

# MIGRATION AND DISEMBEDMENT





## Zimbabwe's global citizens in 'Harare North': Livelihood strategies of Zimbabweans in the United Kingdom

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**THIS CHAPTER FOCUSES ON** Zimbabwean immigrants who formed part of the wave that 'stormed' the United Kingdom, dubbed Harare North, from the late 1990s into the new millennium. The purpose of the chapter is to provide a sketch of this new group of migrants and compare their experiences with those of other groups. It is hoped that a more detailed analysis of the experience will contribute to a better understanding of the livelihoods of the migrants themselves, as well as their communities in Zimbabwe and the UK host communities.

The chapter seeks to underscore a link between the Zimbabwean social, political and economic crises from 1998 to 2009 and the roles played by Zimbabwe's global citizens during these crises. Global citizens (the diaspora or so-called international brain drain) are the major providers of emergency and development aid to Zimbabwe.<sup>1</sup> They can play, will play and should be given the space to play a constructive role in the revival of Zimbabwe, especially in areas of human capital development, skills, education, health, commerce, investment and international trade. Compared to the overvalued role of traditional donors and aid agencies, the role of global citizens is largely marginalised in development discourse. In the context of Zimbabwe, it needs to be located alongside an understanding of the crisis and the lived experiences of Zimbabwe's global citizens. The Zimbabwean crises have demonstrated that Zimbabwe's social, economic and political spaces are not confined to the territorial or geographic space within Zimbabwean borders. In the present context, a global perspective is more helpful than a narrow outlook focusing only on Zimbabwe itself.

In discussions of the international and humanitarian aspects of the crises, little is said about those Zimbabweans who have left for other countries in the region and globally. Yet there are many Zimbabwean diaspora groups, networks and businesses that have mushroomed, and act to address needs of Zimbabweans both abroad and at home.<sup>2</sup> While the Southern Africa Migration Project has devoted much attention to the migration of Zimbabweans to South Africa, there is little about

migration to other countries and on the lived experiences of Zimbabweans in the host communities.<sup>3</sup> Abuse of their human rights at the hands of host communities and officials, for example, is a subject hardly discussed at international forums.

This chapter contributes to an understanding of the lived experiences of Zimbabweans living outside Zimbabwe and the impact this has on communities (in Zimbabwe and the United Kingdom in this case) and on the migrants themselves.

## Conceptual and methodological frameworks

A contested process, migration is a sensitive topic to research. This chapter is based on a study undertaken between 2003 and 2004 by a group of Zimbabwean researchers based in the UK, coordinated by the author. The study confirms the inappropriateness of survey methods that use postal and self-completion questionnaires. The researchers used snowball methods to identify potential respondents whereby contacts from everyday life (work, church, educational institutions and others) were used to identify migrant Zimbabweans and build a pool of potential respondents. When a degree of familiarity between researcher and potential respondent was established, the respondent was introduced to the research project and invited to participate by completing a questionnaire. Despite these measures, only 20 per cent of the questionnaires left for self-completion or posted for completion were returned or completed. In contrast, it was possible to complete all questionnaires attempted through telephone and face-to-face interviews. Candidates who did not complete the questionnaire 'felt uncomfortable' writing down responses, although during conversations they were prepared to talk about almost all of the issues on the questionnaire. This chapter is based on a sample of 25 completed questionnaires complemented by field observations and key informant discussions.

The respondents had left Zimbabwe between 1998 and 2002 and had settled largely in London and South East England. Sixty per cent were female, aged between 28 and 40 at the time of the interviews; the male respondents were between 29 and 45. At the time when they left Zimbabwe, 80 per cent of the respondents had a job there and 70 per cent had a solid education base (a university degree, a college level diploma or an 'O' level qualification). Once in the UK, 80 per cent of the respondents had enrolled in an educational institution or on a training course. Before leaving Zimbabwe, 40 per cent of the respondents had no property there. At the time of the interview, 13 per cent of the respondents had purchased property in the UK.

Although the design of the questionnaire had a quantitative dimension, this chapter does not use statistics and prefers to summarise life stories told by the respondents. These experiences and testimonies bring out the integrated nature

of the migration experience, which is often lost in the reductive use of figures. Furthermore, a small sample is only useful as a source of suggestive insights rather than broad generalisations. Insights were also obtained through discussions in which no questionnaires were completed and through participant observations. Conceptually, this study relies on migration systems theory (see Harris 1995). This theory sees migration as a micro-macro process rather than a single event. It recognises both national and international as well as community and individual linkages. At the macro level, economic and historical structures such as colonial influence, institutional harmony, languages, communication links and regulatory regimes are significant factors affecting migrant dynamics. Thus for Zimbabwe, its history as a former British colony partly explains why the UK has been a primary European destination for immigrants. At the micro level are the individual, family and community dynamics where cultural and social capital is deployed to support livelihoods.<sup>4</sup> Households and families are seen as dynamic multi-located institutions that make short-term decisions in order to survive now and in the future: decisions made in one place influence and are influenced by processes in distant and diverse places.

