

Press Release

Zimbabwe: Large internally displaced population in growing need of assistance and protection, says report

Geneva, 21 August 2008: The large number of people forcibly displaced within Zimbabwe are seeing their humanitarian situation become more desperate, according to an Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) report released today, *The many faces of displacement: IDPs in Zimbabwe*.

The most recent wave of displacement follows the political violence which has continued since the country's March elections. However this is just the latest example of forced displacement in the country. Several hundred thousand Zimbabweans have been forced from their homes since 2000 by a number of government initiatives, including rural land reforms and urban demolition campaigns.

While millions of Zimbabweans are struggling with the country's economic meltdown, these internally displaced people (IDPs) have less capacity to cope with the hardships of Zimbabwe's shrinking economy and diminishing livelihood opportunities.

"In a situation characterised by general poverty and lack of access to basic services, these populations remain particularly vulnerable as a result of their displacement", said Kate Halff, Head of the IDMC. "Their situation has been aggravated by a government imposed ban on humanitarian field operations, in place since early June".

On 21 July, the government's ZANU-PF party and the two factions of the MDC agreed to "work together to ensure the safety of any displaced persons and their safe return home". However, ongoing political violence poses a severe obstacle to any consideration of return.

"The Government of Zimbabwe has yet to acknowledge the reality and scale of internal displacement and to take responsibility for addressing the assistance and protection needs of its displaced citizens", Kate Halff said.

For more information on the internal displacement crisis in Zimbabwe, contact Kate Halff at the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre on +41 22-799 07 03, +41 795 51 82 57 (mobile), or visit www.internal-displacement.org/countries/zimbabwe.

The Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre is the leading international body monitoring internal displacement worldwide. Regularly updated information on all situations of conflict-induced displacement is available from the IDMC's website, www.internal-displacement.org.