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Country Fact Sheet
ZIMBABWE
May 2007

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1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Official name

Republic of Zimbabwe.

Geography

Zimbabwe is a land-locked country in southern Africa, which is bordered by Mozambique to the east, Zambia to the northwest, Botswana to the southwest and South Africa to the south. The country's total area is 390,757 km². Zimbabwe has a tropical climate whose temperatures vary by altitude. Its rainy
season lasts from November to March.

Population and density

Density: 33.1 per km² (mid-2004 estimate).

Principal cities and populations (mid 1992 estimate unless otherwise stated)

Harare (capital) 1,527,000 (2005 estimate), Bulawayo 621,742, Chitungwiza 274, 912, Mutare (Umtali) 131,367, Gweru (Gwelo) 128,037.

Languages

English, Chishona and Sindebele (also known as Ndebele) are Zimbabwe's official languages. Numerous minor dialects are also spoken.

Religions

Syncretic (part Christian, part indigenous beliefs) 50%, Christian 25%, indigenous beliefs 24%, Muslim and other religions 1%.

Ethnic groups

African 98%, including Shona 82%, Ndebele 14%, and other 2%; mixed and Asian 1%; White, less than 1%.

Demographics (2007 estimate unless otherwise indicated)

Population growth rate: 0.595%
Infant mortality rate: 51.12 deaths/1,000 live births.
Life expectancy at birth: 39.5 years.
Fertility rate: 3.08 children born/woman.
Literacy: 94.2% of male and 87.2% of female persons aged 15 and older can read and write English (2003 estimate).

Currency

Zimbabwe Dollars (ZWN).

ZWN 222.816 = CAD 1.00 as of 23 April 2007.

National holidays

2006: 1 January (New Year's Day), 14-17 April (Easter), 18 April (Independence Day), 1 May (Workers' Day), 25 May (Africa Day, anniversary of OAU's foundation), 11 August (Heroes' Day), 12 August (Defence Forces National Day), 22 December (National Unity Day), 25-26 December (Christmas).

2007: 1 January (New Year's Day), 6-9 April (Easter), 18 April (Independence Day), 1 May (Workers' Day), 25 May (Africa Day, anniversary of OAU's foundation), 11 August (Heroes' Day), 12 August...
(Defence Forces National Day), 22 December (National Unity Day), 25-26 December (Christmas).

**Head of state and head of government**

President Robert Gabriel Mugabe is both head of state and head of government. He was elected Prime Minister on 18 April 1980 and subsequently became President on 20 December 1987.

**Form of government**

Zimbabwe is a sovereign republic whose constitution forms its supreme law. The president holds executive power and appoints two vice-presidents, as well as ministers and deputy ministers, who form the cabinet. Zimbabwe's bicameral parliament holds legislative power and normally sits for five years before an election is called. Each of Zimbabwe's ten provinces (including two cities with provincial status) has a centrally appointed provincial governor and acts as an electoral district. Town, district and rural councils make up Zimbabwe's local government structure.

**Legislative structure**

Zimbabwe has a bicameral parliament composed of the House of Assembly and the Senate. The House of Assembly has 150 seats that are distributed among 120 popularly elected members, 12 presidential nominees, 10 traditional chiefs and 8 provincial governors. The Senate has 66 seats that are distributed among 50 popularly elected senators, 6 presidential nominees and 10 traditional chiefs. Parliamentary terms normally last five years. Executive authority is vested in the president, who acts on the advice of cabinet.

**Administrative divisions**

Zimbabwe has two cities with provincial status (Harare and Bulawayo), and eight provinces: Manicaland, Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, Masvingo, Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South and Midlands.

**Judicial system**

The Supreme Court of Zimbabwe hears cases that allege violations of constitutionally guaranteed rights, and hears appeals from Zimbabwe's lower courts. The Supreme Court is composed of a Chief Justice and eight appeal judges, any five of whom constitute a bench. Zimbabwe's High Court is composed of a Chief Justice, a Judge President and eleven additional judges. Regional Courts and Magistrate's Courts have civil and criminal jurisdiction. Customary local courts have jurisdiction over customary legal matters. Chiefs preside over cases where the monetary value is less than ZMD 1,000 and headmen preside over cases where the sums involved are less than ZMD 500. All courts are empowered to hear appeals of customary law decisions.

**Elections**

Zimbabwe has universal suffrage, and persons aged 18 years or more are eligible to vote. The president is elected by the public on a single ballot for a six-year period. President Robert Mugabe was re-elected during the last presidential elections in March 2002. There is no limit on the number of six-year terms a president can sit in office. The next presidential elections are scheduled for March 2008. Legislative elections were last held for the House of Assembly on 31 March 2005 and for the Senate on 26 November 2005. The next legislative elections for both houses are scheduled for the year 2010.