Figures show that Africa's contribution to the global refugee pool is the largest of any continent with the bulk of these refugees remaining as internally displaced people within their own countries and in Africa (IDMC 2009). Statistics often fail to include migration within Zimbabwe (internally displaced) and to southern Africa. This is largely because of the legal status and terminology used to categorise migrants in which the focus is on 'refugees and asylum seekers'. The result is that Zimbabwean crisis-related migrants in places such as South Africa and the UK remain outside official attention. For example, in 2003 *The Independent* newspaper (UK) reported that up to 400 000 Zimbabweans were living in the UK (half of them illegally) and that at least 300 were leaving Zimbabwe daily to join friends and relatives in the UK (*The Independent* 18 January 2003). This referred to the period before Zimbabwe was categorised as a visa country in November 2002. At that rate, it means that over 100 000 Zimbabweans would have come to the UK annually. It is doubtful whether the figure of 300 new arrivals a day could have been sustained consistently over a long period. Not all travellers from the country would be coming to stay – many went back – but there is no system in the UK to monitor this. A 2008 study by the UK Border Agency estimated that there were approximately 100 000 Zimbabweans in the UK.<sup>5</sup>

In 2002, The United Nations Development Programme contracted the Scientific and Industrial Research and Development Centre (SIRDC) to conduct an analysis of the cause and effect of the brain drain in Zimbabwe. They established that there were '479 348 Zimbabweans in the Diaspora...mainly in the United Kingdom, Botswana and South Africa' (SIRDC 2003: 42). The report admits that

this figure is low and that it underestimates the number of Zimbabweans in South Africa. However, it also states that it cannot agree with the claims of phenomenal exodus made by newspapers at the time. The difficulty is that official statistics only report breadwinners and not dependents and, as noted earlier, there is no system to track return migration.

The lack of reliable UK official statistics on return migration extends to movement of dead bodies out of the UK. For such movement, notification and permission to the coroner is given on Form 103. However, there are no systems at the coroner's offices nor anywhere else to consolidate and keep track of the numbers of bodies moved from the UK to countries like Zimbabwe.<sup>6</sup> Anecdotal evidence indicates that body counts of Zimbabweans moved have risen sharply since the late 1990s. Unlike Chinese migrants in the UK, Zimbabwean deaths in the UK are not due to old age.<sup>7</sup> This aspect of bereavement, death and burial in the diaspora is addressed elsewhere (see Mbiba 2010).

## Zimbabweans in Britain: Some preliminary observations

What is the profile of the Zimbabwean migrant in the UK? Zimbabwean community members are likely to have, on average, better academic qualifications than the host community and other African communities. In 2004, the Home Office published a skills audit of refugees conducted over a three-month period and found that of all the groups surveyed, the Zimbabweans had the highest levels of education.<sup>8</sup> This is largely because of the general investment they put into education as the route to progress, as well as the higher level of literacy achieved by the ZANU-PF government in Zimbabwe in the 1980s. Coupled with this, migration to the UK is an expensive exercise afforded only by those from middle- and upper-class families who also happen to be better educated. Thus, prior to 2000, Zimbabweans were a favoured group with regards to UK employment.

Until November 2002, Zimbabweans did not have visa restrictions that applied to most African nationals coming to the UK. This, in addition to their higher education and perceived positive work ethics, meant that employers had fewer hurdles to deal with if they employed a Zimbabwean, compared to the situation with 'visa nationals'.

As political and diplomatic tensions between Harare and London worsened, the numbers of Zimbabweans refused entry into the UK increased. Respondents described Zimbabwean experiences at the hands of immigration officers as 'traumatic', 'demeaning', 'frustrating' and 'utter human rights abuse'. In the UK, the Zimbabwe Association was one of the groups that spoke out about the ill-treatment of immigrants. However, as an asylum-focused organisation, it did not articulate

broader human rights issues, such as conditions experienced in the workplace or in attempts to access services, but sought to highlight alleged dangers faced by refused asylum seekers forced to return to Zimbabwe or held in UK detention centres.

Unlike some immigrant communities concentrated in specific regions and inner city areas of large cities, Zimbabweans appear in every corner of the UK. Settlement in a particular place appears to depend on a combination of factors, such as Zimbabweans' general perceptions of class, access to employment opportunities, access to services, especially education colleges, access to good schools for children and availability of affordable housing.

For most Zimbabweans, settlement in a low-density residential neighbourhood is considered an ideal indicator of success (in colonial Zimbabwe, these were whites-only residential areas). They have no qualms settling in places such as London's Eltham, Bromley, Bexley and Kent, which other African communities refer to as 'those racist places'.<sup>9</sup> The health and care industry (old people's homes) and warehouses are major sectors where Zimbabweans found employment, mainly during the 1997–2004 period. Consequently, they have ended up in locations where old people are concentrated or wherever care services are needed. Southend-on-Sea (a former fishing industry node) is one such area, with an ageing British population in need of care and a thriving Zimbabwean community. Hull, Southampton and Brighton are areas with similar communities. There is a good chance that a black person one comes across in small and remote agricultural towns all over the country may be Zimbabwean. Cleaning toilets and care work (derogatorily labelled 'BBC' – 'British Bottom Cleaners' – by Zimbabweans back home) is something most people would not want to be identified with in Zimbabwe (label subsequently adopted by McGregor 2007). Those doing such work initially sought employment in remote places where there was a low risk of meeting travellers likely to report this back home. However, a survey carried out in 2005 found that care work constituted the largest single occupational category of work amongst Zimbabweans (Bloch 2005).

