



# **PROFILE OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT : ZIMBABWE**

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# COUNTRY PROFILE

## Zimbabwe: A hidden displacement crisis

### Executive Summary

*Internal displacement in Zimbabwe – once the second richest country in sub-Saharan Africa – has been caused by various internal and external factors that have since the late 1990s assured the country's severe economic and social decline. Population movements have become an increasingly visible and common reality against a backdrop of political violence and a critical humanitarian situation. The country has repeatedly been on the verge of famine due to regional drought and the repercussions of an aggressive land reform programme combined with restrictive food importation policies. Almost half the 11.6 million population are dependent on food aid, and in 2003 the HIV/AIDS pandemic killed an estimated 3,300 people each week (UN, April 2004). Unemployment is at more than 60 per cent. While economic hardship has led to new movement patterns, large numbers of people have also been forced on the move because of political violence and state-sponsored human rights violations. These are "internally displaced people" within the definition of the UN Guiding Principles, and are estimated to number up to 150,000.*

*Political violence causing internal displacement in Zimbabwe has to a large extent been linked to the government's "fast track" land reform programme. This began in 2000 and was a bid by the government to speed up its land redistribution programme, aimed at confiscating land from white farm owners and their workers and giving it to thousands of landless black families. The process has been widely marked by violence, inefficiency and corruption. Because of the politically sensitive nature of the land reform programme, the government of Zimbabwe appears to deny that there is a situation of internal displacement in the country, and has restricted humanitarian access to former farm workers – resulting in a serious lack of information on both numbers and needs of this highly vulnerable group. A draft UN IDP strategy for Zimbabwe (September 2003) could not be finalised because it was never approved by the government, and even in the revised UN Consolidated Appeals Process for Zimbabwe (April 2004) there is no direct reference to IDPs.*

*At the end of 2003 the U.S. Committee for Refugees estimated that more than 100,000 people were internally displaced in Zimbabwe (150,000 fled their homes during the year, but one third subsequently returned). One local observer estimated in June 2003 that if a narrow definition of internal displacement were applied, a realistic estimate would be between 50,000 and 100,000 IDPs caused by the land reform and/or the political violence.*

*In August 2003 about 540 commercial farms remained fully operational, out of some 3,800 when the land invasions began in 2000, and more than 252,000 farm workers may have lost their jobs (CFU, October 2003). Although many farm workers have remained on the farms even after farming activities stopped and many have resettled as subsistence farmers in other areas, a large number have become internally displaced – especially the most vulnerable. Although the takeover of the commercial farms was officially completed by the end of 2002, spontaneous farm occupations were still taking place in late 2003. In 2004 the occupations appear to have abated, although there have been continuing reports of politically-motivated violence against workers on farms owned by opposition politicians.*

*With regard to victims of political violence not related to the land reform, there has since 2000 been continuous displacement of political activists on an individual basis. Displacement appears to have peaked during the election periods, and as many as 50,000 were reported to have been temporarily displaced when presidential elections were held in March 2002 (USCR, 2003). As with displaced farm workers, there is as yet no clear picture of numbers, humanitarian needs and the duration of displacement, but it is evident that physical protection is a major concern in the context of the continued state-sponsored violence. The violent response by the ruling party and the government towards the "stay-away/mass protest" demonstrations*

*organised by the MDC opposition in March and June 2003 have in fact been described as worse than during the 2002 elections (CZC, June 2003, p2).*

*In terms of humanitarian response, UN operations have been particularly constrained by the difficult political environment. Food aid has become highly politicised in Zimbabwe, with the government-run Grain Marketing Board (GMB) and WFP effectively running two separate systems. Eligibility for GMB food has in some cases depended on political affiliation. At the same time, donors have been reluctant to support assistance in the commercial farming areas for fear of legitimising the land reform process. As a result, many ex-commercial farmers – both those remaining on the farms and those displaced and unable to resettle in communal areas (as well as many farmers resettled on unworkable land) – have largely been excluded from aid. What little humanitarian assistance there is targeting IDPs in Zimbabwe – usually as part of “vulnerable groups” – has mainly been provided by national NGOs and ICRC.*

*It is crucial that both the government and the humanitarian community provide not only short-term humanitarian assistance to IDPs in Zimbabwe, but also long-term solutions that build on existing coping strategies, focusing on regularising access to land, working conditions on the resettled commercial farms, job security and social services. Special attention must be given to the most vulnerable groups – such as the growing orphan population – who no longer have the safety nets that many of the commercial farms once offered.*

### **People displaced by political violence**

A climate of fear has emerged in Zimbabwe since the beginning of 2000 when political opposition to the ruling ZANU-PF party became more articulate during a constitutional referendum and subsequent parliamentary elections. These resulted in the new opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) gaining nearly half of the parliamentary seats. Both MDC politicians and supporters have since then been exposed to systematic threats, intimidation and direct violence.

The intensity of the political violence and displacement has been closely linked to the elections and the mass protests of the opposition (e.g. HRF, December 2002). After the 2000 elections there have been presidential elections (March 2002), local government elections (September 2002), and subsequent by-elections for parliamentary seats (e.g. 29-30 March 2003). During the first half of 2003 the opposition organised two major “stay away” demonstrations (18-19 March and 26 June 2003), both of which triggered violent reactions by the ruling party.

### **Dynamics of displacement**

A major perpetrator of violence has been the youth militias affiliated with the ruling ZANU-PF party, often directed by militant war veterans from the independence struggle in the 1970s. Graduates of a national youth training programme, known locally as the “Green Bombers”, have led attacks on opposition party supporters and civil society activists (USIP, 21 August 2003). Much of the militia violence has taken place in rural areas. However, since the beginning of 2003 it appears that the capital Harare and its suburbs (many known as opposition strongholds), as well as other major cities have become the focus for the ruling party's campaign to suppress the opposition, and the presence of youth militias has become more visible in urban areas. Since repressive legislation – including the draconian Public Order and Security Act – was introduced in 2002, the police and army personnel have played a more direct role as perpetrators of the violence (HRW, 6 June 2003). Following the MDC-organised stay-away in March 2003, military personnel and members of the police Law and Order Section reportedly perpetrated a series of attacks against MDC party activists and members of parliament. This militarisation has “contributed to deteriorating human rights conditions in the country, as has the increasing impunity demonstrated by non-state actors like the youth militia and war veterans” (USIP, 21 August 2003).

