

Profile of migrant Zimbabweans in South Africa: A pilot study

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Summary of main findings

1. Introduction

The political and economic meltdown in Zimbabwe has led to large numbers of Zimbabweans migrating to neighbouring countries and abroad. Unverified estimates put the population of Zimbabweans in South Africa alone at between two and three million, the upper range being close to a quarter of the country's population. It is against this background that the Mass Public Opinion Institute in partnership with the Zimbabwe Diaspora Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Forum and in co-operation with IDASA conducted a pilot study in Johannesburg to ascertain the profile of migrant Zimbabweans in South Africa.

The primary rationale for the exercise was that its results would feed into the design of policy, civic interventions and eventually harness a pool of skilled Zimbabweans critical for the country's future reconstruction.

A pilot survey was conducted from the beginning of June 2007 to mid-July 2007 in three suburbs of Johannesburg – Hillbrow, Berea and Yeoville – an area covering 2.9 square kilometres. A total of 4 654 [target sample was 5 000] migrant Zimbabweans who had relocated to earn a living in South Africa (excluding mere visitors) were interviewed face-to-face using non-probabilistic sampling methods. Probability sampling techniques could not be used because there is no sampling frame of Zimbabweans in South Africa.

There are large number of undocumented migrant Zimbabweans in South Africa that renders the target population to be hidden. Reliance on non-probabilistic sampling meant that field researchers could only interview those individuals who were available and willing to participate in the study after being appraised of its merits. Willingness to participate depended on trust and persuasion by Zimbabwean civil society activists working with communities in the surveyed areas who had been trained to undertake the study.

The absence of a sampling frame of Zimbabweans in South Africa suggests that caution should be exercised in generalizing the results of the survey to the entire population.

Notwithstanding, the suburbs surveyed are well-known resident areas for migrant Zimbabweans in Johannesburg so that the results could confidently be treated as fairly giving a glimpse of the broader picture. What follows are highlights of the main findings.

2. Migrating patterns

Migrating to South Africa, especially for employment, has been a traditional feature for all Southern African peoples including Zimbabweans. The survey captured arrivals of migrant Zimbabweans in South Africa since 1979 to mid- July 2007. From 1979 to 1999, the number that migrated was a mere 8% (354). However, since 2000 (the year of farm invasions) to the time of the survey the number that has migrated to South Africa has shot up to 92% (4 300). The graph below shows annual trends since 1998. Arrivals began to increase exponentially from 2002, the year the last presidential election was held. The 800 half-yearly arrival figure for 2007 is indicative of a high increase in the current year. In general the present trend of migration to South Africa by Zimbabweans is a product of the political and economic meltdown in the country as it significantly accelerated from 2000.

3. Demographic characteristics

The gender breakdown of migrant Zimbabweans was 41% female and 59% male. The gender make-up is increasing becoming even reflecting movement of whole families unlike before when one breadwinner would migrate to fend for the family left home.

The age profile of respondents showing over 85% below 40 years old is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Age Profile

Age Range	% of Respondents
<18 years	1%
18-20 years	5%
21-30 years	40%
31-40 years	40%
41-50 years	13%
51+ years old	1%

It is evident that there is an insignificant migration of older people. Active young people are the ones leaving in droves for South Africa, the majority being in the 21-40 age groups. The fact that a large group leave after attaining the age of 21 means that most leave after completion of post-secondary education. The marital statuses of respondents were 36% single, 55% married, 3% widowed and 6% divorced or separated. The majority have got families.

Table 2 below shows the number of dependants supported in South Africa by the respondents while Table 3 shows those supported in Zimbabwe. The dependants supported in Zimbabwe could well include members of the extended family. On a comparative basis, there are more dependants supported in Zimbabwe than those being supported in South Africa. This could be an indication that most migrants left their families home. For instance, 45% of respondents have no dependants living with them in South Africa. On the other hand, there is a trend of whole families moving as a significant 43% of respondents have moved with one to two family members.