Those who shun care work (mostly men) are concentrated in industrial areas where order pickers in warehouses, sorting and packing workers and bakery workers are needed. Areas of London along the lower Thames, such as Greenwich, Woolwich, Belvedere and Erith, have such employment opportunities and Zimbabweans have settled within easy travelling distance to these areas. These patterns appear to be repeated in other metropolitan areas of the UK, such as the Birmingham–Coventry–Wolverhampton area, the Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and Doncaster areas as well as Glasgow. Zimbabweans are also concentrated in the Slough area (now referred to as '*kwaChirau*' – an area in the Mashonaland West province of Zimbabwe whose name rhymes with the pronunciation of 'Slough'). Reading, Luton, Leicester and Bedford are other areas with significant concentrations. After initially settling in London,

Zimbabweans with families have often opted to move to these smaller towns where house rentals are lower but which still allow them access to London and other major cities. There are emerging settlement patterns with individuals from the same region in Zimbabwe concentrated in the same region in the UK with suggestions that Leeds and North Yorkshire is dominated by those from Matabeleland, while Luton is home to 'maZezuru'.<sup>10</sup>

More recently, those Zimbabweans who have applied for asylum from within the UK have been subject to a dispersal policy that resettles such people away from London and South East England. The settlement pattern of white Zimbabweans takes a slightly different pattern with discernible concentrations in regions like Surrey, Hampshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Devon and Nottinghamshire.

## Zimbabweans taking the United Kingdom by storm

Earlier, the chapter referred to the wave of Zimbabweans that 'stormed' the UK at the end of the 1990s and the new millennium. While this may refer to the numbers, there are other ways in which the presence of Zimbabweans was and is very noticeable in the everyday life of the United Kingdom. As described in the preceding section, Zimbabweans have aided the suburbanisation of black Africans in the UK and have become visible in almost every sector of the job market. For example, according to *The Economist*, in 2001, Zimbabwean nurses and those from South Africa obtained the 'the most work permits' to work in the United Kingdom.<sup>11</sup> A later section will expose that the 'storming' was not only about headcount and geographical spread but also about the kinds of activities and jobs they have taken up such as in the social care industry.

In the health and education sector, figures from Buckinghamshire University (BUCU) illustrate the patterns of growth in numbers of individuals from Zimbabwe (see Figure 4.1). In numerical terms, women have dominated the migration of Zimbabweans to the UK with health and education providing a source of livelihood to a large proportion.

The figures shown support the fact that the migration of Zimbabweans to the United Kingdom has been a female-led process; women will determine the future of Zimbabwe's new global generations.

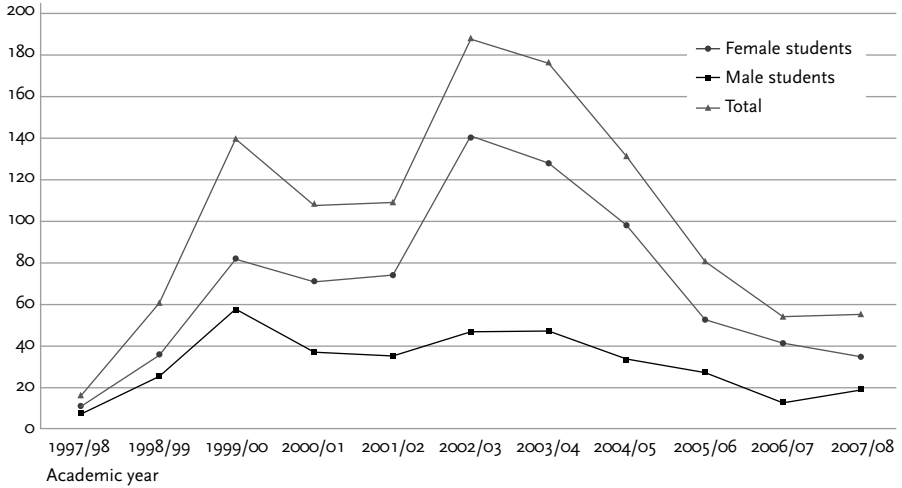
Figures 4.2 and 4.3 highlight the impact of the visa regime implemented by the UK from November 2002.

In the post-2002 period, when Zimbabwe became a visa nation, it is very likely that the numbers of new entrants has dropped. This affects not only student numbers but also all other categories such as asylum seekers, and work permit applications.



