



IOM International Organization for Migration

## The Development Potential of Zimbabweans in the Diaspora: A Survey of Zimbabweans living in the UK and South Africa

In 2004 the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in partnership with the Department of Sociology at City University, London, carried out a survey of the Zimbabwean diaspora living in the UK and South Africa.

This report is based on the survey of 1000 Zimbabweans – 500 respondents in the United Kingdom and 500 respondents in South Africa. The data was collected using self-completion paper questionnaires, a web based self-completion version and, for those with literacy needs, questionnaires were administered using face to face interviews. Different modes of data collection were necessary due to the diversity of potential respondents and the objective of obtaining responses that reflected this diversity. Extensive networking was carried out to identify organisations, employers and individuals that worked with or for Zimbabweans and were prepared to distribute and publicise the questionnaire. The link to the web version was posted on a number of Zimbabwean message boards and relevant web sites with the aim of ensuring as wide and diverse a sample as possible. The fieldwork took place between July and September 2004.

### Research aim and Objectives

The aim of the research was to obtain a profile of Zimbabweans in the United Kingdom and South Africa in terms of their skills base, transnational links and interest in contributing to development. Within the main aim there were five objectives:

- To compile a skills profile of Zimbabweans on arrival in the UK and South Africa by examining educational qualifications and employment experience.
- To examine participation in education and employment in the UK and South Africa and to explore any capacity building activities that have taken place.
- To examine transnational activities with people in Zimbabwe and the nature of those activities.
- To examine links with Zimbabweans in the UK and South Africa or elsewhere in the diaspora.
- To ascertain aspirations for return migration, participation in skills transfer and/or development activities.

The research was not part of a wider programme of research or developed to evaluate policy, but instead a discrete piece of work from which a range of policy makers and organisations would be able to extrapolate the data relevant to them.

### Main Findings

#### • *Social and demographic characteristics of the sample*

The survey of 1000 comprised of 68 per cent men and 32 per cent women. Thirty-two per cent of respondents were less than 30 years old, 39 per cent were aged 30-39 and the rest, 29 per cent, were 40 or over. In terms of immigration status, 13 per cent were naturalised EU or South African citizens, 15 per cent were permanent residents or had indefinite leave to remain, 20 per cent were on working visas, 12 per cent were on student visas, 7 per cent had refugee status or a form of humanitarian protection, 12 per cent were asylum seekers and 19 per cent were undocumented migrants. In the UK, 6 per cent were undocumented compared with 32 per cent of the sample in South Africa. Most had emigrated from Zimbabwe recently. Around two-thirds (65 per cent) had last lived continuously in Zimbabwe in 2000 or later. Zimbabweans living in South Africa returned on a fairly regular basis, with 55 per cent returning for a visit from South Africa every six months or more.

The main reason for emigrating related to the economy and employment – 48 per cent said they left Zimbabwe due to the economic situation, the lack of employment or to work abroad. Around a quarter (26 per cent) said that their main reason for leaving was political. A further 19 per cent left to study abroad, 5 per cent to join family, 1 per cent for other reasons such as to travel and experience other things and 1 per cent had never actually lived continuously in Zimbabwe but had been born elsewhere. A larger proportion in the UK than South Africa had left Zimbabwe for political reasons (33 per cent and 18 per cent respectively). In contrast, 63 per cent of those in South Africa had left for reasons relating to the economy and employment compared with 35 per cent in the UK.

- **Qualifications and skills at the time of emigration**

Most people arrived in either the UK or South Africa with a qualification (82 per cent) of which 38 per cent had a degree or higher, 19 per cent had a diploma in higher education and 3 per cent had a professional qualification. Among those with higher qualifications - a diploma in higher education, a professional qualification or a degree or post-graduate qualification – the largest proportion had a qualification in business studies (16 per cent). This was followed by high level qualifications in education (14 per cent) then healthcare (11 per cent).

Most people had been working before arriving in the UK or South Africa (71 per cent), 15 per cent had been students, 10 per cent were unemployed and looking for work and the rest (3 per cent) were not working for other reasons including looking after the home and family. The jobs that people had were varied though the largest proportion had been in managerial positions (18 per cent) followed by 11 per cent who had been teachers. A larger number of those who had been in professional jobs went to the UK than to South Africa.