Table 2: Dependants Supported in South Africa

Number of Dependants	% of respondents
None	45%
1-2	43%
3-4	11%
5+	1%

Table 3: Dependants Supported in Zimbabwe

Number of Dependants	% of respondents
None	7%
1-2	21%
3-4	42%
5+	30%

4. Reasons for migrating

Most cited reasons for leaving Zimbabwe were political reasons (58%), economic crisis (51%) and employment (31%) in that order. Respondents were asked to give a maximum of two major reasons for leaving Zimbabwe and hence the percentages do not add up to 100%. In any case the reasons can be said be mutually inclusive. For instance, a person politically driven out of Zimbabwe would still need to survive economically by securing employment in the host country. Summed up under political reasons included political beatings, persecution, torture, denial of human and property rights, operation Murambatsvina and Gukurahundi. At the time of migrating to South Africa, 32% of the respondents reported that they were unemployed.

On the basis of a single most cited major reason for migrating to South Africa, it was observed that the reasons were time –varying over the years. From 1979 to 2001 the search for better employment was the major reason for migrating to South Africa. Political reasons only became predominant from 2002 onwards. However, the first half of 2007 (period covered by this survey) has so far seen employment and economic reasons outstripping political reasons. Table 5 below illustrates the trend.

Table 5: Time –varying Reasons for Migrating to South Africa

Year	Reason given for leaving Zimbabwe			
	Employment	Economic	Political	Other
1979-1997	36%	27%	33%	3%
1998	40%	33%	24%	3%
1999	31%	37%	21%	11%
2000	42%	23%	31%	4%
2001	46%	19%	32%	3%
2002	22%	17%	56%	5%
2003	20%	23%	54%	3%
2004	16%	25%	55%	4%
2005	22%	29%	44%	5%
2006	34%	27%	35%	4%
Mid-2007	47%	31%	18%	4%

Further analysis of reasons according to gender revealed that men left for more or less the same reasons as women. However, while there are a significant number of women leaving because of political reasons, men who leave for the same reason are in the majority.

Table 6 below is illustrative.

Table 6: Reasons given according to Gender

Gender	Reason for Migrating to South Africa (n=4642 valid cases)			
	Employment	Economic	Political	Other
Female	47%	40%	37%	54%
Male	53%	60%	63%	46%

Most cited assistance requirements of respondents are as listed in Table 7 below. Respondents were allowed to respond to more than one assistance requirement and hence the percentages do not necessarily add to 100%. The most cited need was assistance to secure refugee status. Apparently, the cited percentage for refugee status more or less tallies with the most cited political reasons for leaving (58%). Assistance to set up own business seems to be correlated with difficulties in getting employment commensurate with qualifications which again is associated with lack of lack of legal status.

Table 7: Immediate Needs of Migrants Assistance

Requirements Cited	Frequency %
Refugee status	57%
Setting up own small business	46%
Work permit	37%
Employment commensurate with qualifications	35%
UN assistance to be repatriated back home	4%
HIV counselling and treatment in government hospitals	4%
Legal counselling	3%

Organizations cited as rendering some assistance included Zimbabwean NGOs (including churches) based in South Africa (29%), South African NGOs (5%), South African Government (3%) and South African Churches (2%). About 60% of respondents reported as getting no assistance from anyone.

Specific organizations frequently cited as rendering assistance to migrants are listed in Table 8 below. Most prominent is the Zimbabwe Political Victims Association (ZIPOVA) again lending weight to one major reason for leaving Zimbabwe.

Table 8: Organizations Assisting Migrants

Organization	Frequency of citings
Zimbabwe Political Victims Association (ZIPOVA)	22%
Southern African Women's Institute in Migration Affairs (SAWIMA)	6%
Zimbabwe Torture Victims Project (ZTVP)	4%
Department of Home Affairs	2%
Methodist Church	1%
Mthwakazi Arts & Culture	1%

There were many other organizations (mainly churches) which were cited but whose frequencies individually were less than 1%.

5. SKILLS BASE AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

The education/qualification levels of respondents at the time of migrating are depicted in Table 9 below. Nearly 40% of the respondents had post-secondary education and over 60% having completed secondary education before leaving.