**FIGURE 4.1** *New students declaring Zimbabwean nationality registered for diploma and first degree courses at BCUC*

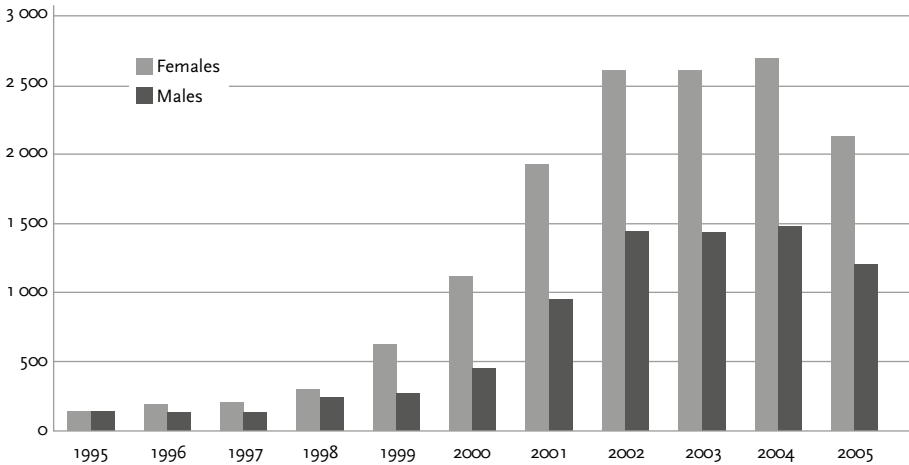
Diploma and first degree students



Source: BCUC Head of Management Services, 25 June 2004 and 27 February 2009.<sup>12</sup>

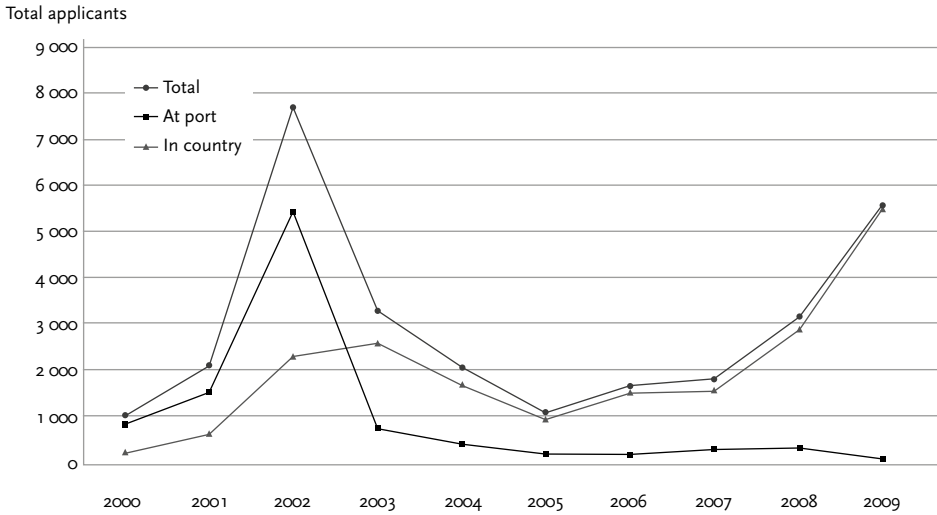
**FIGURE 4.2** *Zimbabweans granted work permits in the United Kingdom*

Numbers



Source: Immigration and Nationality Directorate Freedom of Information, 2006; see also Home Office Statistical Bulletin, Control of Immigration: Statistics UK for the years 2001–2008.<sup>13</sup>

**FIGURE 4.3** *Zimbabwean asylum applications to the United Kingdom*



Source: Home Office, Research Development and Statistics Directorate, Croydon.<sup>14</sup>

There is a major item on Zimbabwe or Zimbabweans in the press (tv and newspapers) almost every week. Stories of Zimbabwean asylum seekers, HIV/AIDS among Zimbabwean groups (such as nurses), and crime stories (especially relating to domestic violence and related murders), have competed with those on the politics of the Zimbabwe crisis and the response (or lack of it) of the international community. In 2005 Zimbabwe even provided its own vibrant barn-storming *Big Brother* contestant in cardiac nurse Makosi Musambasi who, amid controversy, survived to the last day eventually coming out in third place.

## Exclusions and understanding the British

Beyond the legal immigration conditions that plague many immigrants, economic and social survival is about overcoming multiple unexpected barriers. 'You have to prove legality at every stage,' one respondent commented. In particular, Zimbabweans in Britain often experience exclusionary forces that operate in the job market. These have to do with unwritten codes of practice, preferences and behaviours. A respondent used a combination of proverbs and emotional recollections to capture this feeling:

My life here has taught me that you have to understand the British....To know what is happening to you, you have to understand their language. When I say

language, I do not mean English. I do not mean that you have to know how to speak English. Of course you do. What I mean is...that language which is not written, the signs and symbols, which they use to communicate among themselves. When they don't want you to know, they will always find a way to exclude you.<sup>15</sup>

Even those with decent jobs often feel frustrated at work and consider moving elsewhere. A graduate nurse reflected:

Frustration...maybe go to America? But then although there is good money there, there are problems as well. It is far from home but the most critical issue is the litigation culture. For a nurse you have to consider this seriously. Again, you are already settled here so moving may not be the best... greener pastures are not always green when you get there.<sup>16</sup>

Traditionally, migration within and from Zimbabwe was a male-led and male-dominated process whatever phase one looks at – be it migration to South Africa's gold mines in the 1800s or colonial-day migration to cities such as Bulawayo and the then Salisbury and to mining towns, plantation towns or South Africa in the 1970s. In the 1980s and 1990s, migration to South Africa was still male-dominated (Dobson 1998). However, the 1990s saw a transformation of industry in Europe consolidating the move of labour away from extractive sectors such as agriculture towards less labour intensive sectors. Associated with this has been the rise of female labour coupled with the casualisation of labour. Women now dominate in most service sectors while at the same time no job is permanent. In this environment, the rights and social support of workers, especially migrants, have been eroded. This in part is the context within which female nurses and teachers were the favoured recruits to the service sector of the UK (such as the health, care and teaching sectors). Women, whose incomes were much lower in the home country, consider that they have found 'emancipation' in the new economy in Britain.