Parliamentary seats:
Following the 2005 legislative elections, seats in the Senate were shared by the Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), which won 73.7% of votes or 43 seats, and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), which won 20.3% of votes, 7 seats. In the House of Assembly, ZANU-PF won 59.6% of votes or 78 seats and the MDC won 39.5% of votes or 41 seats. One independent candidate also won a seat in the House of Assembly.

**Defence**

The Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF) includes the Zimbabwe National Army, the Air Force of Zimbabwe (AFZ), and the Zimbabwe Republic Police. In 2005 there were 29,000 total armed forces personnel, including 25,000 soldiers and 4,000 air service personnel. Zimbabwe has voluntary 18-month military service. The country's national youth service training program appeared, in 2003, to be moving towards compulsory paramilitary training. Zimbabwe's paramilitary forces include a police force with 19,500 officers and a police support unit with 2,300 officers. During the 2005 fiscal year, Zimbabwe is estimated to have spent ZMD 2,300,000,000,000 (or approximately CAD10,278,601.09 on 27 April 2007) on defence. In 2006, defence spending is estimated to have made up 3.7% of Zimbabwe's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Zimbabwe's military reportedly has a long-standing partnership with the Chinese armed forces, who supplied military equipment to Zimbabwe worth USD3,000,000 in 2005 and USD1,500,000 in 2006, respectively.

**Media**

Zimbabwe's constitution affirms freedom of expression, but limits this right with respect to matters of defence, public safety, public order, state economic interests, public morality, public health and numerous other topics. The Zimbabwe Media Information Commission (MIC) is officially the media's self-regulatory body. The Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) is officially an independent statutory body which governs television and radio programming. The Zimbabwe Inter-African News Agency (ZIANA) is Zimbabwe's state-run news agency and several foreign news agencies also have offices in Harare.

Government-controlled daily newspapers published by Zimbabwe Newspapers Ltd. include The Herald (122,000), which is published in Harare, and The Chronicle (45,000), which is published in Buluwayo. Government-controlled weeklies include the Sunday Mail (159,000) in Harare and the Sunday News (50,000) in Buluwayo (ibid.), as well as the Business Herald, Kwayedza, and the Manica Post. The Daily News is an independent newspaper published in Harare. Independent weeklies published in Harare include the Financial Gazette (35,000), The Standard, the Zimbabwe Independent and the Zimbabwe Mirror. Independent weeklies published in Zimbabwe's provinces include The Gweru Times, the Masvingo Mirror, the Midlands Observer and the North Midlands Gazette.

Zimbabwe's radio stations include Voice of the People, which broadcasts one hour per day, and the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation, which broadcasts general programming.

In 2003, there were approximately 454,000 television receivers, 620,000 personal computers and 620,000 Internet users in Zimbabwe.

**United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) and Country Rank**

Value: 0.491/1 (2004).

Rank: 151 out of 177 countries (2004).
United Nations Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and Country Rank

Value: 0.483/1
Rank: 105 out of 136 countries

Population below the national poverty line
80% (2004 estimate).

Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)
Score: 2.4/10
Rank: 130 out of 163 countries surveyed

Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer (GCB)
Information not available.


[A] The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reports that in 2006 the government of Zimbabwe issued a new official exchange rate of ZWN250.00 to USD1.00 (31 July 2006). The new exchange rate does not reportedly constitute a currency re-evaluation, but rather drops three zeros from the previous currency, whose exchange rate was ZWN250,000.00 to USD1.00 (BBC 31 July 2006). The change was made as Zimbabwe's currency had become unmanageable for transactions (ibid.). The BBC reports that despite the new exchange rate, foreign currency is bought at up to four-times the official government-set rate (ibid.). In April 2007, inflation in Zimbabwe had reportedly reached 1700% (The Monitor 2 Apr. 2007).

[B] ZMD 2,300,000,000,000.00 was the projected defence expenditure for 2005. This amount does not take into account subsequent changes made to the currency in mid-2006 that dropped three zeroes. The exchange rate has therefore been calculated based on a projected expenditure for 2005 of ZMD 2,300,000,000.0 [back]

[C] Currency conversions must take into account the volatility of the ZMD [back]

[D] The HDI is a composite measurement of human development in a country, based on life expectancy, levels of literacy and education, and standard of living. Values are: 0.800 and higher (high human development), 0.500-0.799 (medium human development) and 0.500 and under (low development index). Countries are ranked in descending order by their HDI value. [back]

[E] The GDI adjusts the rating of the HDI to reflect inequalities between men and women [back]

[F] The Transparency International CPI is based on composite survey data from 16 polls and 10 independent institutions. The data reflects the perceptions of resident and non-resident business people and country analysts. Scores range from 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (highly clean). According to their score, countries are ranked in order from least corrupt (1) to most corrupt (159) [back]

[G] The Transparency International GCB is a public opinion survey used to gauge people's perceptions of corruption within their own state [back]

2. POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Following a lengthy guerrilla conflict, Zimbabwe held its first legislative elections with universal suffrage
in 1980, which freed the country from white-minority rule. The Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) won a majority of parliamentary seats, and party leader Robert Mugabe was elected Prime Minister. Animosity between freedom fighters from ZANU-PF, whose supporters were mainly ethnic Shona from the north, and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), whose supporters were mainly ethnic Ndebele from the south, led to intensifying conflict in Matabeleland. In 1984 the government sent 10,000 soldiers to the area, which resulted in the Gukurahundi massacres. An estimated 20,000 civilians were killed and "hundreds of thousands" of civilians suffered torture, unlawful imprisonment and assault. In 1987, ZANU-PF and ZAPU signed a unity agreement and the parties merged. A general amnesty granted in 1988 pardoned government officials and 122 rebels for crimes committed during the massacres.