- **Education and employment in the UK and South Africa**

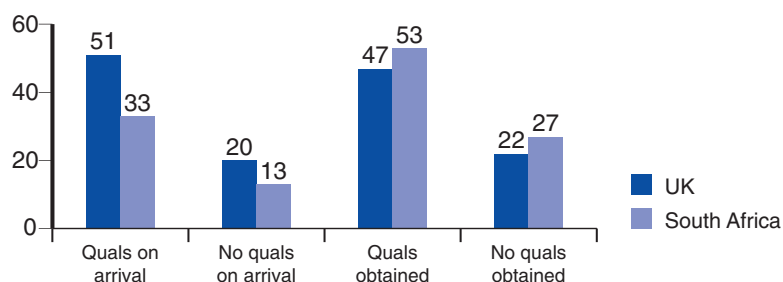
Thirty-nine per cent of respondents had obtained a qualification – more than half of those in the UK had obtained a new qualification (54 per cent) compared with 24 per cent of respondents in South Africa. In the UK, of those who had obtained a qualification, 48 per cent had obtained one at post-graduate level while in South Africa the proportion was 43 per cent. Clearly, those who had participated in education in their country of residence had done so at a very high level.

The profile of respondents' main activity was similar to their pre-migration activity with 68 per cent working at the time of the survey, 13 per cent unemployed and looking for work, 13 per cent studying, and a further 5 per cent not working for other reasons including looking after home and family or not being entitled to work legally because of immigration status. Larger numbers were unemployed and looking for work in South Africa than the UK (22 per cent and 4 per cent respectively).

The largest sector of employment, among those who were working or had worked in the UK or South Africa in the past, was health and social work (22 per cent) and this was followed by agriculture (14 per cent). In the UK, 38 per cent had worked in health and social work while in South Africa 29 per cent had been in the agricultural sector. In terms of jobs, managerial level jobs were the most frequent – 11 per cent were working or had worked at managerial level in their current or most recent job. A further 10 per cent were working or had worked as agricultural labourers, 8 per cent in carer/care assistant jobs and 6 per cent as nurses.

In South Africa, 23 per cent were working as, or had worked most recently as, an agricultural labourer. In the UK, more were employed as carers or care assistants than in any other job (13 per cent) followed closely by nurses (12 per cent). There was definitely an element of occupational down-grading and people not working in jobs that were commensurate with their skills and qualifications. Thirty-eight per cent said that they had skills they had been unable to use in the UK or South Africa.