For Zimbabwe, the exodus of nurses to the UK became significant around or soon after 1996 when the economy, salaries and working conditions of civil servants declined dramatically. Professionals dissatisfied with working conditions in Zimbabwe have also moved to neighbouring countries, especially Botswana and South Africa, as is well-documented for education and health professionals (see Gaidzanwa 1999; Mutizwa-Mangiza 1996; Polzer 2008; Tevera & Chikanda 2009). As with teachers, the role of recruiting agencies for nurses was significant (although no agency-recruited nurses were interviewed for this study). Two broad trends can be identified: (a) school leavers and other non-health professionals who came to the UK to enrol on nursing courses; and (b) qualified nurses who only needed to do

a short 'conversion' course that enabled them to work as full professionals in the National Health Service. There was also a large group of workers who came to work as carers, with training given on the job. Given the bias towards female recruitment into nursing in Zimbabwe, as well as the female preference for jobs such as care assistants, the recruitment of nurses from Zimbabwe into the UK could be described as a process that further expanded 'the feminisation of labour' and migration.

Until 2002, in contrast to other college courses, there were no fees to pay on nursing courses in the UK. In fact, nursing students were paid a £500 monthly stipend and allowed to work. Given their status as trainee nurses, they received a higher hourly pay than did 'unqualified workers' working as casual care assistants. However, recent policy changes mean that nursing is no longer attractive although it remains the major route to a livelihood in the UK. In 2002, the UK government abolished the no-fee policy for non-EU citizens. The government argued that migrants were misusing the system as a way to get work permits and to make money.

According to one respondent operating a nursing recruitment agency, the second major change related to the regulation of nursing homes and care agencies: since 2002, hospitals have been restricted in their use of nursing agencies. Similar regulations have affected care homes. This has resulted in a reduced demand for agency staff and closure of nursing homes. The regulations for nurses have also changed for those with work permits (non-EU nationals): they can now work for only one hospital or institution, namely the institution that supported their application for a work permit. In practice, they can now no longer offer their services to nursing agencies, even during their free time. Thus, for Zimbabweans, the potential for raising money in a short time is now constrained. It has not yet disappeared, but as a respondent put it, 'We are bonded into slavery'.<sup>17</sup>

These changes in the employment of nurses are already the norm for most workers who get work permits to work in the UK. They cannot change employment without the consent of the employer. Our respondents felt that this undermines their ability to assert employee rights in circumstances of perceived unfair treatment by the employer. Castles (2000) reminds us that historical precedents to this 'tied labour' include slavery, indentured labour and systems of control of foreign labour pioneered by Germany before the First World War. In colonial Rhodesia and South Africa, a similar system tied an African worker to a particular 'baas'. Thus, in a subtle way, 'Harare North' workers find themselves bound by structures reminiscent of colonial Salisbury.

After a period of settlement and when most of the major home concerns are taken care of, migrant labourers become aware that their position is one of abuse and exploitation. They become more aware of their confinement to the '3D' jobs (Castles 2000) – dirty, difficult and dangerous (e.g. cleaning, factory and security guard work). 'Tinokwara nebasa' was how respondent Mudiki put it, referring to

'back-breaking' shift work he has to do in order to survive and meet remittance expectations back home. Another male respondent studying and working in London put it this way '...Shift work kills...I am now 34 and to continue like this to the age of 40...I would be finished'.<sup>18</sup> He left his wife and children in Zimbabwe and could not bring them over due to his restrictive student visa status.

Relegation to '3Ds' is not a phenomenon exclusive to Zimbabwean workers. Elam and Chinouya (2000) and the Relief Line's Croydon Study (2003) both affirm that this is the experience of all African immigrant communities including highly educated men with PhDs. These studies observe that the situation is traumatic and accelerates the increase in ailments such as depression, high blood pressure and stress among immigrant men – ailments proportionately lower in the home communities of these migrants. Literature from the Trade Union Congress (TUC) appears to acknowledge the lack of rights and decent work for migrant workers in the UK. This has initiated awareness campaigns for those coming in from East European countries, but nothing specific for those, such as Zimbabweans, coming from outside the European Union.<sup>19</sup>

## Alternative livelihoods

Although the migration process has been portrayed as a 'brain drain', it appears to offer opportunities for potential 'brain gain'. There are a growing range of entrepreneurs going into business and self-employment and creating opportunities to employ others in a range of sectors. An example of this is Zimat, in Plumstead, South East London. The 'market' is located close to a railway station along a regional highway where public transport is abundant. It operates from 11:00 am to midnight every day and is patronised by many Zimbabweans.<sup>20</sup> It sells music cassettes and disks, Zimbabwean food such as dry meat, *matemba* (a type of dried fish), cereals, and drinks such as Mazowe (a Zimbabwe-produced cordial). *Sadza*, the traditional staple Zimbabwean meal is prepared and sold at lunch times. The premises are very basic: a six by three-metre room on the ground floor with a separate outside door that leads to a flat used as accommodation by the proprietors. At least three adults – a man and two women – are involved in running the shop. Other examples of similar enterprises and vibrant food stores are the Mau Mau shop at Southend, East London and Zim Expo and Zambezi Foods in Luton.<sup>21</sup>

