

PARLIAMENT OF ZIMBABWE

FIRST SESSION PARLIAMENT

**FIRST REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE AND
HOME AFFAIRS**

ON

THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS

Presented to Parliament on Tuesday, 6th June, 2006

[S.C 14, 2006]

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Your Committee examined the operations of the Ministry of Home Affairs with particular emphasis on the Police Holding Cells, the Registrar General's Department and Immigration Control. In the conduct of its business, your committee held meetings where it received written and oral evidence and paid fact finding visits to the various departments of the Ministry in a number of Provinces throughout the country, namely Harare, Mashonaland East, Manicaland, Midlands, Masvingo and Bulawayo.

1.2. Your Committee wishes to commend the Ministry Officials for their efficient responses to the Committee's requests and for the replies which assisted the Committee to compile this Report.

2. PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

2.1. As part of its proceedings and on spot inquiries, your Committee selected three departments of the Ministry of Home Affairs, namely the Registrar General's Offices, the Zimbabwe Republic Police (Z R P) and the Immigration Control. The inquiries were conducted on service delivery, operational capacities, utilization of funds appropriated by Parliament and challenges faced by the three Departments.

3. FINDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

3.1. On the Zimbabwe Republic Police Operations, your Committee placed emphasis among other things on the conditions of the Holding Cells at the various stations that it chose to visit. These were Matapi, Highlands, Marondera and Rusape Police Stations and Mutare, Masvingo, Gweru and Harare Central Police Stations.

4. POLICE STATIONS

4.1. As your Committee conducted its tour of various Police Stations around the country it found that the situation was the same at most Stations although at times the intensity and extent to which certain conditions prevailed differed. For example, issues around the shortages of manpower, food for inmates, rations for officers, erratic fuel allocations, transport, blankets, detergents, accoutrements, unsatisfactory conditions at holding cells, inadequate stationery, lack of Office and staff accommodation were observed at all the Police Stations visited.

4.2. In terms of manpower shortages Gweru Central Police Station was one of those hardest hit. There were 175 officers out of 300 resulting in a shortfall of 125. Officers at the Gweru Central Police Station faced an acute shortage of accommodation to the extent that some married officers were accommodated in former horse stables. Your Committee found this state of affairs completely deplorable.

4.3. The Masvingo Central Police Station revealed to your Committee that the Province was dealing with an upsurge in murder cases. Generally, there were delays in dealing with pending cases by the Courts. Masvingo Central Police Station alone had 4 000 pending cases and there were only 3 junior magistrates to dispose of all those cases. The Officers lamented the issue of fines which they said were not deterrent enough as offenders paid the fines and continued to commit further crimes with impunity as if laws did not exist

5. MATAPI POLICE STATION

5.1. The Committee visited Matapi Police Station where it held interviews with Officers and also conducted a tour of the holding cells. It was evident from the thorough cleaning that had been done that the station had prepared for the Committee's visit. Although there were no inmates at the time of the visit, your Committee, nonetheless, observed that there was a

shortage of blankets .

5.2. The entire Police Station did not have any security lights, a situation that might pose a security risk to the station. Lack of security lights at the station was coupled with the non functional lights at the holding cells. Your Committee found such a state of affairs quite unacceptable and strongly urges the department to take urgent remedial measures to redress the situation.

5.3. Your Committee also observed the acute shortage of office space at the station. Evidence given to your Committee showed that officers also experienced accommodation problems.

5.4. Matapi Police Station, unlike all other stations visited by your committee, reported adequate food supplies and that inmates were given at least three meals a day. Your Committee actually found this quite interesting but could not ascertain the accuracy of the claim as there were no inmates to confirm this statement.

5.5. The station was also experiencing equipment and manpower shortages. The entire Police Station did not have its own typewriters or computers at all. The one typewriter which was being used was said to belong to an individual who had loaned it to the Station. Stationery was also in short supply. The total manpower strength at the time of the visit was said to be forty two out of a total of seventy for the establishment.

6. HIGHLANDS POLICE STATION

6.1. Your Committee also visited the Highlands Police Station where it was impressed by the toilet system in the Holding Cells. Unlike in other Police Stations, the holding cells at Highlands were an excellent model of what other cells should be like in this modern age. The cells had a button flushing system which was operated by the inmates themselves whenever the need arose. Your Committee highly commends the station for such a system and hopes that other police stations will soon revamp their toilet systems so that they resemble the ones at the Highlands Police Station.