### Proportion with unused skills by qualifications on arrival and obtained by country of residence (%)

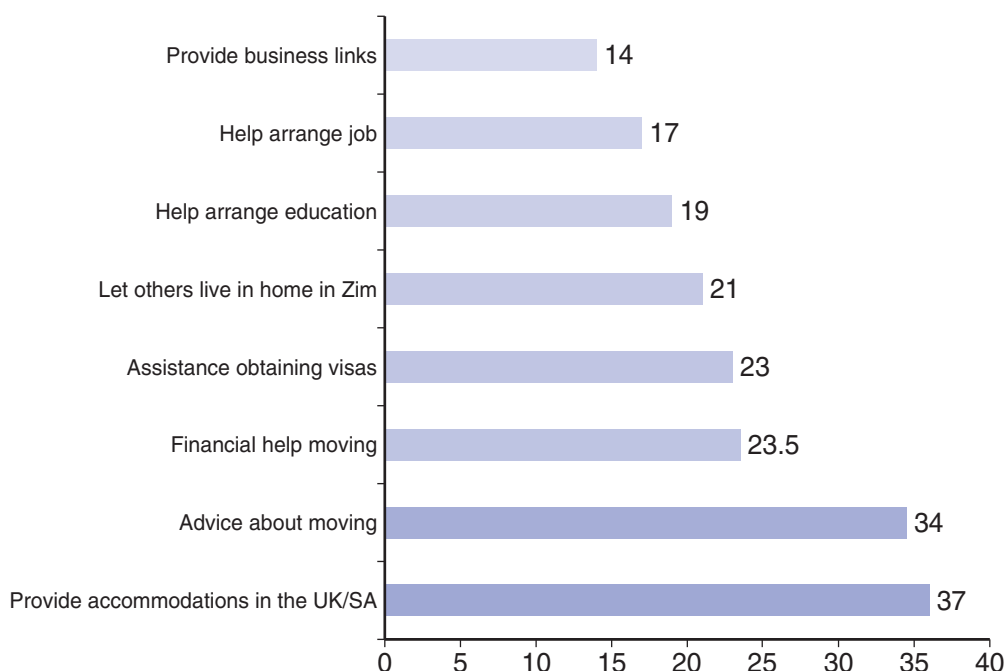


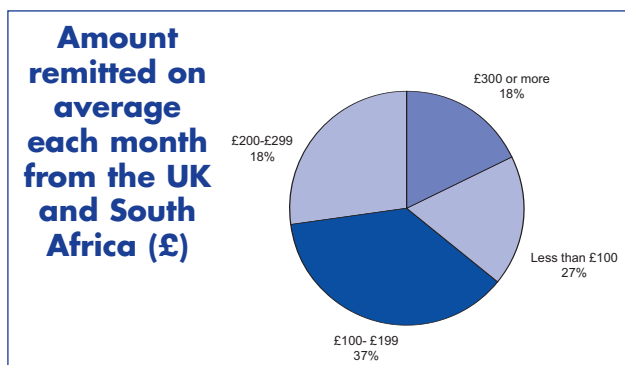
### • Transnational and diasporic links

Nearly everyone maintained regular social contact with family members in Zimbabwe (96 per cent). Nearly half (49 per cent) were in touch with family members once a week or more. There were also strong economic ties with family in Zimbabwe. Around three quarters of respondents (74 per cent) sent economic remittances and of those that sent these remittances, 85 per cent said the main reason was to support family members. Money was more likely to be remitted through the informal routes of family, friends and personal visits to Zimbabwe than through formal financial institutions. Two-thirds also sent non-monetary gifts to Zimbabwe and clothes were sent most often (85 per cent) followed by food (43 per cent). Respondents also provided other kinds of help and support to people in Zimbabwe and mentioned most often was providing accommodation for new arrivals to the UK and South Africa (37 per cent). See figure below.

Respondents to the survey also engaged in a number of activities with other Zimbabweans in the country of residence, in Zimbabwe and in the rest of the diapsora. Eighty-one per cent said they were involved in activities with other Zimbabweans in their country of residence. The main types of activity were informal social activities (47 per cent) followed by church and religious activities (31 per cent) and clubs and groups (21 per cent). Fewer participated in activities with people or organisations based in Zimbabwe (48 per cent). Among those who did participate, internet discussion groups was the activity mentioned most often (21 per cent) followed by political activities (14 per cent) and contributions to charities (12 per cent). Around half (51 per cent) participated in activities with Zimbabweans in diapsora countries other than their own. Again internet discussion groups was the activity mentioned most often (25 per cent). A further 14 per cent participated in political activities, 13 per cent sent economic remittances and 12 per cent sent non-monetary gifts.

