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Zimbabwe

Unknown numbers of IDPs still need humanitarian assistance as well as support for long-term durable solutions

The situation of internally displaced people (IDPs) in Zimbabwe varies widely, depending on the reasons for their displacement and the length of time they have been displaced. Accordingly, their needs range from emergency humanitarian assistance to interventions aimed at securing durable solutions. A significant proportion of IDPs would choose to integrate in the place they were displaced to, but their lack of security of tenure presents a major obstacle to this.

Since the formation of the Government of National Unity in February 2009, the government's approach to internal displacement has begun to improve. While previous governments did not acknowledge internal displacement in the country, in August 2009 the government participated in a rapid IDP assessment with the United Nations, and has called for a more comprehensive nationwide survey of IDPs to be conducted. This has not yet taken place and is one cause of the lack of information on the scale of continuing internal displacement. Meanwhile, under the new government, the access of humanitarian aid to IDPs has improved considerably.

Displacement occurred as a result of different government policies and actions. The two largest groups of IDPs are farm workers and their families who have been displaced as a result of losing their employment on farms which were seized and reallocated during the fast-track land reform programme, and people displaced as a result of evictions in Zimbabwe's towns and cities. Others were displaced by government campaigns against informal mine workers, and by politically-motivated violence. Of the last group, most were able to return home after the 2008 elections, while many of the first three groups have been able to find other durable solutions. There has been an increase in 2011 in initiatives by the government and civil society organisations to promote durable solutions, in which IDPs and host communities have actively participated.

In October 2009, President Mugabe was the second head of state to sign the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of IDPs in Africa (the Kampala Convention).

Background

In 2011, the international community noted overall improvements in Zimbabwe's humanitarian situation. These improvements came after a decade of violence and resulting internal displacement left large numbers of people in need of assistance. Political disturbances and economic contraction coupled with hyper-inflation and successive years of declining agricultural production and deteriorating basic social services have contributed to Zimbabwe being included in the list of countries with low human development in UNDP's Human Development Index. In 2011 it stood at 173rd place out of 187 countries (UNDP, 2011).

Parliamentary and presidential elections in 2008, which were marred by high levels of violence, led to a power-sharing agreement between the major political parties, the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the two factions of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), after mediation by South African President Mbeki.

The new Government of National Unity (GNU) adopted the Short Term Emergency Recovery Programme in 2009 and a multi-currency system in 2010, and the country experienced its first economic growth in over 20 years (The Fund for Peace, November 2011). In July 2011, the GNU launched the Medium Term Economic Plan for 2011-2015, marking the exit from emergency economic planning (Government of Zimbabwe, 7 July 2011).

According to the International Crisis Group, the 2008 Global Political Agreement (GPA) "offers a coherent framework for putting in place conditions for credible elections" (ICG, 27 April 2011). However, rising tensions ahead of the elections planned for 2012 have prompted President Robert Mugabe and Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai to call for tolerance (BBC, 11 November 2011). The centrepiece of the GPA is a process

to draft a new constitution to replace the 1979 Constitution adopted at independence, led by parliament under the direction of the Constitution Parliamentary Affairs (Select) Committee (COPAC). The process was running behind schedule in late 2011, but was expected to lead to a constitutional referendum between March and May 2012 (The Zimbabwean, 3 November 2011). According to a public survey run by Afrobarometer, popular awareness of the Constitution was impressively high in 2011 (75 per cent of respondents were aware of it), as was the perceived need for change, either through continuing amendments or a comprehensive reform (Afrobarometer, March 2011, p. 8).

Despite improvements in the economy, social indicators remain a cause for concern. Displacement is not the only cause of vulnerability but IDPs do remain among the most vulnerable groups in Zimbabwe (OCHA, 20 July 2011).

A broad distinction can be made between four different groups of IDPs, each of which is discussed in more detail below. First, the fast-track land reform programme which started in 2000 deprived many farm workers of their livelihoods and their homes on the commercial farms. Second, home demolitions and arbitrary evictions in Zimbabwe's towns and cities left people homeless. Third, illegal mine workers and their families were displaced from mining areas. And fourth, political violence in 2008 led to the displacement of political activists and also ordinary voters. Most of this last group were able to return to their homes after the 2008 elections.