6.2. However, your Committee was quite concerned at the acute shortage of food that was observed at the station. The problem was said to have been exacerbated by the shortage of maize meal that had hit the city of Harare at the time of the Committee's visit. As a result it was difficult to provide even a decent meal for the suspects. Your Committee was Informed that more than ten suspects that were held at the station had not been given meals during the two days prior to the Committee's visit. The only meal that they had been served with, on the day of the visit, was dried Kapenta fish which was served for their breakfast. Your Committee strongly feels that suspects deserve to be treated humanely and to be accorded all their basic rights.

6.3. Your Committee observed that there were inadequate blankets for the inmates and actually saw several pieces of what used to be blankets in the cells. Investigations by your Committee revealed that owing to the shortage of toilet paper, inmates had resorted to tearing blankets so that they could use such pieces as tissue paper each time they visited the toilet.

6.4. Out of an establishment of 127 officers the station had strength of 67 leaving a shortfall of 60. This shortfall had serious consequences on the operations of the station that was said to be experiencing a spate of armed robberies, housebreaking and crimes relating to shop lifting.

6.5. It was, however, pleasing to your Committee to learn that the local community was very cooperative and had contributed immensely towards the neighbourhood watch. The community had also given a lot of material and moral support to the Police. For example, at the time of the Committee's visit, the local community had just painted the Station's offices. Problems of inadequate stationery and funds for maintenance purposes were some of the major challenges facing the station.

7. HARARE CENTRAL POLICE STATION

7.1. In its fact finding visits your Committee toured the Holding Cells at the Harare Central Police Station. The condition of the Cells was appalling and unfit for human habitation. A grisly sight met your Committee as it arrived at the reception to the Holding Cells. A glance at the area directly above the reception revealed traces of unsightly stains of urine and water from the burst sewer system which had badly soaked the ceiling so much that it collapsed sending intermittent drips on those manning the reception. Your Committee learnt that the problem of burst sewer pipes was a daily occurrence at the station despite the numerous efforts by plumbers to repair the system which had outlived its life span and the improper use of the toilets by the different inmates who are normally held at the station. Owing to the non availability of toilet paper at the holding cells, the inmates resorted to tearing pieces of blankets which they used as a substitute for toilet paper and this had the effect of blocking the old sewer system resulting in numerous bursts especially on the second and third floors of the Building.

7.2. The situation was further worsened by the non availability of funds for infrastructural maintenance and renovations. There were no detergents at all for the cleaning of the cells resulting in a foul smell being emitted from them. All the floors visited by your Committee were damp and stuffy. Furthermore, there was no protective clothing such as gloves, gumboots etc for the cleaners. The whole passage to the cells was either dark or dimly lit and there were no lights at all in the cells.

7.3. The Holding cells did not have food at all, resulting in inmates having to rely on the food provided by their relatives. Further shortages were experienced on items such as stationery and in particular the fine books. The station was only allocated five books a month for fines and these were said to be grossly inadequate. Uniforms were also said to be in critical short supply with officers having gone for over two years without being issued with new uniforms. This situation had the effect of loss of confidence and lowering of morale among the officers.

7.4. There was also the problem of accommodation shortage. Some of the officers had been victims of Operation Murambatsvina. They conducted the Operation and at the end of the day they found themselves going back to those people whose structures they had destroyed to seek accommodation. Those from the high density suburbs were forking out as much as three million dollars a room every month, yet their housing allowance was only \$1,5 million dollars only.

8. MARONDERA POLICE STATION

8.1. Your Committee visited the Marondera Police Station where it held interviews and conducted a tour of the Cells. The Station did not have adequate food for the inmates. However, it was pleasing to your Committee to note that the Station had resorted to growing vegetables to ameliorate the plight of the inmates. Once again the issue of inadequate blankets and lack of toilet paper was raised at Marondera Police Station. However, the cells were spick and span a situation that your Committee greatly commends. This was despite the fact that the cells were sometimes overcrowded as the Police Station caters for suspects from the Morondera Rural District, Criminal Investigations Department (CID) and the Traffic Section.

8.2. The most prevalent crime in the area was said to be stock theft where the proximity of Harare, a ready market for meat, was making it difficult to curb such incidents. As a result a lot of cattle were being stolen in areas like Dema and Goromonzi. Incidents of stock theft were further worsened by erratic fuel allocations making it difficult to conduct effective patrols as mobility was greatly curtailed. In addition manpower shortages compounded the situation. The Station had an establishment of 450 officers whereas the strength was 380 and there was a shortfall of 70. Stationery and computers were also inadequate thereby hampering the efficient operations of the station.