### Ways of providing help and support to those in Zimbabwe (%)



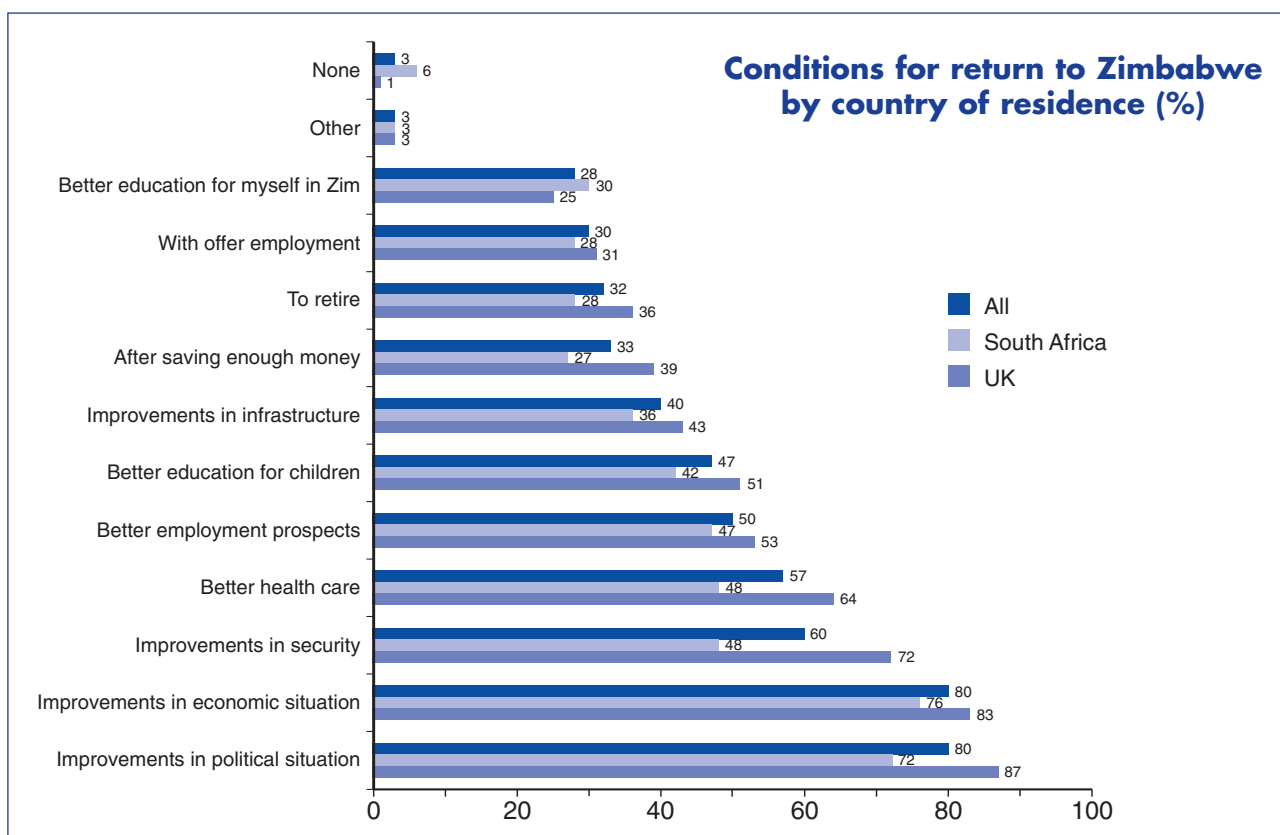


- **Skills transfer, development and return migration**

Nearly three-quarters (73 per cent) of respondents wanted to participate in a skills transfer programme and an additional 16 per cent thought they might be interested. More than half (53 per cent) of those who were interested in a programme said that they would be interested in a programme lasting 12 months or more. Seventy-seven per cent wanted to contribute to the development of Zimbabwe and 14 per cent said they might want to. More people were interested in investing in business (58 per cent) than any other development related activity. This was followed by skills transfer through working in Zimbabwe (38 per cent) and skills transfer through training in Zimbabwe (37 per cent).

Respondents were asked what changes would help them to contribute or contribute more effectively to development and mentioned most often were factors that related directly to Zimbabwe - political changes (60 per cent), economic opportunities (50 per cent) and voting rights (49 per cent). A better exchange rate and dual nationality were also mentioned as changes that would help people to contribute to development (47 per cent and 42 per cent respectively). There were also factors that related to the country of residence and these included a better paid job (29 per cent), skills training (27 per cent) and legal immigration status (27 per cent).

Two-thirds of respondents said that they would like to return to Zimbabwe to live at some point in the future and 21 per cent said that they might like to. Only 12 per cent definitely did not want to return. In terms of conditions for return, mentioned most often were improvements in the political situation and improvements in the economic situation (both 80 per cent). Among those who did not want to return, the reason mentioned most often was a better standard of living in the country of residence (51 per cent) followed by the political situation in Zimbabwe (48 per cent) and then lack of employment (47 per cent).



## Publication Details

The full report, *The Development Potential of Zimbabweans in the Diaspora: A Survey of Zimbabweans living in the UK and South Africa*, authored by Alice Bloch, is published by IOM. It can be downloaded from IOM London's website: [www.iomlondon.org](http://www.iomlondon.org). For a printed copy, please contact Elizabeth Baxter on [ebaxter@iomlondon.org](mailto:ebaxter@iomlondon.org) or call 020 7233 0001.