A common pattern has been that opposition supporters victimised by the state security forces and militias affiliated with the ruling party have sought shelter in the capital Harare, and, to a lesser extent, in other urban areas. Political exile abroad appears not have been an option for the majority of the displaced opposition supporters.

Victims of state brutality have often been beaten, temporarily detained, and in many cases their property has been looted and their houses burned, either before or after they have managed to flee. The practical organisation of both the March 2002 and September 2002 elections exposed active MDC candidates and supporters. The militias have used public lists of polling agents when seeking out targets for their violent campaigns.

This state-sponsored violence intensified prior to the presidential elections in March 2002. Local human rights observers reported that political violence, including rape and systematic torture, remained at a high level throughout 2003 and 2004 (CZC, June 2003; HRW, 6 June 2003; HRF, 2 April 2004). It has been claimed that one of the motives behind forced displacement prior to these elections was to keep opposition supporters away from their home districts and thus hinder their possibility of voting (Zimrights, 6 September 2002), and it has been reported that about half of the opposition MDC candidates for the local elections withdrew because of violence and intimidation (AI, 11 September 2002). Sexual violence, rape in particular, has been reported to be increasingly associated with political violence (Amani Trust, 28 August 2002). Because of the nature of such violence, the majority of individual cases are never reported (HRF, December 2002, p38).

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum documents in detail reported cases of political violence and forced displacement, and its reports show that people associated with the opposition continued to be displaced by ZANU-PF youths in 2004 (e.g. HRF, 28 July 2004).

Teachers in rural areas have been particularly targeted. Between January 2001 and June 2002 as many as 238 cases of human rights abuses against teachers were systematically documented, with nearly half having been victims of torture or armed assault (AI, June 2002, p29; HRF, 20 September 2002).

The security forces have intensified their raids in Harare's residential areas and the youth militias are increasingly present in urban areas. This has caused increased intra-city displacement, i.e. politically persecuted activists fleeing from one area to seek shelter in another area.

### **How many displaced because of political violence?**

Political violence in Zimbabwe is widespread and the perpetrators, especially the youth militias, have gradually become institutionalised into a more formal structure for recruitment and training, establishing bases throughout the country. There are no opposition held areas in Zimbabwe out of reach of the militias. Because of the present political situation and the presence of security forces, state intelligence agents and youth militias in Harare and other major cities, those displaced by political violence have to keep a low profile and it is as such not possible to undertake any IDP registration. There has not been any visible mass movement of people or concentration of IDPs in camp-like settlements.

The existing displacement patterns make it difficult to quantify the number of people affected. However, available information gives some indication of the gravity of the situation. USCR reported that as many as 50,000 people had to temporarily flee their homes because of the violence related to the March 2002 elections (USCR, 2003). It was reported in May 2002 that 1,000 displaced had been sheltered in "safe-houses" run by the NGO Amani Trust, and that about 20 new victims were assisted per day before these shelter facilities were closed down (OCHA, 26 May 2002, p6).

While there is a continuous, but apparently diminishing, flow of newly displaced people from outside Harare, a certain number of those who were displaced by mid-2002 have since then been able to return to the rural areas where the situation has stabilised somewhat. For example, after being displaced from rural areas some teachers sought refuge in Harare for a period, and thereafter found new teaching posts in other areas of the country where political persecution is less intense. There has also been an exodus of health personnel due to the violence as well as economic hardship. Many of this group have migrated to other countries where there are better employment opportunities.

### **Displacement caused by the “fast track land reform”**

Most observers agree that there was a genuine need for land reform in Zimbabwe because of the skewed distribution of the most fertile farmland that took place during the colonial era. However, previous attempts to undertake land distribution in an orderly manner were by the end-1990s overtaken by political events and put on a “fast track” by the government without regard for the negative consequences in terms of national food security and the farm worker population.

### **Outline of the accelerated land reform 2000-2004**

Land redistribution has been high on the agenda since independence in 1980 when a total of 15.5 million hectares of land was in the hands of farmers of European descent, who dominated the large-scale commercial farming sector. Only about 3.5 million hectares of this land were redistributed between 1980 and 1997. In June 1998 the government set a target for Phase II of its land-reform programme to redistribute an additional 5 million hectares of land within six years. However, two years later only about 3 per cent of this target had been reached. In mid-2000 the government embarked on a “Fast Track” implementation of the programme aimed at distributing 9 million hectares before end-2001 by radically expanding the list of land to be acquired from white farmers (UNDP, January 2002, pp. 4-7). In May 2002 the government decided that about 2,900 commercial farmers should cease all farming activities and leave their farms within three months (IRIN, 24 June 2002).

There is some uncertainty about the total number of commercial farms operating in Zimbabwe when the “fast track” reform was initiated in 2000. By June 2000 government figures suggest that at least 5,500 commercial farms were considered to be included in the land reform (UNDP, January 2002, table2). The Commercial Farmers’ Union had at the same time 3,760 members, which were managing nearly 80 per cent of the large scale commercial farming sector. As of August 2003 only 543 of these farms were fully operational (CFU, October 2003). The outputs during the 2002/2003 agricultural season from the remaining large-scale commercial farms was only about 10 per cent compared to what was produced during the 1990s (FAO/WFP, 19 June 2003, p1). On the other hand, the expropriated land had been redistributed to some 200,000 small scale farmers and some 28,000 farm plots had been allocated for new commercial farmers (FAO/WFP, 19 June 2003, table 2).

<b>Commercial Farmers’ Union membership data as at 31 October 2003</b>
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	Mash West	Mash Central	Mash East	Manical and	Masvin go	Matabele land	Midlands	TOTAL
No of members as at year 2000	1012	560	738	378	346	489	237	3760
No of members as at Aug 2003	430	288	367	206	249	282	171	1893
Fully operational	67	20	125	140	52	72	67	543
Partially operational	136	118	46	86	131	134	72	723
Not operational but on farm	52	10	15	18	26	4	7	132
Off farms	503	343	181	19	110	72	25	1253

Source: Commercial Farmers Union Report, October 2003.