9. THE DEPARTMENT OF THE REGISTRAR GENERAL

9.1. Marondera Provincial Registry

Your Committee visited the Marondera Provincial Registry and was informed that the Department caters for nine districts in Mashonaland East. A total of nineteen substations out of thirty had been opened. However, the major problems experienced by the sub offices were the shortages of office and staff accommodation. The Provincial Registry was also experiencing lack of computers for passports, death and birth certificates at provincial, district and sub officers.

9.2. The Provincial Registry's activities were seriously affected by erratic fuel supplies. This had crippled the daily delivery service of passports to Harare so much so that the Registry had limited the deliveries to once a week. Supervision of Districts and Sub Offices had also been restricted as there was inadequate fuel for such activities.

9.3. The processing of documents was adversely affected by the untimely power cuts, which were disrupting the activities on a daily basis. With no electricity available nothing could be processed.

9.4. Your Committee was further informed that at the Provincial Offices there was very limited office space. The location of the Offices at the second floor of the Building made them user-unfriendly as they did not cater for the physically disabled and elderly members of the public. Your Committee strongly feels that the relocation of the Provincial Registry in Marondera to the ground floor, preferably the offices used by Arex should be given priority so that members of the public are not inconvenienced when they require their National documents.

10. MUTARE PROVINCIAL REGISTRY

10.1. The Mutare Provincial Registry just like the Provincial Registry in Marondera is situated on the second floor of the Building where it is not readily accessible to the physical disabled and elderly members of the public.

10.2. Your Committee urges the Ministry to urgently develop their stand No. 368 where the problem of inaccessibility can be done away with. Moreover such development will also see a huge reduction in the costs of rentals, which, at the time of the Committee's visit were unsustainable. To make matters worse the Manicaland Provincial Registry in Mutare had no toilets for the public. A new building would render such inconveniences a thing of the past.

10.3. Your Committee was informed of the manpower shortages, lack of office and staff accommodation at sub offices which had compounded the low staff morale that was experienced by the Department. It was also disturbing to your Committee to learn that it took over thirteen months for an ordinary passport to be processed. The situation was further exacerbated by lack of resources in particular, computers and stationery at Provincial, District and Sub office level

11. MASVINGO PROVINCIAL REGISTRY

11.1. Your Committee was informed that the Masvingo Provincial Registry covers seven districts, where a total of 18 sub offices had been opened. However, the major problem being faced by the Province was the shortage of office and staff accommodation. A stand that was allocated by the local authority some five years back had still not have been developed at the time of your Committee's visit.

11.2. Operational activities of the Provincial Registry were adversely affected by the electricity power cuts which were further worsened by the absence of a generator to provide back up service whenever there were power cuts. The computers were said to be offline in many instances and the Posts and Telecommunications Department took its time to respond to such situations thereby creating a lot of inconvenience and man hour losses to the Provincial Registry. Such abrupt disruptions and inconveniences saw the processing of

passports delayed from six months to more than a year during your committee's visit. To make matters worse the problem of manpower shortage did not spare the Registry. Out of an establishment of 161 there were 115 leaving a shortfall of 46. There were no computers at all at sub offices, a situation that plunged the entire operations into a quandary.

12. MIDLANDS PROVINCIAL REGISTRY

12.1. The Provincial Registry covers 8 districts where all the fourteen sub offices have been opened. A budget allocation of \$2,7 billion was given out of \$2,9 billion which had been bided for. Only \$100 million was earmarked for the 14 sub offices and the 8 district offices. Due to hyperinflation the allocation has proved to be inadequate. Out of the 14 sub offices only six issue identity cards. Problems of office and staff accommodation, and shortage of furniture are common at all the offices in the Province. Erratic fuel supplies made it extremely difficult for the supervision of district offices and sub offices to be conducted.

12.2. Manpower shortages were also experienced where 152 members of staff out of 248 were in post leaving a shortfall of 96. Generally, Conditions of service were said not to be conducive for the retention of staff and this had the effect of lowering the morale of the workforce.

13. BULAWAYO PROVINCIAL REGISTRY

13.1. A total of 22 sub offices fall under the Bulawayo Provincial Registry Out of these 19 were operational. The problem of inadequate budget allocation was one of the major challenges facing the Registry. An allocation of \$2,4 billion out of \$14,6 billion that was bided for was given. On the manpower situation there were 170 officers out of 215. About 45 more were required for the Registry to operate efficiently.