IDP figures

Internal displacement in Zimbabwe is to a large extent an unrecognised phenomenon, but the new government has acknowledged it. It conducted a preliminary IDP assessment, albeit limited in scope, with the United Nations in August 2009 (Government of Zimbabwe and

UN, February 2010). The government has not yet released the results of the assessment. Publication of the report would help the government and its partners provide appropriate assistance to IDPs, and support their achievement of durable solutions. The joint assessment called for a joint quantitative survey of all IDPs in the country, to establish their number and locations. Such a survey would be an important step towards establishing the extent of the displacement crisis in Zimbabwe and it is still strongly supported by civil society organisations.

In the absence of a comprehensive survey the only IDP figures are estimates based on past sectoral needs assessments (ZimVAC 2007; OCHA, 10 December 2007, p.36). Estimating the total number of IDPs in Zimbabwe is made more difficult by the fact that a significant number have been displaced more than once, in different waves of displacement (see for example Solidarity Peace Trust, 30 July 2010), and many have settled, either locally, or elsewhere in the country or through return. An estimate for the current total number of IDPs can therefore not simply be obtained by adding up the estimates for the number of people displaced by each of the different causes of displacement. Moreover, up to four million Zimbabweans are estimated to have left the country for political and economic reasons, mostly to neighbouring countries (IOM, 19 January 2011): these refugees and migrants may have been internally displaced in Zimbabwe before they went abroad.

The fast-track land reform and resettlement programme

When Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980, the country inherited an inequitable and race-based land ownership pattern, with a few thousand white farmers owning 37 per cent of all land in Zimbabwe, while more than one million black families lived in overcrowded, arid “communal areas” allocated to Africans by the former colonial government (COHRE, September 2001, p.11; HRW, March 2002, p.2).

To address this imbalance, Zimbabwe’s government embarked on an ambitious land reform and resettlement programme, with the aim of resettling black families on land acquired from large-scale commercial farmers. However, by the end of 1999, after almost two decades in power, the government had resettled only just over 70,000 families, while about 4,000 large-scale commercial farmers still held 22 per cent of the land (COHRE, September 2001, pp.12, 15; HRW, March 2002, pp.6-7; Justice for Agriculture, May 2008, p.4; Tapera Knox Chitiyo, May 2000). The failure to meet the land reform programme’s ambitions was largely due to disagreement between the government of Zimbabwe and donor governments about funding for the programme, and to the government’s own inability to allocate funds for the acquisition of land for resettlement (Kay Muir-Leresche, August 1998, p.25).

In 2000, President Mugabe’s ZANU-PF government announced the fast-track land reform and resettlement programme (Government of Zimbabwe, April 2001 and 2006). Thousands of privately-owned farms were listed for compulsory acquisition. Because the compulsory acquisition of land was carried out so quickly and “short-circuiting legal procedures”, even those people who had been allocated plots on former commercial farms appeared in many cases to have little security of tenure and appeared vulnerable to evictions and impoverishment (HRW, 8 March 2002; Economist, 19 March 2008).

At the start of the fast-track land reform programme, it was estimated that the large-scale commercial farms employed between 300,000 and 350,000 permanent workers and a further 250,000 to 270,000 seasonal workers (IDMC, August 2008, p.32 and sources quoted therein). Farm workers, seasonal workers, and farm workers’ families together numbered an estimated two million people, and the vast majority lived on the commercial farms. By 2008, UNDP estimated that one million people (200,000 farm workers and

their families) had lost their homes and livelihoods since the start of the programme (UNDP, September 2008, pp.157-158).

Fewer than one in ten of these workers are still employed on the commercial farms, whether by the few remaining commercial farmers or by new owners. Others are still living on the farms where they used to be employed before the owner was evicted, but they are no longer employed there. As a consequence, they have no legal right to remain on the farms, and they are at risk of being evicted from their homes by the new farm owners.