By mid-2002 the humanitarian community feared that the politically motivated land acquisitions would cause a mass exodus of the farm worker population and that several hundred thousand people would end up in a situation of internal displacement. Although it appears that a less dramatic situation materialised in terms of forced displacement, the majority of the ex-farm workers have been facing a very serious humanitarian situation caused by lack of access to land, lack of employment opportunities and lack of access to food aid (largely for political reasons). This also characterises the situation facing those who have been allowed to remain in the farm workers' compounds. The social safety net that the commercial farms provided has more or less disappeared. This has had an especially detrimental impact on the most vulnerable sections of the farm workers population, i.e. the elderly, female-headed households, orphans and others without resources to resettle (e.g. HIV/AIDS victims).

The accelerated land reform process has been deeply politicised as the commercial farmers and the farm workers have been considered supporters of the MDC opposition, and therefore "legitimate targets" by the ruling party. Violent farm occupations led by war veterans and ZANU-PF militias became a hallmark of the process between the beginning of 2000 and mid-2002. This affected not only farms officially listed for acquisition, but also several hundred non-listed farms (UNDP, January 2002, p17).

During the first half of 2002, farm workers increasingly became victims of organised political violence. The media regularly carried stories of farm workers brutally forced to leave the farms and seek shelter in makeshift camps, in the bush or drift to urban areas (Amani Trust, 31 May 2002; BBC, 10 July 2002). Serious acts of violence against farm owners and the farm workers have been documented (e.g. Amani Trust, 31 May 2002; AI, June 2002, HRF, August 2002, HRW, March 2002). Already by June 2000 it was reported that as many as 26 farm workers had been killed and 1,600 assaulted when farms were forcefully occupied (HRW, March 2002, p19). Many of the workers on the farms affected by these occupations had no other choice than to flee as the violence, intimidation and undermining of their livelihoods became unbearable.

"At the very least, the government has condoned these farm invasions by its failure to protect and uphold the rights of the affected farmers, to end the violence and to bring the perpetrators to justice. In many cases, these invasions resulted in the forced eviction of farm owners and farm workers from their homes in violation of due process. These acts and omissions constitute flagrant violations of the Constitution of Zimbabwe and of internationally recognized human rights, including the rights to property, life, dignity, freedom of movement, adequate housing, education and freedom of association." (COHRE, September 2001, p46)

After mid-2002 there appears to have been a shift in the government's policy, allowing many ex-farm workers to remain in the farm compounds, although mostly without access to land. In general, the physical threats that farm workers were exposed to during the 2000-2002 period appears to be less intense since mid-2002. The youth militias are still present but appear to be less aggressively involved in enforcing the closure of the farms. There have also been systematic efforts to politically co-opt farm workers, which may explain why some – still disproportionately few – farm workers have been allocated land under the land reform.

Although the pattern outlined above illustrates the situation in large parts of Zimbabwe, there are regional differences with regard to the level of violence associated with the farm occupations. Local human rights observers reported in September 2002 that displacement caused by political violence was especially serious in the Manicaland province, where MDC supporters had been forced to seek refuge in major cities after being "chased away from their homes" by the police and ZANU-PF supporters (Zimrights, 6 September 2002). The three Mashonaland provinces have been worst affected in terms of farm closures. Anecdotal information suggests that Mashonaland Central, which is dominated by ZANU-PF hardliners, has one of the highest proportions of displaced farm workers.

Despite the official end of the fast-track land reform programme, white-owned farms have continued to be listed for compulsory acquisition. Further farm evictions were reported in 2003, and in some cases farmers were reportedly attacked by settlers or gangs (AFP, 28 August 2003; HRF, 20 August 2003). In 2004

continuing violence by ZANU-PF supporters was reported to be commonplace against workers on farms owned by MDC politicians – such as Charleswood in Manicaland province (HRF, 2 April 2004).

A further indictment of the manner in which land reform has been implemented is the fact that significant numbers of resettled farmers – the supposed beneficiaries of the scheme – have been returning to their original homes due largely to difficult living conditions (IRIN, 4 September 2003) and large tracts of commercial farmland are now lying fallow (IRIN, 31 May 2004). Resettled farmers have in some areas been in desperate need of humanitarian aid, but there appears to have been reluctance on the part of donors to assist these communities as this might seem to give tacit approval to the land reform exercise (IRIN, 18 November 2003). In some cases, resettled farmers have themselves been evicted from farms which they had occupied since 2000 in order to make way for senior figures within the ruling ZANU-PF party (IRIN, 31 May 2004).

### **How many farm workers are affected by the accelerated land reform?**

While various reports cite numbers of farm workers who have lost their jobs, it remains unclear exactly how many are in fact internally displaced.

At the outset of the present crisis in 1999 the large-scale commercial farms in Zimbabwe employed, according to a government survey, about 322,000 farm workers – about half of these on a permanent basis (MPSLSW, September 2001, table 2). Other sources have indicated that as many as 460,000 were permanently employed (FCTZ, May 2002, p6). Based on estimates of an average household including 4-5 people, the total farm worker population may have amounted to between 1.5 and 2 million people.

The UN reported in July 2002 that 270,000 commercial farm workers had already lost their jobs and USAID reported in August 2002 that “more than 100,000 farm workers” had been displaced. During the subsequent months there was a mass closure of farms as the government implemented its decision to acquire most of the remaining commercial farms. During the period August-September 2002 a joint UN, NGO and government committee estimated that more than half a million farm workers and their dependants had been affected by the intensified closing of farms (ZimVAC, 20 December 2002, p21). Considering that only 10-20 per cent of the old commercial farms were still operating by the beginning of 2003, a reasonable estimate is that the “fast track” land reform has affected at least one million people whose livelihoods were based on the incomes and other resources received from the commercial farms. A local NGO reported in February 2003 that as many as 900,000 people had been pushed out of their homes by the fast-track land reform (ZCDT, February 2003, p3). In July 2004, Refugees International cited the figure of 150,000 former farm workers internally displaced (RI, 23 July 2004)

About 88 per cent of the farm workers were employed on farms located in the three Mashonaland provinces and Manicaland. As more than 70 per cent of the commercial farms in the Mashonaland provinces have closed down, it is reasonable to believe that these areas have a particularly high number of displaced farm workers. On the other hand, Manicaland has seen only about 35 per cent of the commercial farms closed and is apparently facing a less dramatic displacement situation – although it has in the past often been the centre of political violence (SC-UK, 31 May 2001, p.6; CFU, February 2003).