Other Zimbabweans are engaged in brokering money transfers and offering financial services. These include Mukuru, Fanob Exchange, Alliance Link, Global Exchange, Zimbabwe Exchange, sms Country and Abnob Cash Transfer. The basic model requires few start-up costs – a telephone, a fax machine, a bank

account in the UK, and, on the Zimbabwe side, a similar set of inputs plus large sums of ready cash in Zimbabwe dollars. To send money to Zimbabwe, a client is requested to deposit cash into the UK account and show proof of deposit to the UK financial broker. An exchange rate is agreed prior to the deposit. Once the deposit is confirmed, the UK broker sends a fax or email or telephones the Zimbabwe broker giving details of the amount deposited and the beneficiary of the transaction in Zimbabwe. Cash in Zimbabwe dollar equivalent is then transferred or deposited into the beneficiary account for collection. Depending on the urgency of the matter and social capital existing between the client and the brokers, the Zimbabwe-based beneficiary can receive cash within 12 hours.

There are also less formal financial service providers – what respondent Mudiki characterised as '*maBureau de Change eChivhanu*' – a very elementary bureau de change. In this case, an individual in the UK uses personal networks to identify a person with local currency cash in Zimbabwe. They agree an exchange rate after which the UK person deposits money in the UK account of the contact in Zimbabwe who, in turn, deposits the local currency equivalent in the Zimbabwe bank account of the person in the UK. In other circumstances, the local currency is passed to a nominated person in Zimbabwe in order to pay bills or other commitments of the person in the UK. The transaction is based on trust and little or no paperwork is involved. There are no offices and few or no employees involved. As in the *Hawala* money transfer system used by Somalis, cash in Zimbabwe stays in Zimbabwe while the forex in the UK or elsewhere stays outside Zimbabwe. Clearly, the financial support goes where it is needed, quickly and effectively, compared to the formal channels of aid. However, officials in the West have taken a dim view of these financial transactions, alleging that they are used to sponsor terrorist activities, drugs and money laundering.<sup>22</sup>

The bulk of these transactions occur where a worker in the UK needs funds for family members or business in Zimbabwe but has no access to Zimbabwe dollars and would lose financially if the funds were transferred through the formal banking system. That is where the brokers come in, collecting foreign currency in the UK and making sure that an agreed amount is delivered in Zimbabwe to the appointed recipient within the shortest time possible, often a matter of hours. A reverse process can also take place. This occurs when a business or a family in Zimbabwe in need of foreign currency to pay for fees at a UK university or for costs to transport the body of a deceased relative in the UK, for example, will give Zimbabwe dollars to a broker in Zimbabwe for pounds sterling to be made available in the UK. While some brokers have advertised on the internet, the bulk are advertised by word of mouth – usually the more efficient they are, the more potential customers get to know about them.

One place where financial services, brokers and agencies are concentrated is Sydenham, South London. We shall call these the 'Sydenham syndicate'. At least four offices are allocated to Zimbabwean entrepreneurs. Each of these offices has a number of 'desks', each devoted to one service but all integrated to give clients a package. Money transfer, funeral insurance, property buying and mortgage services, travel agency and employment agency are key components of the package. The Sydenham syndicate is significant in that it illustrates how some of the main UK business portfolios are extensions of Zimbabwean companies who, as a key informant remarked, have 'followed money to the UK'. Some of them are Zimbabwe-registered companies that market their services in the UK but are not registered in the UK.<sup>23</sup>

The Sydenham syndicate, which includes companies such as Intermarket Building Society, helps UK-based Zimbabweans to open bank accounts in Zimbabwe and processes mortgages for house purchase in Zimbabwe. In partnership with estate agencies and built environment firms, it can facilitate the purchase of land, construction of property and tenant management. Another company, the MEC Consultancy, has a UK company registration number and works in conjunction with Moonlight Funeral Services to provide funeral insurance and services including 'elite' graves through a Zimbabwean subsidiary, Mashfords Funeral Services, which has 'land banked' graves in cities such as Harare. UK subscribers with sufficient funds deposited with Moonlight Funeral Services can nominate beneficiaries in Zimbabwe who will be given access to burial service packages provided by some of Zimbabwe's elite funeral parlours. The subscriptions can also be used to transport the subscribers themselves or their nominee to Zimbabwe for burial, in the event of death in the UK. The minimum cost of such service is estimated at £1 900 or more. In addition to business brochures, MEC Consultancy produces and distributes *Zimbabwe Connection*, a magazine in which many Zimbabwe-based companies advertise.

More recently, during the 2007–2009 period when the economic crisis in Zimbabwe was at its peak, remittances to Zimbabwe diversified into goods such as clothing, medical supplies, and crucially, food hampers and drums. These were shipped directly from Britain, or procured by South African based agents for delivery to families in Zimbabwe. With the government of unity since early 2009, the Zimbabwe economy has stabilised and goods and food have become more plentiful. The UK diaspora shifted away from sending food back to sending cash and other investment goods such as building materials, machinery, cars and trucks, engines and electricity generators. All these have created opportunities for the growth of cargo businesses run by Zimbabweans.