The remaining group of farm workers have either been forcibly evicted from their homes on the farms in the course of the farm occupations, or they have been forced to leave because they could no longer survive in the absence of employment. They are among Zimbabwe's most vulnerable people, and very few of them have managed to put their lives back on a sustainable basis. Some have moved to live on other farms, where their presence is condoned but not secure, while others are squatting on government-owned land (IDMC, August 2008). Some have moved to the towns and cities, where they have joined the urban poor, and in many cases have been displaced again as a result of arbitrary evictions. Many of the former farm workers who went to work in the mining areas have also fallen victim to evictions and home demolitions by the government.

Displaced farm workers who went to the rural areas from which they or their ancestors originated have not necessarily fared much better. Some have been allocated small plots of land by their chief, but not everyone has been helped in this way. Sometimes chiefs have not been able to allocate land to displaced farm workers, because of the overcrowding in Zimbabwe's communal areas and the resulting shortages of land.

The 2008 Global Political Agreement provides for a comprehensive land audit (Article 5.9), but to date no progress has been made. In March 2010 the International Crisis Group stated that a land audit would be "an attempt to lay the groundwork for addressing this most sensitive reform area, including multiple farm ownership, production by new farmers, compensation for former white commercial farmers and an end to farm invasions" (ICG, 3 March 2010, p.3).

Arbitrary evictions in urban areas

Zimbabwe has for many years faced a shortage of housing for people on low incomes. In 1995, the government stated that waiting lists for accommodation indicated a shortage of 600,000 housing units nationwide (UN Economic and Social Council, 25 September 1995, paras.100-101). As a consequence, people were forced to build makeshift structures, often referred to as "backyard extensions" in the yards of existing houses. While these did not comply with the building regulations, and no urban planning permission was given for these informal homes, local authorities often gave their explicit or tacit approval, and many families lived there undisturbed by the authorities for many years (Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, June 2005, p.7).

In May 2005 the government launched Operation Murambatsvina ("drive out the filth"), the official aim of which was to halt and reverse a process of disorderly and unregulated urbanisation. Well over 100,000 informal homes were destroyed in the course of a few weeks; by July 2005 the UN estimated that approximately 570,000 people had been made homeless by the operation (UN, 18 July 2005, pp.32-34).

Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle ("for a better life") was launched five weeks after Operation Murambatsvina to re-house the victims of the mass forced evictions. According to Amnesty International, under Operation Garikai the government provided a small proportion of those

displaced either with houses that were not fully constructed or with unserviced plots of land, on which they were permitted to build houses without receiving any further government assistance. In 2011, the majority of those who had received plots of land were still living in inadequate shelter (Amnesty International, 5 October 2011).

Urban evictions have continued ever since Operation Murambatsvina, although not on the same scale (Amnesty International, 22 July 2009 and 30 September 2010; Solidarity Peace Trust, 30 July 2010; Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, 25 August 2010 and 30 August 2010). Since 2005, informal structures have reappeared in many towns and cities, although not on the same scale as before then.

Arbitrary evictions in mining areas

Many former farm workers who had been deprived of their livelihoods by the fast-track land reform programme turned to informal gold panning as their only alternative source of income. Similarly, petty traders who had been deprived of their market stalls in 2005 also turned to the mines for alternative livelihoods. In November 2006, following the discovery of diamonds in the Chiadzwa area of Marange district, the government of Zimbabwe launched yet another eviction programme, Operation Chikorokoza Chapera ("no illegal panning"), in the course of which the homes of thousands of informal miners were destroyed (IRIN, 1 May 2008; HRW, June 2009, p.19).

Political violence

In the period leading up to the second round of the presidential elections in 2008, tens of thousands of people were forced to flee their homes as a result of widespread violence (Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, 5 May 2008; HRW, 25 April 2008 and June 2008; BBC, 12 June 2008; IRIN, 9 July 2008). Precise figures are not available: in the circumstances that prevailed at the time, it was impossible to survey the numbers of people affected by the violence.

Politically-motivated violence has continued to displace people since the formation of the GNU in February 2009, albeit on a lower scale.