Government figures showed that by the beginning of 2004 less than one per cent of former farm workers had been resettled as part of the fast-track programme. The majority migrated to urban settlements or their rural communal areas, turned to gold panning or remained in the area, offering their labour to the new farmers (IRIN, 6 February 2004).



### **Coping strategies of affected farm workers**

While some farm workers have not been allowed time to prepare for their departure when being evicted from their homes on the commercial farms, others have been in a position to make their own choice whether to remain in the commercial farming areas or try to resettle elsewhere. However, options have been limited and opportunities for permanent employment substantially reduced. The new settlers in the commercial farming areas are only offering the original farm workers limited employment, often on a seasonal basis. Few workers have benefited from the re-distribution of the land acquired from the commercial farmers. The coping strategies can be summarised as follows:

- Remaining on the farm with access to paid employment/land
- Remaining on the farm but with no access to land and only ad-hoc opportunities for employment
- Being forced into a situation of internal displacement
- Long-term resettlement

#### ***Remaining on the farm with access to paid employment/land***

By the end of 2002 it was estimated that only some 100,000 farm workers remained employed by commercial farms still operating (FCTZ, May 2003, p.5). There is reason to believe that by mid-2003 this number had dropped to some 60,000-80,000. Although some 28,000 larger plots designated for commercial farming (i.e. the “A2” farms) had been allocated by the beginning of 2003, it appears that a large share of these new farmers have not been in a position to fully utilise the allocated land and offer employment at the same level as the former commercial farming sector (FAO/WFP, 19 June 2003, p6). In fact, it has been reported that only 10 per cent of the new “A2” farms have absorbed some of the original workforce (FCTZ, May 2003, pp.30, 42).

In addition, a certain number of workers have been allowed to remain in their farm compounds and have been given access to land to grow their own food. One survey of commercial farms in three districts in Mashonaland West indicates that about one-third of the remaining farm workers had access to small plots of arable land (ZCDT, February 2003, p.19). A small number of ex-farm workers have been allocated land under the ongoing land reform programme (e.g. Parliament, 16 May 2003, p4).

A preliminary estimate based on available information is that about one-quarter of the original farm worker population remain in their homes and are in a position to sustain themselves through a combination of paid employment in the commercial farming sector and some agricultural activity on their own.

However, with a chronic shortage of agricultural inputs and an inflation rate of 600 per cent (at the beginning of 2004) production has been drastically reduced and commercial farmers remaining on their land have struggled to avoid total collapse (AFP, 6 August 2003). To make matters worse, the government passed a new law in December 2003 allowing for compulsory acquisition of farm equipment (IRIN, 18 December 2003).

#### ***Remaining on the farm but with no access to land and only ad-hoc opportunities for employment***

Many farm workers appear hesitant to leave their homes on the farm compound even if there are no job opportunities or access to land. As the new settlers in the commercial sector are in general not offering the farm workers permanent employment, a new pattern is that the farm workers remaining in the former

commercial farming areas are only offered ad-hoc jobs following the seasonal demand for labour input (ZCDT, February 2003, p. 4; FCTZ, May 2003, pp. 44-45). To some extent the remaining farm workers serve the needs of the new settlers to have flexible access to cheap labour. The working conditions offered by the new employers have been reported to be poor, with workers being fired arbitrarily when getting sick, a lack of holidays and lack of consideration for special needs of female workers (e.g. Parliament, 16 May 2003, pp.7, 8).

According to a July 2004 report by Refugees International, many of the new settlers refuse or cannot pay the minimum wage to farm workers. Farm workers accuse the settlers of using intimidation, hunger and other methods to coerce them into working for them in “slave labour” conditions. RI asserts that many of these farm workers are “internally trapped” rather than “internally displaced”, as they cannot afford to leave the farms or are sometimes trapped there by government forces.

However, houses in the farm worker compounds are in many cases of a higher standard than those found in poor rural settlements. Access to housing covers at least one fundamental need, and, in the absence of direct physical threats, it appears that many farm workers see leaving their house as a last resort. There have been reports of conflicts with new settlers who have wanted to acquire the housing from the former farm workers (FCTZ, May 2003, p.45 & Parliament, 16 May 2003, pp. 4, 10, 12).

There have also been reports of former farm workers who refused to do contract work being chased away by the new farmers, some of whom viewed the displaced farm workers as enemies, since they were generally perceived to have been on the side of white farmers who had resisted land reform. Some former farm labourers have reportedly become engaged in illegal activities such as gold panning, gambling and prostitution in order to make ends meet (IRIN, 6 February 2004).

### ***Being forced into a situation of internal displacement***

Available information suggests that at least 50 per cent of farm workers have over the past three years voluntarily left or been forced to flee their homes on the farm compounds where they worked. During the first two years of the “fast track” land reform it appears that in many cases the war veterans/youth militias who spontaneously occupied the farms made arbitrary decisions about whether or not to evict the farm workers. Since mid-2002, when the government ordered some 2,900 commercial farmers to leave their farms, the displacement of farm workers appears to have been less random. One local organisation has observed a pattern whereby farm workers become displaced from farms with the most fertile land and best-developed infrastructure, while workers on less prosperous farms are allowed to remain in their compounds (ZCDT, February 2003, p3).

There was an apparent shift in government policy during the second half of 2002 whereby farm workers were no longer to be forcefully removed from farms where they had worked. This appears to be confirmed by a survey in February 2003 of three districts that showed direct evictions as the reason for leaving in about one-third of the cases, while lost employment apparently was a greater push factor (ZCDT, February 2003, p10). However, local media carried regular reports of continued violent occupations of farms and farm workers being forced to leave during the first half of 2003.