13.2. The Registry was also hard hit by the shortage of equipment. This had the effect of reducing the capacity to process passports. Your committee was informed that when the resources were available the Registry could process as many as 250 passports a day. However, due to scarcity of resources the provincial Registry had scaled down its processing to 150 passports a day. The Registry revealed to your Committee that the production of ordinary passports stopped in March 2005 due to lack of raw materials and as a result a lot of applications were still heaped at the Provincial Registry.

13.3. The Provincial Registrar informed your Committee that the situation in the sub offices throughout the Province was worsened by pathetic living conditions. For example, in the Binga District officers had to operate from caravans while at night they had to sleep in half completed structures where they found themselves at the mercy of mosquitoes. It goes without saying that they risked contracting malaria. The security of the documents, which intact are security sensitive, was greatly compromised as there were open spaces for windows on some of the structures. These documents by their nature need to be properly secured all the time. Such conditions tended to demoralize the staff to a great extent.

13.4. On the issuing of birth certificates, the process was heavily centralized. As a result it took years to get a copy of the long birth certificate. This created a huge backlog for such applications.

13.5. The Provincial Registry collected anything between 500 million - 600 million dollars on a daily basis. However, no security was provided for such revenue, which needed to be banked daily. Your Committee calls upon the Ministry to immediately take remedial measures to safeguard that money and documents.

14. BULAWAYO DISTRICT REGISTRY

14.1. The Bulawayo District Office covers six sub offices. Five of the sub offices were said to be operational with the Magwegwe sub Office yet to be opened. The District Registry made a bid of six billion dollars and was only allocated 1,4 billion dollars. This was said to be grossly inadequate by the District Registrar. As a result the sub offices had been restricted to the

issuing of death and birth certificates, as they did not have the necessary equipment and space to process other documents.

14.2. A critical shortage of manpower was compromising service delivery by the District Registry in Bulawayo. Your Committee was disturbed by the long meandering queues, which were said to be the order of the day at the Registry. The shortage of manpower had led to severe delays in the processing of National identity documents, birth and death certificates and travel documents. The establishment had 12 officers all of whom were in post, but your Committee was informed that thirty officers were needed for the efficient operation of the District Registry.

14.3. Your Committee observed the trying conditions under which the officers operated. Some of them had to receive forms in one office and then move on to the next office to process the documents. The turnout was so overwhelming such that at times the members of the public had to be turned away as the officers were unable to assist them. The District Registry was even compelled by the circumstances to combine the birth section with that of records and deaths so that at least clients could be served.

14.4. The District Registry also faced a severe shortage of stationery such as BDIA forms required for the processing of birth certificates for newly born babies. These were said to have been in short supply for the previous three months or more.

14.5. Your committee noted that the District Registry did not have a proper filing material. As a result, rodents had wrecked havoc on some of the documents which were poorly stored or heaped in the open spaces in some of the offices. These heaped forms took quite a long time to be processed because of manpower of public leading them to claim that the Registrar General's Department countrywide was ill treating them and inefficient.

15. DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION CONTROL

15.1. Your Committee conducted a fact finding visit at the Forbes Border Post where it witnessed the appalling conditions under which the officers worked. The Department operated from one office making it extremely difficult to conduct some of the activities for example, when interviews were conducted other officer had to leave the office and go outside to allow for such activities to take place. Your committee found this state of Affairs completely unacceptable. Lack of office space and the unconducive working environment was further worsened by the fact that another sister department, the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) have by far better offices which are the envy of the Immigration Officers.

15.2. Other problems encountered at the Department of Immigration Control at the Forbes Border Post were those of manpower shortage where out of an establishment of 20 the strength was 15.

15.3. Your Committee noted that the stamps used by the Immigration Officers, much as they are security items were exposed to the high risk of being misused owing to the absence of locks for individual staff where they could put them away for safekeeping. The locks have not been provided dating to as far back as two years yet the security of these stamps is paramount. The reason cited for the non availability of the locks was said to be inadequate budget to procure them. Your Committee strongly feels that this is one issue that requires urgent attention by the Ministry.

15.4. It was of concern to your Committee to observe the condition of the security fence at this Border Post. The state of disrepair of the security fence made it very possible to walk across the Border to Mozambique without passing through the check point. Such a situation made a mockery of the existence of the Border Post. Furthermore, security was gravely compromised at night because of the very poor lighting system. To this end, your Committee recommends that generators be procured to complement the power supplies from the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA).