## In search of security

Remittances from global citizens have become a major source of direct investment for developing countries in Asia, Latin America and, increasingly, Africa.

Preliminary observations on remittances among global Zimbabweans in the UK indicate that those with insecure legal and economic status send proportionately more money back home than professionals with indefinite leave to remain and in stable economic positions. For those with legal insecurity or 'those without stationery',<sup>24</sup> investment in the UK is not an option, hence, the urgency to send as much as possible back home before time runs out. Those with children or spouses still in Zimbabwe send proportionately more than is sent by those with complete nuclear family units in the UK. Women appear to send more money more frequently than is the case with their male counterparts. But the greatest deciding factor is perceived need.

Education and housing are the two main areas in which Zimbabweans invest their hard-earned cash. Diaspora remittances to fund housing development kept the property market in Zimbabwe afloat. While the rest of the economy shrunk, the housing market remained buoyant. Companies in Zimbabwe have teamed up to offer packages that help those outside to build, purchase or manage real estate back home. The Zimbabwe government, and in particular the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, Dr Gideon Gono, led a campaign to portray global Zimbabweans as partners in economic development and to tap into their intellectual wealth. Following trips and dialogue with Zimbabweans living in Western nations, a Homelink programme was established in which those outside Zimbabwe could invest in a number of products (such as real estate) with remittances channelled via formal institutions. However, 'Murambatsvina', the government destruction of 'illegal' or informal businesses and squatter settlements in May to July 2005 affected some of the investments in land and small enterprises. While the impact of this social engineering on 'diaspora investments' is yet to be assessed, there is now an urgent challenge for urban social scientists and policy-makers to critically examine what has been described as '*Gushungo's* new paradigm of town planning and urban management'.<sup>25</sup> Although the Homelink programme became entangled in national politics and was discredited on the grounds of an apparent link between the Reserve Bank and the then ruling party (ZANU-PF), similar initiatives are emerging, such as the Investment Trust promoted by Tawanda Nyambirayi's TN Bank/TN Holdings.

Prior to coming to the UK, respondent Mudiki's income as a salesperson was too low to get him on the first rung of the property ladder. On moving to London in late 2001, in-laws supported him with initial accommodation and college fees for the first year.<sup>26</sup> While working in the '3Ds', he studied at diploma level. Between January 2002 and December 2003, his remittances enabled him to buy three



properties in Zimbabwe – complete houses in secondary towns within 50 km of the capital Harare and a vacant piece of land in a Harare suburb, which he hoped to develop. In 2003 he sent home remittances of between £3 000 and £4 000, most of which went into the purchasing of the properties. Few would have managed this on a Zimbabwean salary, even in the 1980s when the economy was at its peak. Thus, although the young man was a tenant who paid £300 per month rent in a shared two-bedroom flat and had ‘nothing to show’ in the UK, back home he was now a person of substance.

It appears that the majority who invested in property back home are those who had nothing when they left, or who felt that their UK employment or status was precarious. In Harare, as in other towns, distinct districts have been developed largely on remittance income. An area in the low-density high-income Mount Pleasant suburb of Harare developed this way is now nicknamed ‘*Machembere*’ on the assumption that the incomes used to develop it were earned by Zimbabweans (mainly former nurses) working as carers in UK’s old people’s homes. *Machembere* is the local equivalent of ‘old people’, in this instance used in a derogatory way by those seeking to devalue the progress made by their compatriots overseas.

For many Zimbabweans, the major constraint to entry into the UK housing market is lack of the required 10 per cent cash deposit. Key workers with government support have managed to overcome this hurdle. Those coming out of universities have qualified for 100 per cent mortgages. In both cases, the condition of a secure, well-paying job has been critical. However, with time, even those previously eligible for 100 per cent mortgages have encountered difficulties, as some mortgage lenders have refused to lend to foreign nationals. The limited choice has meant purchasers have ended up taking mortgages that are more expensive. Recent legal regimes demanding monitoring of foreign-national banking transactions appear to discourage mortgage lenders from dealing with foreigners.

However, the process of finding security can be easy at times. For respondent Venus and her sister care worker, mortgage support was easily available when they qualified as nurses. They opted for a joint mortgage and bought a cosy flat close to central London. With few commitments, they have enjoyed life and work, travelling abroad on holidays. Sending money home is not a regular chore for them since there are others, senior to them, who have to worry about that. Buying property in Zimbabwe is also not a priority as they feel secure where they are now in the UK. Yet, as for Mudiki and others, their early years in the UK were years when they relied on financial support and accommodation from relatives.

## Conclusions

This chapter set out to provide an outline of preliminary observations from a study conducted on Zimbabwe's global citizens in 2004. The themes covered are not exhaustive and important topics such as political participation and the cultural, social and civic activities of these citizens are not explored. It is through these associations and organisations, rather than the individual citizens, that development institutions such as the Department for International Development (DFID) are able to engage. Hence, there is a need not only to understand what is currently in place but also to build their capacity for enhanced policy development and investment in the home country. Our interrogation of concepts like the shifting 'migration gender contracts' is just beginning to lead to an understanding of the social transformation of settlement in another country in an era of globalisation. This is an attempt to move away from restrictive concepts associated with refugees and asylum seekers, though these too are valid categories.