It should be noted that not all the farm workers who have been forced to leave their homes can be considered internally displaced. As shown in the next section, many have been able to resettle voluntarily into communal areas or other areas where they have built houses and started farming activities.

It appears that internal displacement has especially affected the most vulnerable segment of the farm worker population – in particular people who are unattractive labour for the new farmers and who lack the resources required to find long-term resettlement opportunities (e.g. Parliament, 16 May 2003, p10).

Involuntary displacement has thus especially affected the elderly, female headed households, orphans and people in poor health (e.g. HIV/AIDS victims).

Many of those who are forced to leave their homes on the farms and who are unable to resettle elsewhere appear to remain in the surrounding area. One observer suggests this means around a 50km radius. They are then left seeking temporary shelter in peri-urban areas, drifting from farm to farm, trying to make an income through seasonal work or seeking access to assistance offered by some local NGOs. Although some of the ex-farm workers have in the past been sheltered by local organisations in Harare (Amani Trust, 31 May 2002), there is nothing to suggest any major rural-urban movements of the displaced. A main reason for this may be that urban areas presently offer more limited coping mechanisms than rural areas because of the economic decline and hyper-inflation.

- **Ex-farm workers with foreign roots**

About one fifth of the former farm workers have ancestral roots in countries outside Zimbabwe, in particular Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia. A large number of these were born in Zimbabwe of parents who were recruited by the commercial farmers several decades ago. This group has fewer coping mechanisms available than those with Zimbabwean origin who are more likely to be able to resettle in communal areas or be supported by extended community networks. These people often lack local support structures and do not have traditional leaders who could promote their needs e.g. negotiate access to land. It is reasonable to believe that there is a disproportionately high presence of this category of ex-farm workers among those that remain internally displaced.

It appears that the majority have become detached from their countries of origin, and their children neither speak the vernacular languages nor have any relationship with the areas/tribes that their parents and grandparents originally came from. A government survey in 2001 showed that only between four and ten per cent of this group wished to be repatriated to their home of origin (MPSLSW, September 2001, p9). The government has in fact previously recognised that farm workers who entered Zimbabwe during the federation period (1953-1963) should together with their children be entitled to citizenship (Amanor-Wilks, 12 February 2000). At the beginning of 2004 the government proposed a bill to amend the Citizenship of Zimbabwe Act that would effectively benefit many commercial farm workers of foreign descent by granting them and their families Zimbabwean citizenship (UN RRU, 13 January 2004).

### *Long-term resettlement*

As a preliminary estimate, about one-third of the farm workers may have been able to find opportunities for long-term resettlement after leaving the farms where they originally worked. A systematic survey is needed to establish more accurately how many have succeeded in this and to what extent their resettlement can be considered sustainable.

The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement clearly state that internally displaced persons who have returned or resettled shall be protected against discrimination as a result of having been displaced, shall have the right to participate fully and equally in public affairs, and have equal access to public services. Furthermore, competent authorities have a duty and responsibility to assist returned or resettled internally displaced persons recover or receive compensation for property and possessions left behind or of which they were dispossessed upon displacement (Principle 29).

- **Becoming independent farmers under the accelerated land reform program**

A survey in 2001 showed that as many as 53 per cent of the farm workers would choose to start farming on their own if they had an opportunity to benefit from the land reform programme (MPSLSW, September

2001, p15). However, the farm worker population has in general been approached in a hostile manner by the government as they have been associated with supporters of the opposition, and have mostly been excluded from land redistribution under the “fast track” system. Government figures from October 2001 showed that farm workers then represented only 1.7 per cent of the beneficiaries of re-distributed land (UNDP, January 2002, p.36). A more recent survey indicates that this had increased to some 5 per cent by the end of 2002 (FCTZ, May 2003, p25). One reason for this slight improvement may be that the issue of political affiliation has become less predominant as time has passed after the last elections, as well as some farm workers being allocated land as a reward for expressing support to the ruling party.

- **Moving to other farms with employment opportunities**

A survey of movement patterns in three districts in February 2003 found that a large share (i.e. 43 per cent) of people living on the surveyed farms had in fact initially been displaced from other farms (ZCDT, February 2002, p9). It confirms an observation made by many humanitarian actors consulted in June 2003, that many of the displaced farm workers have not moved long distances but drifted to farms in the vicinity that could offer some employment. However, employment is scarce and the extent to which people falling within this category should be considered resettled or IDPs living in temporary shelters needs to be further investigated.

- **Moving to communal areas**

This has been an option primarily available to the farm workers who kept their ties with their tribe/community in the communal areas where they used to live. Some also kept their traditional homes (i.e. their “kumusha”), while working on the commercial farms on a seasonal basis. One survey found that in the Mashonaland provinces approximately 40 per cent of the farm workers had maintained such traditional homes; while more than half of those working in the Matabeleland South and three-quarters of those in the Midlands had this option for return (SC-UK, 31 May 2001, p.6). In 2002 a national survey indicated that return to communal areas would be an option for about 27 per cent of the farm workers (FCTZ, May 2003, p.61). A 2002 survey of Seke district by Save the Children UK showed that farmers who were paid a lump sum of cash as a resettlement package were also much more likely to leave the farms and move to communal areas, as they were more able to set up a home and start farming activities (SC UK, 2002).

- **Moving to informal settlements on state-owned land**

Of those farm workers who left the commercial farms, and who do not have the opportunity to reintegrate in communal areas or be allocated land under the “land reform”, there is a distinction between those who have ended up in a situation of internal displacement and those who have been able to resettle in other areas where they have access to land or employment. An unknown number of ex-farm workers have resettled on state-owned land that is neither categorised as “commercial” nor “communal”. Entitlement to use the land is therefore not regularised and people cannot be considered permanently resettled before the authorities make these settlements “official”. It is not known how many of the ex-farm workers have been able to resettle in such areas, but it appears that especially during 2000 and 2001 several thousand people from the farm worker populations gradually resettled in these areas (e.g. Maratos in the Concession area of Mashonaland Central, and Chihwiti and Gambuli in Mashonaland West). In September 2001 it was estimated that as many as 100 people each week resettled in the Chihwiti area (SCF/FCTZ, 5 October 2001, p1), and an assessment of both the Chihwiti and Gambuli areas in September 2002 indicated that approximately 6,000 of the residents had resettled from the commercial farms (FCTZ, September 2002).