Table 9: Education Profile

Education/Qualification Level	Percentage
University degree	4%
Professional qualification (incl. teachers and nurses)	15%
Artisan qualification	3%
Post-secondary Diploma/Certificate	10%
Secondary Education	62%
Primary Education and other	6%

Over 15% of respondents reported that they had acquired additional qualifications and training in various technical and non-technical fields in South Africa which have helped them to be gainfully employed. The profile of economic activities of respondents in South Africa is depicted in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Profile of Economic Activities/Professions

Profession/Activity	Frequency	Percentage
Domestic worker/Gardener	513	11.0%
Security	617	13.3%
Hairdressing	212	4.6%
Shop assistant	279	6.0%
Teacher	324	7.0%
Driver	115	2.5%
Health professionals	160	3.4%
Hawking	442	9.5
Multiple professions	139	3.0%
Artisans	413	8.9%
Hospitality workers	585	12.6%
Other	885	18.4%
Total	4654	100%

Only 20% of respondents are self-employed and the rest are in formal employment of one form or another. Given business opportunity the majority reported that they would endeavour into retail (24%) and services (35%) industries. However, most cited constraints include lack of access to credit (62%), harassment by locals and the police (18%) and lack of skills (12%).

The monthly gross earnings of respondents is as follows:

Table 11: Profile of Earnings

Monthly gross earnings	% of respondents
R1000 or less	21%
R1001 - R2000	38%
R2001 - R4000	27%
Over R4000	14%

Evidently, the majority earn below R2000 per month, possibly an indication of exploitation by virtue of having no legal status or purely because of a measure of desperation by virtue of the difficulty in securing employment. In any case, assistance to get employment commensurate with qualifications is one most cited assistance requirements. Hence, the majority are not employed in jobs that are commensurate with their skills or training.

Despite having to survive on meagre earnings, nearly 90% of respondents remit every month some money and/or groceries back home to support their own and members of the extended family. The value of remittances on a monthly basis is tabulated below.

Table 12: Remittances

Monthly Remittances	% of Respondents
None	11%
<R50	2%
R50-R100	7%
R101-R200	18%
R201-R500	40%
R501-R1000	19%
>R1000	3%

On a weighted median average every respondent remits R290 rands every month.

The channels through which remittances are sent home are largely informal as only 2% of these remittances are sent through the official banking channel, a clear indictment of flawed exchange rate policies in Zimbabwe. Table 13 below is illustrative.

Table 13: Mode of Remittance Transfer

Mode of transfer	% of respondents using mode
Taxi/bus drivers	69%
Friends/relatives visiting home	20%
Official banking channel	2%
Other channels	9%

The majority of respondents (59%) have no access to banking services (have no bank accounts) in South Africa. Again this percentage is close to the percentage of respondents requiring assistance to secure refugee status something indicative of lack of legal status. In order to open a bank account in South Africa one has to be legally in the country with a verifiable residential address and source of livelihood.

A total of 41% of the respondents save through informal savings clubs. This is expected as the majority have no access to formal financial services.

The magnitudes of respondents' savings on a monthly basis is as follows:

Table 14: Migrant Savings

Monthly value of savings	% of respondents saving
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Zero	50%
<R50	7%
R50-R100	11%
R101-R200	11%
R201-R500	14%
R501-R1000	6%
>R1000	1%

Notably, 50% of respondents do not save, at least in South Africa. It is however possible that some of the remittances they sent home are not entirely for consumption but saved in one form or another. Hence, it is debatable whether they do not save at all.

6. Aspirations for the future

Should the political and economic situation in Zimbabwe stabilize, the majority of the migrants (66%) intend to go back and be economically active, 32% of which would like to go into business. On the other hand, 34% of the sampled migrants intend to continue living in South Africa, but 7% of these intend to have their retirement in Zimbabwe.

Home link is very strong as 58% of respondents do visit home once every year, 8% more regularly (once or several times in six months) and the rest do so irregularly.

7. Conclusion

The results of the survey give an insightful glimpse of the plight of migrant Zimbabweans in South Africa and the increased rate at which the migration is taking place of late. A notable feature is that the majority of migrants surveyed left Zimbabwe because of political reasons but lack legal status in South Africa. Consequently, the majority are in dire need to be assisted to secure refugee status or any other form of residence permit. Lack of legal status means there are many migrants who are undocumented. It impacts on employment, remuneration, crime control, repatriation and skills retention. The pilot survey is limited in scope in that it was limited to only three small suburbs of Johannesburg yet it is common knowledge that migrant Zimbabweans are found in all corners of South Africa. The limited scope is also evident in that the survey only captured a narrow skills base and migrants within the lower living standard measure (LSM 1 - 5). A national survey that combines both field work and website survey methods would give a more representative picture. Ideally, such survey would need to cover the major cities of the country, farming and mining regions. The assumption is that immigrants are likely to go to these areas where chances of getting employment are generally high.

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