The chapter has attempted to show that a migration sub-culture, with its own rules, language, territory and vibrancy has emerged among Zimbabweans. Like most migrants, Zimbabweans desire to pursue a decent and honourable life through legal means. However, as the regime of controls and costs increases, it is not surprising to see an increase in the number of those involved in 'illegal transactions'. Contributions from Zimbabweans to the host community are great. They have stretched the limits of social diversity into areas previously shunned by most black communities. Zimbabweans have invested in themselves, especially through education and training. They have also helped prop up the British National Health Service through quality professionals – nurses, doctors and care assistants. With experience gained in these sectors, Zimbabweans are slowly crafting their own institutions to create jobs. Zimbabweans also boost the British economy through tax contributions. In relative terms, few receive welfare benefits and those who work are not eligible for family tax credits, child-care support or child benefits until they acquire indefinite leave to remain, or become British citizens. At the same time, their remittances have helped to keep Zimbabwe's economy afloat. Makosi's ventures into *Big Brother 6*, 2005, are just one example of how Zimbabweans have penetrated every aspect of British society, challenging stereotypes, traditional perceptions and prejudices, refusing the refugee tag and demanding to be seen as part of the host society – 'here to stay!'

There is still much that needs to be established regarding global Zimbabweans in the UK. Impacts on real estate, health, education, business, democracy and culture in Zimbabwe need to be investigated further. In addition, the analysis of the experiences and roles of Zimbabwe's white global citizens needs

to be included in the ongoing work as well. The space for Zimbabwe's future is now global and researchers need to examine it more fully.

## Acknowledgement

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## Notes

- 1 The term 'global citizen' is used in an effort to imagine and bring into being a person whose social, economic and political life is not bound by the confines of a single country's political boundaries. He or she can settle and contribute to the welfare of any place on the globe, and make a home anywhere without restrictions. In reality, legal and social prejudices often constrain the development of this kind of citizen, but the term is used here as a way of stressing the dignity and the positive contributions of displaced Zimbabweans.
- 2 Some of these experiences are captured in McGregor & Primorac (2010).
- 3 See Southern African Migration project (SAMP), <http://www.queensu.ca/samp/>
- 4 For social capital and the livelihoods approach, see Rakodi & Lloyd-Jones (2002).
- 5 Zimbabwe: Rebuilding a nation. *Phoenix Zimbabwe* March 2009. Accessed 22 November 2010, <http://www.phoenixzimbabwe.org/reports.php>
- 6 Richard Allen, Home Affairs, National Statistics, personal communication , 8 August 2005 (Richard.Allen2@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk); Christine Martin, Southwark Council Coroner's office, personal communication, 8 August 2005 (Christine.Martin@southwark.gov.uk).
- 7 Richard Allen, personal communication, 8 August 2005.
- 8 Zimbabwe: Rebuilding a Nation. *Phoenix Zimbabwe* March 2009. Accessed 22 November 2010, <http://www.phoenixzimbabwe.org/reports.php>
- 9 Respondent, Nigerian lawyer, interviewed March 2001, New Cross, London
- 10 A businesswoman, personal communication, Luton, 20 August 2005.
- 11 African migration: Home, sweet home – for some. How can Africa move from brain drain to brain gain? *The Economist* 11 August 2005. Accessed 28 February 2012, <http://www.economist.com/node/4277319>
- 12 Data gathered from personal telephone and email communication.
- 13 Compiled by author using UK immigration statistics: monthly, quarterly and annual reports.
- 14 Compiled by author using UK immigration statistics: monthly, quarterly and annual reports.
- 15 Respondent, Thamesmead, 2005
- 16 Respondent, Isle of Dogs, 2005
- 17 Respondent. Changanire, Milton Keynes, 2005
- 18 Respondent Mudiki, Plumstead, London, 2005
- 19 Living and working in the UK: Your rights. *TUC*. Accessed 28 February 2012, [www.tuc.org.uk/extras/workingintheuk.pdf](http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/workingintheuk.pdf)
- 20 Although patrons and respondents referred to it as a market, in fact it is a shop.

- 21 Both Zimat and Zim Expo had closed by end of 2007 due to increased competition from Asian shops selling similar products as well as increasing costs of importing goods from Zimbabwe in an inflationary environment. However, many other new retail enterprises have started, see Mbiba (2011: 50–75).
- 22 Although no evidence could be made available, some respondents alleged that UK bank accounts for some of those had been frozen pending clarification of their operations (focus group discussions, Sheffield, 2004)
- 23 The Sydenham syndicate had closed down by 2007; however, similar outfits emerged elsewhere, for example, in Luton, Coventry and Birmingham.
- 24 Those ‘without stationery’ is a colloquial term used by Zimbabweans to refer to those whose immigration status is not in order, also referred to as illegal or undocumented immigrants.
- 25 ‘Gushungo’ is the totem of President Mugabe. Refer to Shona customs for the deeper meaning and understanding of these terms in Zimbabwean society.
- 26 Mudiki returned to Zimbabwe in 2006, married, and now lives in Harare with his wife and three children.

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