It has been reported that several new resettlement areas were established on vacant state-owned land to absorb the influx of displaced farm workers during the latter half of 2002 (FCTZ, May 2003, p.40, 49). While some of the resettlement areas have fertile land, many displaced workers have had no other option than moving into remote and marginalised areas, such as northern border areas towards Mozambique. One

local observer claimed in June 2003 that 3,500 families had resettled in the Dande area, which has meagre agricultural potential, absence of health services, exposure to floods, as well as being an area where food-aid distribution is strictly controlled by the ruling party. This area also appears to function as a transit zone for those who decide to resettle inside Mozambique.

- **Resettling in other countries**

Although a large number of farm workers have ancestral roots in countries outside Zimbabwe, there is no available information to indicate any major movements of farm workers out of Zimbabwe. One local observer claimed in June 2003 that more than 10,000 people had resettled inside Mozambique, but other sources have only verified settlements of a small number of ex-farm workers across the northern border. There have been no reports of any large number of ex-farm workers moving to Malawi. Unconfirmed information suggests that some of the farm workers have sought employment at farms in South Africa. In July 2004 a group of white Zimbabwean farmers reached a deal to start farming in Nigeria (BBC, 27 July 2004).

### **Physical security undermined**

A major concern in Zimbabwe is the fact that the main perpetrators of the political violence, i.e. the youth militias and war veterans, can operate with impunity vis-à-vis the state law and order enforcement institutions. According to Amnesty International, “By ignoring the violation, the state compounds it .... Moreover, this failure by the state gives a green light to the perpetrators to continue” (AI, June 2002, p1). The London-based Redress Trust reports, “Organised political violence has become entrenched. Torture is routinely practiced and is widespread. The police, army, recently-instituted youth militias, former liberation fighters (and those masquerading as them), intelligence services and ruling-party supporters have been and continue to be used to maintain Zanu-PF” (Redress, March 2004).

Various reports document how police and army staff have been indirectly and increasingly directly involved in the violence, for example by assisting the militias with transport and other resources during the farm occupations (AI, June 2002, p19; HRW, March 2002, p23; IRIN, 8 September 2003). In September 2002 it was reported that regular army personnel were becoming directly involved in the evictions from the commercial farms (HRF, 9 October 2002). This situation raises serious concerns regarding the protection of displaced people. International law and the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement clearly assign national authorities the “duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons within their jurisdiction” (Guiding Principles, principle 3).

“It is difficult to determine how many of the hundreds of detentions of MDC activists in March-April [2003] were accompanied by the kind of physical brutality that some victims described. However, it is clear that violent attacks by official state security personnel were systematic and widespread, particularly in the high-density suburbs. In most cases, ‘suspects’ were not taken to police stations, and charges were neither filed nor mentioned to the individuals” (HRW, 6 June 2003).

During the first half of 2003, the direct involvement of state security forces became even more visible. During the national stay-away organised by the opposition in June 2003 security forces were actively used to prevent political demonstrations as well as to arbitrarily arrest opposition supporters (LCHR, June 2003). The violent campaign by the government against the “stay-away/mass protest” in June 2003 also included the deployment of youth militias throughout high density suburbs of Harare and Bulawayo (CZC, June 2003).

NGOs and the opposition MDC party have in the past tried to offer displaced victims of violence shelter and protection in “safe houses”, but the worsening security situation has recently required a less visible approach. In 2001, there were already reports of direct attacks on “safe houses” and abductions of those

who had been in hiding (HRF, August 2001, p8). The Amani Trust, a local organisation internationally renowned for its rehabilitation of torture victims, played an important role in sheltering victims of the political violence. In November 2002 its activities came to a halt after intense pressure from the government and continuous threats.

### **Displaced into a humanitarian emergency**

Many internally displaced have to cope with a situation where they have neither adequate housing, access to food aid nor land to grow their own food. Many were already in a vulnerable situation while working on the farms. For example, more than 25 per cent of the (ex) farm workers aged 20-49 years are HIV positive (FCTZ, May 2003, p.8). The most vulnerable of the IDPs may join other destitute groups in semi-urban areas, while others still have been able to find income-generating opportunities in the informal economy, e.g. gold panning and prostitution or getting some income from stray jobs with the new farmers.

Assessments of selected areas suggest that, by the end of 2002, in total just over 20 per cent of the farm workers had received severance packages when losing their jobs on the farms (FCTZ, May 2003, p.49; ZCDT, February 2003, p11). This suggests that a large share of those displaced have been without the required means to independently sustain themselves even during the first period after being displaced. Women farm workers – mostly employed as casual labour and therefore not eligible for severance packages – were one of the most vulnerable and exploited groups even before the land reform crisis made their situation even worse (CZC, October 2003).

- **Many lack adequate shelter**

As most of the displaced workers are without the necessary means to rent accommodation and the capacity of relatives and friends to provide accommodation is limited, there has been a fast growth of squatter camps outside major urban centres resulting in an urgent need for emergency shelters (IRIN, 22 August 2002; Zimrights, 6 September 2002).

“... informal settlements or 'squatter camps' have mushroomed to provide shelter and sometimes land to farm workers who have lost jobs and entitlement to shelter on the farms. ... Some of them are on the fringes of commercial farms; others are near small farming towns and several are close to the capital. Conditions in these settlements leave a great deal to be desired. Housing, schooling, health facilities, sanitation and water supplies are rudimentary. Food security is poor.” (FCTZ, May 2003, p12)

In one such area – Chinoyi, 140 km northwest of the capital Harare – former farm workers had set up squatter settlements on the outskirts of farms: “Living conditions and sanitation facilities were poor. The occupants lived in pole-and-mud huts and used improvised pit latrines or went into the bush. Very few of them had plots to cultivate because the new farmers did not provide them with land. They lacked basic health and education facilities, and children roamed the settlements because many of their parents could not afford school fees” (IRIN, 6 February 2004).

