

Displaced and Forgotten
Norwegian Refugee Council
Global IDP Project

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The Global IDP Project prepared the first version of its profile on internal displacement in Zimbabwe in July 2002. Gaps in the information then available made it difficult to present a detailed picture of the situation that included accurate figures, location of IDPs and assessment of needs. A year on the information that is now available reveals a situation of great concern, although serious information gaps still make it difficult to present a comprehensive analysis. However, the present document identifies major displacement patterns, existing coping strategies and the most urgent humanitarian needs.

While the main purpose of the profile is to bring attention to the plight of people being internally displaced in Zimbabwe, it will hopefully also serve as a useful input for a more detailed and urgently needed survey of the situation. The list of documents at the end of this profile includes the most relevant reports issued since the present crisis started in 2000. Any additional information users may have, would be gratefully received.

Introduction

Zimbabwe - once grouped among the more prosperous and politically stable countries in Africa - has since the mid-1990s seen both its economy and political stability deteriorate. Population movements, both voluntary and forced, have become an increasingly visible and common reality. While economic hardship has led to new movement patterns, large numbers of people have been forced on the move because of political violence, both separate from and closely linked to the "fast track" land reform programme implemented by the Government.

The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement were developed in particular to protect people fleeing violence and human rights violations. In Zimbabwe, the high level of "generalized" violence and human rights abuses make it relevant to apply this legal framework:

"internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border." (UN 1998, principle 2)

By the end of 2002 USCR estimated that more than 100,000 people were internally displaced in Zimbabwe. One local observer estimated in June 2003 that if a narrow definition of internal displacement is applied, a realistic estimate would be that there were between 50,000 and 100,000 IDPs caused by the land reform and/or the political violence. Although a comprehensive assessment of the situation remains to be undertaken, available information suggest that the number of ex-farm workers who remain in a situation of internal displacement could be higher.

By June 2003 less than 25 percent of the original commercial farms were operating and as many as 240,000 former farm workers may have lost their jobs. Although many farm workers

remain on the farms even if the farming activities have 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 mid-2003.

With regard to victims of political violence not related to the land reform, there has during the last three years 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).

Beyond the targeting of Zimbabwe's population of European descent, ethnicity and tribal violence has not been a dominant issue during the recent crisis. However, in June 2003 the whole population of a village, Muzerengwa in the Manicaland Province, was displaced. The tribal affiliation of the 500-700 inhabitants differed from the neighbouring group, and their eviction was apparently triggered by the headman's brother being an active MDC activist.

People displaced by political violence

A 'climate of fear' has emerged over Zimbabwe since the beginning of 2000 when political opposition to the ruling party ZANU-PF had then become more articulate during a constitutional referendum and subsequent parliamentary elections. The outcome of the latter was that the new opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) gained 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 have 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 organized two major "stay away" demonstrations (18 & 19 March and 2-6 June 2003), which both 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. 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. The presence of youth militias has become more visible in the city. Since repressive legislation was introduced during 2002, the police and army personnel have played a more direct role as perpetrators of the violence (HRW 6 June 2003).

A common pattern has been that opposition supporters victimized 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.

A typical pattern is that victims are exposed to intimidation because of their MDC affiliation. This often includes beatings, temporary detainment, and in many cases looting of property and burning of houses before or after the victims have fled their homes. The practical

organisation of both the March 2002 and September 2002 elections exposed active MDC candidates and supporters. The militias have, among others, used public lists of polling agents when seeking out targets for their violent campaign.

This state-sponsored violence intensified prior to the presidential election in March 2002. Local human rights observers have reported that the political violence, including rape and systematic torture, has remained at a high level during the first half of 2003, especially in the Harare area (CZC June 2003; HRW 6 June 2003). 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 to vote (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 being displaced during the first-half of 2003 (e.g. HRF 24 May 2003 and 17 June 2003). During the "stay away/mass protest" organized by the opposition in June 2003 at least 600 people were arbitrarily arrested (CZC June 2003, p9).

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 recently 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 institutionalized 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).

Local observers claim that as of June 2003 it appears that the number of people displaced by political violence may have been reduced compared to the situation around the March 2002 presidential elections. 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 somehow stabilized. 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 both caused by the violence as well as the economic hardship. Many of this group have migrated to other countries where there are employment opportunities.

