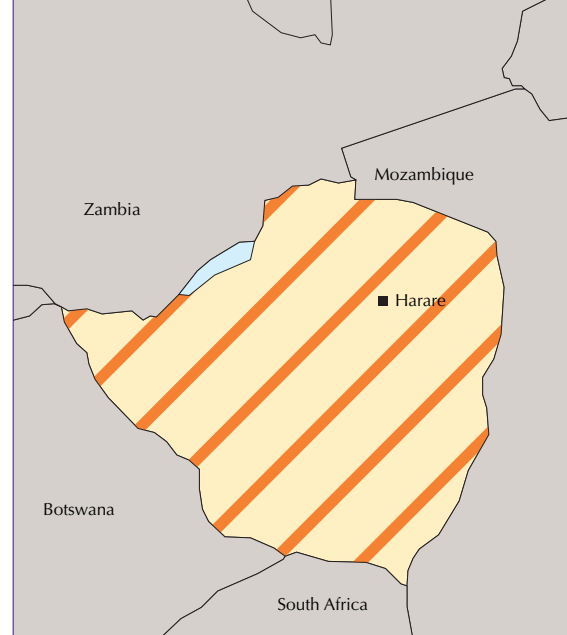


Zimbabwe

Quick facts

Number of IDPs	570,000–1,000,000
Percentage of total population	4.2%–7.4%
Start of current displacement situation	2000 (fast-track land reform programme); 2005 (Operation Murambatsvina); 2006 (Operation Chikoro-koza Chapera); 2008 (political violence)
New displacement in 2008	36,000
Returns in 2008	Undetermined
Causes of displacement	Generalised violence (2008 political displacement), human rights violations (all other displacement)
Human development index	151



It is impossible to say with confidence how many Zimbabweans are internally displaced. UNDP estimated that a million farm workers and their families lost their homes and livelihoods as a result of the fast-track land reform programme which started in 2000 and which led to the almost complete collapse of the commercial farming sector in Zimbabwe. The UN estimated that 570,000 people were made homeless by the urban demolitions of Operation Murambatsvina (“clear the filth”) in 2005, while the government destroyed the homes of thousands of informal mine workers in Operation Chikorokoza Chapera (“stop the gold panning”) in late 2006 and early 2007. Estimates of the number of people displaced by the 2008 electoral violence range between 36,000 and 200,000. To complicate matters, a substantial proportion of the displaced have been displaced multiple times by successive operations. Thus many displaced farm workers who went to the towns and cities or to mining areas were later caught up in Operation Murambatsvina or Operation Chikorokoza Chapera. Moreover, some people who were internally displaced have since joined the estimated three to four million Zimbabweans who have left the country altogether.

The ZANU-PF government led by President Mugabe refused to acknowledge that its policies and actions had led to internal displacement. Indeed it objected to the use of the phrase “internally displaced people” with reference to displaced Zimbabweans, and agencies used the phrase “mobile and vulnerable populations” instead. As a result, it has been impossible for comprehensive surveys of IDPs in Zimbabwe to be conducted. However, the 2007 Food Security and Nutrition Assessment conducted by the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC) found that about eight per cent of respondents had been involuntarily displaced in the past five years. Based on recent population estimates for Zimbabwe of between 11 and 12 million people, this would indicate a total number of IDPs in Zimbabwe of between 880,000 and 960,000 people.

Political violence in the run-up to the second round of the presidential elections in June 2008 led to the displacement of tens of thousands as the homes of suspected opposition supporters were burned down and people were

threatened, attacked and forced to flee the constituencies in which they were registered to vote. By the end of the year most of these displaced people had returned home, but some continued to fear for their safety because of ongoing political violence. Further farm invasions connected to the political violence led to new displacement of both farmers and farm workers during the year. Meanwhile a ban on humanitarian operations between June and August 2008 made it impossible for agencies to reach beneficiaries including displaced people.

Lack of access to adequate shelter, food, clean water and medical services are all serious concerns for IDPs, as are access to education and livelihoods. However, with the rapidly deteriorating economic situation in Zimbabwe which has brought the country to the brink of a humanitarian emergency, many non-displaced people are faced with similar problems. Estimates put the unemployment rate at the end of 2008 at 94 per cent, and Zimbabwe’s health and education systems had all but collapsed.

Although almost the entire population could thus be considered as vulnerable, IDPs are likely to find it much harder to rebuild their lives following political changes and to make use of new opportunities brought by an improvement in Zimbabwe’s general economic situation. Displaced people, and particularly those people who have been displaced more than once, start from a much lower base than non-displaced people. At the same time, tens of thousands of former farm workers and their families who have nowhere else to go are currently stuck on commercial farms that no longer operate due to the fast-track land reform programme; they continue to be at risk of displacement by whoever claims ownership of the land.

UN agencies and international NGOs have struggled to respond to the needs of IDPs, in part because of obstruction by the authorities and in part because of a lack of clear arrangements for leadership on IDP protection. Durable solutions for Zimbabwe’s displaced people will depend on effective urban planning and the adoption of new building regulations for towns and cities, as well as a new programme for the distribution of farm land.