National and international responses

Since 2009 the government's position has evolved, as shown by the 2009 joint IDP assessment and by the fact that the Consolidated Appeal for 2010 referred openly to IDPs for the first time (Government of Zimbabwe and UN, February 2010; OCHA, 30 November 2009). In October 2009, at a special summit of the African Union (AU) in Kampala, President Mugabe was one of five heads of state to sign the AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of IDPs in Africa (also known as the Kampala Convention). The Convention will come into force once it has been ratified by 15 AU member states. Zimbabwe has not yet ratified the Convention; however, President Mugabe's signing of the Convention must be taken as an important indication of Zimbabwe's intent to be bound by it.

While the cluster approach was formally adopted in Zimbabwe in February 2008, it was not until 2009, after the formation of the GNU, that a protection cluster was established under the leadership of UNHCR. A particular feature of this cluster in Zimbabwe is that it includes an IDP sub-cluster.

In 2010, government agencies and officials were working increasingly closely with the humanitarian clusters, with representatives of relevant line ministries attending cluster meetings and participating in the identification of cluster or sector needs, priorities, objectives and response plans (OCHA, 30 November 2010).

In 2011, the protection cluster and the IDP sub-cluster formally endorsed the Framework for Resettlement as a Durable Solution to Internal Displacement, in line with the Guiding Principles

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on Internal Displacement, the IASC Framework for Durable Solutions and the Kampala Convention. Emphasis is placed on voluntariness, security of tenure and livelihoods opportunities, as well as coordination with the authorities and participation of both internally displaced and host communities (OCHA, 20 July 2011).

Increasingly, the concept of community-based planning is used by the government and development and humanitarian partners to bring displaced and host communities together. All groups in a certain community, including IDPs, work together in identifying durable solutions and a common development plan (IOM, 2011).

There is a growing recognition in Zimbabwe that the search for durable solutions for IDPs must be made a priority. This requires an investment in recovery and development interventions as well as humanitarian assistance. However, a number of obstacles stand in the way of this transition. First, while there are many programmes and frameworks aimed at recovery and development in Zimbabwe (including the Short Term Economic Recovery Programme (STERP); the Multi Donor Trust Fund (MDTF), administered by the World Bank; and the Zimbabwe UN Development Assistance Framework (ZUNDAF), none of these make specific reference to the situation of IDPs and their particular needs in terms of recovery and development interventions.

Humanitarian access

The Global Political Agreement between ZANU-PF and the two MDC factions provided that “all displaced persons shall be entitled to humanitarian and food assistance to enable them to return and settle in their original homes and that social welfare organisations shall be allowed to render such assistance as might be required” (ZANU-PF and the two MDC Formations, 15 September 2008, art. 16(4)(c)).

Humanitarian access to vulnerable communities, including IDPs, has increased in recent years as different line ministries participated in cluster coordination mechanisms (OCHA, 30 November 2011).

Note: This is a summary of IDMC’s internal displacement profile on Zimbabwe. The full profile is available online [here](#).

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About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) was established by the Norwegian Refugee Council in 1998, upon the request of the United Nations, to set up a global database on internal displacement. A decade later, IDMC remains the leading source of information and analysis on internal displacement caused by conflict and violence worldwide.

IDMC aims to support better international and national responses to situations of internal displacement and respect for the rights of internally displaced people (IDPs), who are often among the world's most vulnerable people. It also aims to promote durable solutions for IDPs, through return, local integration or settlement elsewhere in the country.

IDMC's main activities include:

- Monitoring and reporting on internal displacement caused by conflict, generalised violence and violations of human rights;
- Researching, analysing and advocating for the rights of IDPs;
- Training and strengthening capacities on the protection of IDPs;
- Contributing to the development of standards and guidance on protecting and assisting IDPs.

For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at www.internal-displacement.org

Contact:

Marzia Montemurro

Head of Africa and Americas Department

Mobile: +41227990705

Email: marzia.montemurro@nrc.ch

IDMC

Norwegian Refugee Council

Chemin de Balexert 7-9

1219 Geneva, Switzerland

www.internal-displacement.org

Tel: +41 (0)22 799 0700

Fax: +41 (0)22 799 0701