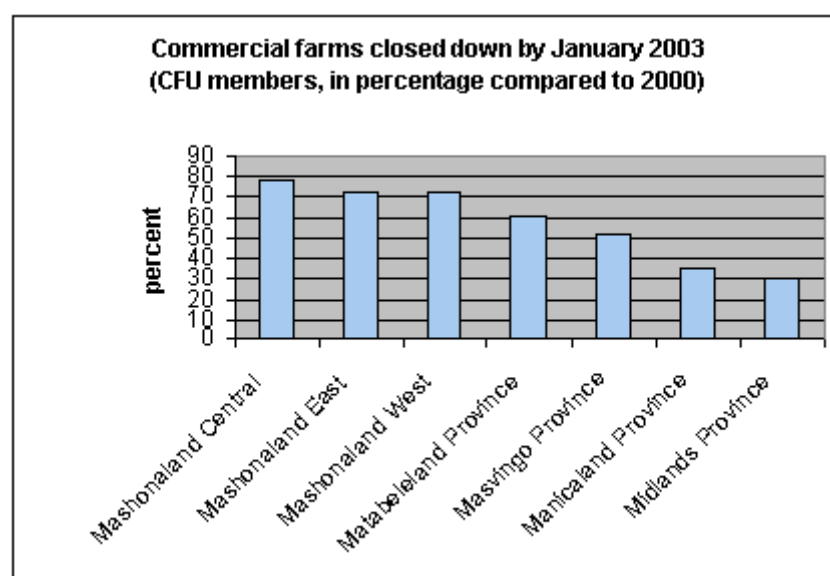
Displacement caused by the fast track "land reform"

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 has remained since the colonial days. 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 2000-2003

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 percent of this target had been reached. In mid-2000 the Government embarked on a "Fast Track" implementation of the programme aiming at distributing 9 million hectares before end-2001 by radically expanding the list of land to be acquired from white farmers (UNDP January 2001, 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 by the same time about 3,200 members, which were managing nearly 80 percent of the large scale commercial farming sector. As of February 2003 only some 800-900 of these farms were fully or partially operational (CFU February 2003, pp. 4, 7 and "National summary"). The outputs during the 2002/2003 agricultural season from the remaining large-scale commercial farms was only about 10 percent 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).



Source: CFU February 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 would end up in a situation of internal displacement. One year later, in terms of forced displacement, it appears that a less dramatic situation had materialized. However, the majority of the ex-farm workers were still 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 characterizes the situation facing those that 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 has not only affected 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 the organised political violence. The media regularly carried stories of farm workers brutally forced to leave the farms and seeking shelter in makeshift camps, in the bush or drifting 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 fleeing as the violence, intimidation and the 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 that has allowed 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 has 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). If one considers how the situation has developed during the last three years 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.

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

As of June 2003 neither the Government nor the humanitarian community had yet undertaken a systematic survey of how the accelerated land reform has affected the farm worker population. While it should be possible to quantify how many of the ex-farm workers that have physically left the commercial farms during the last three years, it will be a challenge to assess to what extent these have ended up in a situation of internal displacement.

At the outset of the present crisis in 1999 the large-scale commercial farms in Zimbabwe were, according to a Government survey, employing about 322,000 farm workers – about half of these on a permanent basis (MPSSLW September 2001, table2). 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 total could also be lower as recent surveys indicate that more than half of the remaining workforce consists of single farm workers (FCTZ May 2003, p.31).

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 percent 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).

About 80 percent of the farm workers were employed on farms located in the three Mashonaland provinces and Manicaland. As more than 70 percent 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 percent of the commercial farms closed and is apparently facing a less dramatic displacement situation – although in the past often being the centre of political violence (SC-UK 31 May 2001, p.6; CFU February 2003).

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 at 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, the alternative options have been limited. With only some 20 percent of the original farms still operating by mid-2003, opportunities for permanent employment have been substantially reduced. The new settlers in the commercial farming areas are only to a limited extent offering the original farm workers employment, and if so, mainly on a seasonal basis. Neither are substantial numbers of workers benefiting 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 utilize 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 percent of the new "A2" farms have absorbed some of the original workforce (FCTZ May 2003, pp.30, 42).

In addition, there is a certain number who 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 few ex-farm workers have as well been allocated land under the ongoing land reform programme (e.g. Parliament, 16 May 2003, p4).

A preliminary estimate based on available information could be that about one-fourth 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.

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 in 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 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, lack of protective clothing, lack of holidays and lack of consideration for special needs of female workers (e.g. Parliament 16 May 2003, pp.7, 8).

The houses in the farm worker compounds were in many cases of a higher standard than often 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 leaving one's house is by many farm workers considered a last option. 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).

Being forced into a situation of internal displacement

Available information suggest that at least 50 percent of the farm workers have during the last three years voluntarily left or been forced to flee their homes at the farm compounds where they worked. During the first two years of the "fast track" land reform it appears that the plight of the farm workers was subject to arbitrary decisions by the war veterans/youth militias who spontaneously occupied the farms or were assigned by politicians to evict the farmers. 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 the farm workers become displaced from the farms with the most fertile land and most developed infrastructure, while the workers on less prosperous farms are allowed to remain in their compounds (ZCDT February 2003, p3).