15.5. The problem of staff transport was also a major concern at the Border Post. There were no vehicles at all.

15.6. On equipment the situation was also a cause for concern as there was no computers at all of the Immigration Control Department. In the absence of computers, one would have expected the Department to have adequate stationery but that was not the case. Items like gate passes were not available thereby undermining the activities of the Department. It was therefore, not surprising that under such conditions the staff morale was at the lowest ebb,

16. BULAWAYO IMMIGRATION CONTROL

16.1. Your Committee interviewed the Principal Immigration Officer in Bulawayo and was disturbed to learn the harsh conditions the department operated under. While the Immigration offices are located in the City Centre, the officials have to conduct their major duties at the Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo International Airport. However, they only have two unreliable vehicles to conduct their duties. Your Committee was informed that ideally two additional vehicles which are reliable would alleviate the transport problem at the Immigration Control Department in Bulawayo. It was also disheartening to your Committee to observe some Immigration Officers putting on mixed up attire as they revealed that there was an acute shortage of uniforms for the Department. The officers informed your Committee that they had gone for a long time without being issued with uniforms. Your Committee learnt that the situation was also worsened by the officers' failure to acquire reflective clothing when conducting their duties at the Airport. The regulations at the Airport required that for the officers to go into the runway and subsequently on to the planes when escorting unwanted persons, for example, they had to wear such reflective clothing. However due to the non availability of such clothing escorts were not possible. Generally, the Department was also facing serious problems of conducting supervision throughout its area of jurisdiction because of the erratic fuel supplies.

17. CONCLUSION

Your Committee concluded that the Ministry of Home Affairs Departments are operating under very trying conditions where the scarce financial resources are being constantly eroded away by inflation. The low morale within the personnel, lack of office and staff accommodation and equipment all has severely compromised the operational efficiency of the Departments. At times the situation has been so bad so much that staff has been known to work as officers by day and vendors by night. This is a serious cause for concern to your Committee

18. RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the observations made during the enquiries, your Committee recommends the following:-

- (a) that the problems of deteriorating conditions of service and poor remuneration which has bedeviled the Ministry leading to acute manpower shortages be tackled at a level higher than the Ministry of Home Affairs alone i. e inter ministerial level involving the Ministries of Finance, Home Affairs and the Public Service Commission.
- (b) That the problem of lack of office space in Mutare and Masvingo be tackled as urgently as possible since some undeveloped stands that were allocated to the Department of the Registrar General are still lying idle.
- (c) That shortage of office equipment is a cause of concern and the Ministry needs to budget adequately for such equipment so that a long term solution is found to this perennial problem.
- (d) That the sewer system at the Harare Central Police Station be completely overhauled as it has outlived its life span
- (e) That security lights be installed at the Matapi Police Station,

(f) That suspects held at the various Police Cells be treated as humanely as possible as they should enjoy their rights and privileges until proven guilty.

(g) That Police Officers' accommodation be topmost priority in the Ministry's activities, since the issue compromises efficiency and effectiveness of Police Officers to unprecedented levels. Some officers end up lodging in the houses of the very suspects that they have to bring to book.

(h) That the transport situation also needs to be properly addressed as it has crippled the activities of the various Departments of the Ministry. Supervision of sub-stations has been so adversely affected so much so that it is just not possible to carry it out in certain areas. Delivery of passport application forms and other security sensitive documents like those for identity cards has also been severely compromised.

(i) That there is need to decentralize decision making to the provinces in the Department of Immigration Control.

(j) That there is need for constant coordination between Head Office and the Provinces. For example the Principal Registrar General's Department in Bulawayo bemoaned failure by high profile figures in the Minister's office within their Provincial Offices. Such visits would enhance first hand information to the Head Office as and when events occur and thin would go a long way towards affected and timeous decision making.

(k) That there is need for constant coordination between Head Office and the Provinces. For example the Provincial Registrar General's Department in Bulawayo bemoaned failure by high profile figures in the Ministry to visit their offices even though there existed the Minister's office within their Provincial Offices. Such visits would enhance first hand information to the Head Office as and when events occur and thin would go a long way towards effective and timeous decision making.

Conclusion

Finally, your Committee would like to express its appreciation to all the Ministry officials who contributed towards this report. Your Committee fervently hopes that the recommendations contained therein will be implemented and assist in enhancing the operations of the Ministry of Home Affairs.