- **Poor food security**

During the 2002/2003 season sufficient rain for agricultural production returned to many areas of Zimbabwe. Although the production of maize increased by 61 per cent compared to the previous year, the output was less than 50 per cent of the national requirements (FAO/WFP, 19 June 2003). Although imports and food aid have to some extent averted the worst crisis for many Zimbabweans, ex-farm workers have in general neither had access to food aid or financial means to buy food. It has been estimated that workers on commercial farms used to cover 80 per cent of their food needs by the income from their farm employment (SC, 31 May 2002, p6). Even in the absence of detailed surveys, it is clear that farm workers who have been displaced and who have no access to land for subsistence farming remain in an extremely vulnerable situation.

“Retrenchment and the associated costs of returning home or migrating elsewhere are severe shocks to livelihoods, and the decreased accessibility and availability of cereal staples have severely eroded the already limited coping abilities of some 300 000 former farm workers, or 1.8 million people including family members. Many face significant hardship in meeting household food needs, as new sources of income become increasingly scarce”(FAO/WFP 19 June 2003, p17).

Many farm workers who have been able to keep their houses on the commercial farms had no access to land during the 2002/2003 season or access to food aid. There is a high risk that the number of internally displaced people will increase unless the needs of these ex-farm workers, who still remain in their compounds, are addressed.

- **Protection of orphans overlooked**

Orphans have been identified as a particularly vulnerable group when people are forced to leave the commercial farms. The estimated average number of orphaned children on each commercial farm rose from 12 in December 2001 to 25 in October 2003 (FOST 2003 & 2004). FOST, a local NGO, put this drastic increase down to the effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on the farm worker community. Across the country, approximately 800,000 children have been orphaned due to AIDS (UN, March 2004). However, according to FOST, tracking the numbers of orphans has become increasingly difficult since “many vulnerable children...have found it necessary to move frequently to support themselves and their families.” The recent fragmentation and displacement of the farm worker communities is eroding support structures that used to exist on the farms. Thus orphans have ended up in an even more vulnerable situation, where child labour, young marriages and child prostitution may be the only coping mechanisms available.

#### **Constrained humanitarian access**

Humanitarian assistance to the displaced is undermined by constrained access facing both national and international humanitarian actors. There have been several reports of food distribution activities being hindered by war-veterans and the militias (IRIN, 12 June 2002; ICG, 14 June 2002, p7; ICG, 29 August 2002). It has been reported that the government actively undermines the work of national NGOs, among others, by imposing restrictions on foreign funding and closing down “safe houses” established to shelter victims of the political violence (HRF, August 2001, pp. 8, 14; ICG, 14 June 2002).

Some areas controlled by the ZANU-PF militias have become “no-go” areas with blocked access for both monitoring and delivery of humanitarian assistance (PHR, 21 May 2002, p13). This makes it difficult to undertake humanitarian surveys, which have in addition been constrained by government policies. Although it has been possible for some NGOs to undertake local-level assessments, permission has not been granted for national-level assessments in the large-scale commercial farming areas (UN HC, November 2003).

Registration of both local and international humanitarian organisations is often subject to delays. WFP, for example, can only work with implementing partners who are registered by the Department of Social Welfare. Further bureaucratic obstacles exist. In a July 2004 report, Refugees International stated that the Zimbabwe government has begun instituting new administrative requirements such as signing new memorandums of understanding that restrict access, demanding two weeks advance notice for field visits, and requesting personal details from staff, including residential addresses – effectively reducing the operational space of humanitarian agencies. NGOs that receive funding from “unfriendly” foreign countries or are perceived as sympathetic to the political opposition find themselves facing barriers to their work, according to the report. Some NGOs reportedly claim that they are targeted for harassment because their work with displaced populations threatens to show that the land reform programme has been unsuccessful in addressing inequity in land ownership (RI, 23 July 2004).

The opportunities for raising awareness about the rights of IDPs and the obligations of national authorities are limited due to restrictions on human rights education activities (HRW, March 2002, p36). There are also constraints on NGOs involved in civic education. In August 2004 the Zimbabwe government

published a bill that would ban foreign human rights organisations and restrict many local charities, since President Mugabe has repeatedly accused NGOs of interfering in politics (BBC, 20 August 2004)

### **National and International Responses**

Humanitarian assistance targeting IDPs in Zimbabwe – usually as part of the ex-commercial farm worker community – has mainly been provided by national NGOs and ICRC. One local organisation managed to operate a camp-like settlement for displaced farm workers during a one-year period ending March 2003. On the pretext that this settlement had been used for “terrorist training”, the authorities closed it down. The same organisation managed to reach as many as 6,000 ex-farm workers with three-month food aid packages during the first half of 2003. Another organisation, the Farm Community Trust in Zimbabwe (FCTZ) estimated in January 2003 that they were reaching 100,000 beneficiaries from the ex-farm worker community, including both ex-workers remaining on the farms and some who had moved to informal settlements (RRU, 29 January 2003). In May 2003 FCTZ expressed concern over the lack of basic services (e.g. health and schools) available in the new settlements, and pointed out that these settlements could be part of a durable solution for some of the IDPs if public services and infrastructure were improved and land allocated (FCTZ, May 2003, pp.12-13). ICRC has visited communities of former farm workers, assessed their needs, and delivered basic aid in the form of food and non-food items (ICRC, 2004).

While local NGOs have been able to assist some of the ex-farm workers, there is a risk that those reached are those who have the resources to articulate their needs and who can easily be located, e.g. those moving to the resettlement areas on state-owned land. Internally displaced farm workers who may have ended up destitute in peri-urban areas are more difficult to reach, as the political situation continues to limit the movements of NGOs.

While the government's food distribution has been criticised for excluding ex-farm workers, food distribution by humanitarian agencies has also been criticised for discriminating against the new farmers who have been allocated land in the same areas (Parliament, 16 May 2003, p5). By June 2003 opportunities appeared to have opened up for negotiating the allocation of land to ex-farm workers with local authorities.

Until the beginning of 2002 local NGOs (e.g. Amani Trust) organised “safe houses” to accommodate people displaced by political violence, but during 2002 the security forces appear to have effectively made it impossible to maintain this type of shelter. The present approach by NGOs and church groups is to provide accommodation on an individual and discreet basis or to provide financial support for IDPs to find shelter on their own. When requested, these actors appear to have sufficient capacity to provide IDPs on a case-by-case basis with some support for food and health services.