There was apparently a shift in Government policy during the second half of 2002 that farm workers should not be forcefully removed from their compounds on the farms where they had worked. This appears to be confirmed by a survey in February 2003 of three districts that showed that direct evictions were reported to be 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 occupation 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 that 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. These are in particular people who are unattractive as labour for the new farmers and who do not have 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 that are forced to leave their homes at 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 then are left seeking temporary shelter in peri-urban areas, drifting from farm to farm, trying to make an income on seasonal work or get access to assistance offered by some local NGOs. Although some of the ex-farm workers have in the past been sheltered by local organizations in Harare (Amani Trust 31 May 2002), nothing 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 by parent(s) 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, the children do not speak the vernacular languages and have no relationship with the areas/tribes that their parents and grandparents originally came from. A government survey in 2001 showed that only between 4 and 10 percent of this group wished to be repatriated to their home of origin (MPSLSW September 2001, p9). The Government has in fact previously recognized 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). Moreover, in April 2003, the Government announced that it intended to change its citizenship act to include all citizens from other countries in the region (SADC) who were resident in the country in 1980 (IRIN 4 April 2003). As of June 2003 a final policy had still not been made public by the Government.

Long-term resettlement

A preliminary estimate could be that some one-third of the farm workers 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 percent 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 ruling party and the Government as they have been associated with supporters of the opposition, and have in general been excluded when land has been redistributed under the "fast track" land reform. Government figures from October 2001 showed that farm workers then represented only 1,7 percent of the beneficiaries of re-distributed land (UNDP January 2002, p.36). A more recent survey indicates that this had increased to some 5 percent 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 for 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 percent) of people living on the surveyed farms in fact had 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 for the farm workers who had kept their ties with their tribe/community in the communal areas where they used to live. Some had 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 percent 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 percent of the farm workers (FCTZ May 2003, p.61). As of mid-2003 no studies had been undertaken to estimate more accurately how many have in fact resettled in communal areas.

Moving to informal settlements on state owned land

Of those farm workers who are leaving 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 categorized as "commercial" nor "communal". The entitlement to use the land is thus not regularized and people can not 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 marginalized 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 that indicates 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 suggest that some of the farm workers have sought employment at farms in South Africa.

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)." Even more disturbing are reports documenting 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). In September 2002 it was reported that regular army personnel were becoming directly involved in the evictions at 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, "political violence")

During the first half of 2003, the direct involvement of the state's security forces became even more visible. During the national stay-away organised by the opposition in June 2003 the state's security forces were actively being used to both prevent political demonstrations as well as arbitrarily arresting 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 in Harare and Bulawayo (CZC June 2003).

NGOs and the opposition party MDC 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 abduction 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 percent 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 in semi-urban areas while others 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.

Assessment of selected areas suggest that, by the end of 2002, in total just over 20 percent 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.

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 and there is 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)

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 percent compared to the previous year, the output was less than 50 percent of the national requirements (FAO/WFP 19 June 2003). Although imports and food aid to some extent has 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 percent 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 at 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 being one particularly vulnerable group when people are forced to leave the commercial farms. In December 2001 it was estimated that there were on average 12 orphaned children on each commercial farm (FOST 2003, p7). A conservative estimate would thus be that more than 50,000 orphaned children may have been affected by the farm acquisitions. FOST, a local NGO, observed in 2002 that the number of orphans within the farm worker community was even on the increase and is related to the worsening HIV/AIDS epidemic (FOST 2003). 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, fn8). However, local NGOs have in some cases been able to quickly provide displaced farm workers with immediate assistance after violent farm occupations, as well as mobilizing further support from international actors like ICRC.

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 being involved in civic education. 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 restrictive government policies. In October 2002, the UN planned to undertake, together with the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, a survey of the situation facing the farm worker population (RRU 29 October 2002). Nine months later - apparently for political reasons - the survey had still not been undertaken.

National and International Responses

Humanitarian assistance targeting IDPs in Zimbabwe has mainly been provided by national NGOs. One local organization 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 organization managed to reach as many as 6,000 ex-farm workers with three-months food aid packages during the first half of 2003. Another organization, 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 that 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 for 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 was improved and land allocated (FCTZ May 2003, pp.12-13).

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 are often the most vulnerable ex-farm workers, e.g. the elderly and the HIV/AIDS victims, who may have ended up as destitute in peri-urban areas etc., 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 that 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 has established a Relief and Recovery Unit (RRU) with responsibility to coordinate the humanitarian assistance in Zimbabwe. An IDP advisor has been attached to the RRU since September 2002. The RRU regularly brings together a network of international and national actors to share information about the IDP situation.

