had a meeting on Monday at Mitchell's Plain police station, invited more orgs to be part of team.
- Met with issues at Bluewaters – told to get off the property, weren't wanted there. Managed to go back on Thursday – people there don't want to deal with South Africans; ultimately agreed to be monitored by HRC.
- No access to mosque in Mitchell's Plain. Invited Muslim leader on board but right now it's a major problem, no access to the mosque. Told that Portland's mosque has people sleeping on concrete floors – have blankets, no mattresses. Mostly Somalis in the mosque(s). Volunteers feel burnt out but are still there for the cause.

**Northern district:**

- plan to go to sites, try to talk to leaders to get a database to help them
- want to know exactly where people are coming from; need to know which communities people come from before they can start mobilizing.

Main challenges faced by sub-districts: coordination. Volunteer 'management', morale. Media and information to the camps. Dissemination of information. Access to information. Logistics of relief – to match up needs with supplies (in smaller sites).

-Silverstroom: handed over from church to City Disaster Management.  
-transitional problems are inevitable. Main issue to ensure that there are no break-downs in delivery of relief supplies in big sites.

-Disaster Management offering inferior services. Need to move towards establishing standards for sanitation, housing, etc. UN is going to give us insight into exactly what is going on. Government is developing a set of standards that are similar to UN standards – that will allow us to monitor the camps.

-Need to make a central secretariat of task force.

-Gap in info being centrally gathered. Volunteers at TAC need to begin gathering information again.

**-Health report:** Lots of different orgs represented, including people from Displaced Refugees Network. Decided to establish 2 sub-groups:

1) service coordination group – role: collect and collate offers of assistance made by health professionals and other willing volunteers, try to ensure that such offers are channeled to health authorities.

2) interface group - role: to interface w/ health authorities. Pull in info about unmet needs and available/unused resources, and transmit needs expressed by refugees to the health department and verify cases of denial of health needs.

-Transmit stories of health violations to this group so that they can be put in the media if appropriate.

-Contact: 0214475770 (ask for PHM, Liz, or Bridget)

-Contact: [liz@phmsouthafrica.org](mailto:liz@phmsouthafrica.org) - to report health issues

### **Zackie's report**

-March on Monday, 02 June → ~2,000 refugees in march, mostly peaceful. ~1,000 other South Africans on march.

-First march in last 10 years Zackie attended that nearly turned violent. Luckily, police stood off and let TAC deal with it. Let refugees hand over their own memoranda – and that information was not properly communicated among refugees, not all demands were included.

-Legal letter of demand to premier, city, and president. Related to transport, freedom of movement, information, involvement of UN.

-Reply: premier's office called this morning, said: Look, we'll respond by Monday but trying to sort out issues in phone call. Mayor sent letter: under the circumstances, city has no legal competency to address any of your requests (including transport for people in camps, etc.).

-Province will only deal w/ community centers, won't deal with camps. Disaster Management sent out order not to feed any of the shelters, because that is Province's responsibility.

-At last week's meeting, 3 letters discussed: 1) health, 2) transport, 3) education; Transport and Education have been sent.

-Transport: Asked for coordination between transportation services – no response yet. Asked for transport routes to be open, esp. Golden Arrow bus services.

-Trying to work on 50% discount for those routes from government.

-Education: Asked national and provincial ministers to issue memo on schools Re: how to deal with crisis. It is the state's responsibility to do these things – but we can help because it's a humanitarian crisis.

-Letter to Dept of Home Affairs Re: documentation issue and arrest for immigration-related offenses and deportations.

-Originally promised no one would be arrested/deported for immigration-related offenses, especially people in sites.

-That appears to have been lifted. Security challenge for displaced people.

-Soetwater: people don't want to have anything to do with South Africans. Letters sent on their behalf Re: transportation, UN, etc.

-Caledon Square: demanding compensation, UN intervention, repatriation, or resettlement. Also support other people's wishes for reintegration. Refused to move until civic centers and other facilities were opened.

-Many of them have been located at local mosque.

-Mosque can't take any more people, asking for civic centers to open.

-If Province has taken over, they may have the power to demand City open these places.

-Problem: Province wants to reintegrate people quickly.

-Reintegration *can* happen – see Khayelitsha – but some people do not want to reintegrate, and it's important to support those people as well.

-DFID has allocated R2.7m– only to be spent on humanitarian crisis costs.

- leaves around R1.4m that must go to shelters and displaced people in form of foods, blankets, clothes, etc.

-working with OXFAM on funding

-Problem: over R1m of advocacy expenses not in the budget – marches, ads in the newspaper, pamphlets, etc. Need to raise that money.

-Important: coordination with shelters. When TAC limited its role, the information coming into the office decreased. Sub-districts need to replenish that information by supplying info to secretariat.

United Nations involvement:

-This morning: UN met with particular leaders from refugee groups

-AIDS Law Project has sent out UN petition, → international outcry

-UN says they have a team on standby ready to come in and help, and the government refuses to let them.

-Clarification: Gauteng and WC provinces have asked for and received UN assistance. It is the President who has not requested help.

Past week, SHAWCO health clinics in refugee sites:

-Health has responded well. Need to break down health advocacy to practical level so that refugees understand their rights and what they can do about it.

Suggestion: Have Khayelitsha write something down on how they did the reintegration? Other refugee groups would like to hear it.

Response:

-Provincial government trained people. City council also trained people. Don't know if they are working together.

-Need to have a separate team from the task force that will go and make an assessment to see whether people are fully ready to accept the immigrants back, whether there are social dialogues taking place.

-need for continuation of assessment of sites

-health questionnaire acts as great basis point, needs to be taken further – no idea how many children are at each site, whether they're at school, ratio of men to women, etc.

-Secretariat's duty: consolidate list of all our volunteers and what they can/can't do.

-support community coordination; info that needs to come in

-8-12 hour line for emergency calls to come in

-put pressure on local groups to make sure site assessments happen

-need clear idea of what's happening at every site

-feed info from Home Affairs up/down

Manolo Bedran from OXFAM to help set standard for sites, esp. water sanitation.

Meeting this week on sanitation and water with Manolo: **Wednesday at 6pm, 11 June**

-broad briefing on standards (which should we advocate for?)

-one person from each district should take on that responsibility

Note: 20 June is World Refugee Day; something should be organized.

Next Task Team meeting: **12pm, 14 June (Saturday)**