- **Limited UN assistance**

Operational activities by UN agencies in the commercial farming areas have been a sensitive issue both vis-à-vis the government and the donors. No particular UN programme or agency has been designated as “lead agency” responsible for humanitarian assistance to IDPs. However, the UN established a Relief and Recovery Unit (RRU) with responsibility to coordinate the humanitarian assistance in Zimbabwe. The RRU regularly brings together a network of international and national actors to share information about the IDP situation. However, due to political sensitivities and strained relations between humanitarian agencies in Zimbabwe and the government, there is little if any official reference to internal displacement in the country, and IDP issues appear to be discreetly absorbed into programmes benefiting “vulnerable groups”.

The UN and donors channelled about \$ 1 million to the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) during 2003, which was in turn channelled through national and international NGOs for the purchase of food and non-food items for vulnerable people including ex-farm workers (UN HC, November 2003).

In April 2004 the UN launched a new consolidated appeal for Zimbabwe – requesting a total of US\$ 95.4 million – which targeted vulnerable groups, but not explicitly IDPs.



- **Displaced farm workers excluded from food aid programmes**

The government claims that it was able to import some 920,000 tonnes of maize (a main staple food) between April 2002 and March 2003, which it distributed at subsidised prices. WFP distributed some 280,000 tonnes of food-aid during the same period (FAO/WFP, 19 June 2003, p15). The food aid distributed by the government (i.e. through the Grain Marketing Board) and WFP food aid have in reality been two parallel systems, in some cases targeting the same categories of vulnerable population but in other cases also excluding the same groups. The tragedy for the ex-commercial farm workers has been that both those remaining on the farms and those displaced and unable to resettle in communal areas have largely been excluded from food aid by the two systems.

The government is not comfortable with the treatment of farm workers as a special target group, and feels that they should be viewed among other vulnerable groups, which include the newly resettled A1 farmers. Although the ZCDT survey of three districts in February 2003 showed that some 25 per cent of the ex-farm workers remaining in the area had received some food from the government's food aid scheme, it also pointed out that many were excluded due to "politics" (ZCDT February 2003, p17). It has been reported that ZANU-PF membership has in some cases been a requirement for receiving food aid (RI, 16 September 2002). Even children have been denied food aid because of their parents' affiliation to the opposition (PHR, 21 May 2002). Human Rights Watch reported in October 2003 that "Despite efforts by many international relief organizations to prevent politicization, local officials – mostly ZANU PF – have been able to manipulate the processes for registering beneficiaries, preventing non-ZANU PF supporters from receiving food aid".

Non-governmental organisations have faced restrictions in importing their own food commodities to implement food aid programmes independent of the government and the UN. However, some humanitarian actors, among others Plan International, Oxfam (GB) and the Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe have obtained licenses to import food (UN

RRU, 8 July 2002; 30 September 2002).

Donors have been reluctant to support activities in the commercial farming areas as they fear this could be seen as legitimising the fast-track land reform, and assistance remains meagre. In August 2004, Human Rights Watch reported that the "reluctance [of donors] to provide food aid and agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizer, etc.) strictly on the basis of need in resettled areas, where black Zimbabweans have been given land under the fast track land reform program, has further compromised Zimbabweans' access to adequate food".

#### **Need to identify and support durable solutions**

It is of great concern that a large number of people in Zimbabwe remain internally displaced without protection and largely excluded from existing humanitarian assistance. In the short term there is an urgent need for a country-wide survey to assess the situation, in order to get more detailed information about the coping strategies used by the ex-farm workers themselves, and identify those who remain internally displaced (a study of vulnerability within former commercial farming areas was undertaken in November 2003 by the UN Humanitarian Coordinator's office in Zimbabwe, but was primarily a review of existing literature on the subject). However, even before such a survey is undertaken the government and the humanitarian community should agree on how to assist displaced farm workers -- especially how to include them in their food aid programmes.

There is a need for urgent action to give ex-farm workers access to land and farm inputs before the next agricultural season. This could include more ex-farm workers being included in the government's land distribution scheme (especially being allocated A1 plots) as well as finding temporary solutions to use the largely under-utilised land allocated for commercial farming (the A2 farms).

For those displaced by the political violence, the government must recognise its obligations under international human rights law and reiterated in national legislation to protect all its citizens without regard

to political affiliations. This explicitly obliges the government to protect people from being arbitrarily displaced.

While tending to short-term humanitarian needs, the government and the humanitarian community must also seek long term solutions for the former farm workers. This should build on the coping strategies already pursued by the affected people and must, among others, focus on regularising the access to land, working conditions on the “new” commercial farms, job security and social services. Special attention must be given to the most vulnerable groups – such as the growing orphan population – who no longer have the safety nets that many of the commercial farms once offered.

In mid-2004, reports of continuing politically-motivated violence on farms in some provinces, including Mashonaland and Manicaland, raised the possibility of further farm worker displacement and unemployment. This will need to be monitored closely.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

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BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CFU	Commercial Farmer's Union
CIO	Central Intelligence Organisation
COHRE	Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions
CZC	Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition
DN	The Daily News
ESC	Electoral Supervisory Commission
FCTZ	Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe
FG	The Financial Gazette
HCRA	Harare Combined Residents' Association
HRF	Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum
ICG	International Crisis Group
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
LOMA	Law and Order (Maintenance) Act
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MP	Member of Parliament
MPSLSA	Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare
NAGG	National Alliance for Good Government
NCA	National Constitutional Assembly
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NYTS	National Youth Training Scheme
POSA	Public Order and Security Act
RI	Refugees International
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SC	Save the Children
UMP	Uzumba-Maramba-Pfungwe (constituency in Zimbabwe)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USCR	United States Committee for Refugees
USIP	United States Institute for Peace

ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union (also known as ZANU-Ndonga)
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African Patriotic Union
ZIMCET	Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust
ZNA	Zimbabwe National Army
ZNLWVA	Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association
ZRP	Zimbabwe Republic Police

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