During the first half of 2003, the UN channeled USD150,000 to IOM, which in turn assisted a range of local NGOs in purchasing non food assistance for highly vulnerable people – including displaced farm workers. The pilot programme will lead to a longer term programme of humanitarian assistance, which will be managed by IOM. The focus of the programme will be in assisting vulnerable groups including farm workers.

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 has distributed at subsidized 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. GMB) and the food aid by WFP has 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.

There has in the past been reluctance by some donors to support activities in the commercial farming areas as they have feared that this could be seen as legitimising the fast-track land reform. However, more recently the donors appears to have accepted that there are also vulnerable people in the newly resettled areas and would be willing to consider humanitarian assistance on the basis of vulnerability. As the international NGOs that distribute WFP's food aid have to work through local authorities, there is limited flexibility for them to make their own decisions to target the ex-farm worker population. These NGOs expressed in January 2003 concerns that the farm worker community were being excluded from the food aid programme executed by WFP, and called for this group to be included in future vulnerability assessments (RRU 29 January 2003). In March 2003 WFP and UNDP were negotiating with local

authorities in order to undertake assessments of the needs of ex-farm workers and newly resettled farmers (RRU 10 March 2003).

The Government is not comfortable with the treatment of farm workers as a special target group, and feel that they should be viewed as 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 percent 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 "politics" was a major reason why a large number was excluded (ZCDT February 2003, p17). It has been reported in some cases that ZANU-PF membership has 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).

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).

Awareness about the needs but rights not fulfilled

Zimbabwe is party to most major international human rights instruments (HRW March 2002, p36), including those that form the basis for the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, and thus has a clear obligation to protect its population from being displaced and to provide protection and humanitarian assistance during displacement. Official policy documents from the late 1990s in fact recognise the needs of farm workers and their right to resettlement as part of the land reform programme (FCTZ May 2002, p7). Both the Government and the humanitarian community should be well aware of the consequences of the political violence and the fast track land reform:

§ The UN Secretary-General raised the issue on 28 August 2002, when he explicitly pointed to the need to provide "compensation to displaced farm workers (IRIN 28 August 2002)."

§ Between March and July 2001 the Government undertook an IOM-sponsored survey of options for farm workers (MPSLSW, September 2001).

§ On the request of the Commonwealth and the Government of Zimbabwe, the United Nations undertook an assessment mission in November/December 2001 and produced a comprehensive report on the land reform programme and the need for durable resettlement of the farm workers (UNDP January 2002).

§ Several Government institutions participate in the Zimbabwe National Vulnerability Assessment Committee, and the reports of this body explicitly recognize the food aid needs of the former commercial farm workers and their dependants (ZimVAC 16 September 2002, p4 & 20 December 2002, p21).

§ The Special Envoy of the UN SG made an official visit to Zimbabwe in January 2003, and brought to attention the need for assessing the needs of the former commercial farm workers (UN 10 February 2003).

§ A committee mandated by the Parliament of Zimbabwe delivered in May 2003 a report that identified major needs in the commercial farming areas.

In the mid-term review of the consolidated UN Appeal it explicitly stated that one of the priorities for the food aid programme would be to target "farm workers and re-settled farmers" following a joint UN/Government assessment (UN February 2003, p.139). As of June 2003 the planned assessment had still not been undertaken, apparently because of Government's reluctance to expose the impact of the fast-track land reform programme. The need for an assessment of the situation facing (ex)-commercial farm workers was reiterated in the FAO/WFP crop assessment (FAO/WFP 19 June 2003, p17).

The political climate in Zimbabwe has made it difficult to raise the issue of political violence and the effects of the accelerated land reform process with the government. International organizations tend to avoid confrontations with the government and even the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has not been in a position to respond to the situation. In fact, African member countries of the UN Human Rights Commission blocked both in 2002 and 2003 a resolution on human rights in Zimbabwe, that among other things, would invite UN human rights experts to monitor the situation in the country (HRW 16 April 2003).

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 run there is an urgent need for a country-wide survey to assess the situation, get more detailed information about the coping strategies used by the ex-farm workers themselves, and identify those who remain internally displaced. However, even before such a survey has been 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 2003/2004 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, there is only one solution. The Government must recognise its obligations under international human rights law as well as 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 the 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. Orphans who have been detached from the safety nets that many of the commercial farms used to offer, need special attention and should be given priority by initiatives already being implemented to assist Zimbabwe's growing orphan population.

By mid-2003, there were worrying signals of new farm occupations in some provinces, including Mashonaland and Manicaland provinces, which could lead to further farm worker displacement and unemployment. This will need to be monitored closely.

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