ZANU-PF maintained a parliamentary majority in the 1990s, at which time Robert Mugabe was elected president by a wide majority and the Senate was abolished.

In 1998, an economic crisis precipitated escalating inflation, food riots and strikes. This, coupled with the country's participation in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, led to the formation of Zimbabwe's first viable political opposition party since independence, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), in 1999. During the same year, international financial aid was suspended. In February 2000, amid squatter-led farm seizures, the public voted down a draft constitution that would have awarded Mugabe the presidency for life, allowed him to dissolve parliament, and enabled the government to engage in a land re-distribution program. Despite the referendum's failure, the government commenced with farm seizures only weeks later, and initiated a land-reform program that has involved the eviction of over a thousand white farmers from their land by government militia.

In June 2000 parliamentary elections, ZANU-PF won a narrow majority of seats ahead of the MDC, led by Morgan Tsvangirai. The European Union (EU) electoral observer mission to Zimbabwe notes that ZANU-PF "was engaged in a systematic campaign of intimidation aimed at crushing support for opposition parties." The EU and the Commonwealth Observer Group note that violence, coercion, and intimidation took place, including murder, rape, assault, torture and abduction. In subsequent presidential elections held in 2002, MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai challenged the incumbent Robert Mugabe and claimed 42 percent of the vote against Mugabe's 56.2 percent, though international observers denounced the vote as having been rigged.

A law passed in May 2002 gave white farmers 45 days to abandon their land, and by November 2002 the government had seized 35 million acres of previously white-owned farmland. During the same year, government statistics showed that 80 percent of the population was already below the poverty line, and 59 percent were below the food poverty line. Also in 2002, The Commonwealth imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe, which prompted Zimbabwe to withdraw from the organization.

In response to the economic crisis, general strikes held 2003 led to widespread arrests and torture. Shortly thereafter, during a period of opposition protests, MDC Leader Morgan Tsvangirai was charged with treason for a second time. Courts acquitted him of the first charge in October 2004 and the second in 2005. A third treason charge against Tsvangirai has been dropped.

The government held regularly scheduled legislative elections in March 2005. ZANU-PF succeeded in reclaiming a two-thirds majority in the House of Assembly, which allows the party to amend the...
constitution. 35 The remaining seats are claimed by the MDC (41 seats) and one independent candidate. 36 Amnesty International (AI) reports that while violent incidents were comparatively fewer than in past elections, intimidation nonetheless took place, and rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly were systematically repressed. 37 An ongoing "economic catastrophe" spurred the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to ask the Zimbabwean government for permission to deliver emergency food aid. 38 This request was accepted with strict conditions, but there were reports that the ruling party used the food to "buy" votes during the election. 39 Following the election, opposition party supporters experienced attacks and property demolitions. 40

In May 2005, the government initiated an eviction and demolition campaign against homes and businesses in urban areas around the country. 41 While the campaign's stated purpose was to "restore social order," critics suggested that it was in reality an attempt to undermine the MDC party's urban support base and to revitalize agriculture by forcing citizens back to rural areas after the failed land-distribution campaign. 42 The United Nations Special Envoy on Human Settlement estimates that the campaign rendered 700,000 people homeless and without income, affecting more than 2 million people. 43 Despite promises to build new homes for the displaced, forced evictions continued through 2006. 44

At the end of 2005, the government held elections for a reinstated Senate. 45 The opposition MDC party split into two factions over its leader's decision to boycott the elections. 46 The Senate election subsequently had low voter turnout and resulted in a ZANU-PF majority in the legislature's reinstated upper house. 47

In 2006, foreign governments reduced direct assistance to the Zimbabwean government which aggravated the humanitarian situation, 48 and the World Food Programme reportedly cut food deliveries to the country by two-thirds because of a funding shortfall. 49 Government-orchestrated attacks continued against human rights activists, student activists, trade union members and members of the independent press. 50

At a March 2007 public meeting that was disrupted by riot police, opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai of the MDC was arrested and subsequently beaten while in custody. 51 The government states that the gathering was held in contravention of a ban on political rallies. 52 In response to Tsvangirai's treatment, public demonstrations reportedly erupted throughout the country. 53 At the beginning of 2007, both the MDC and ZANU-PF continued to suffer from factionalism within their respective parties. 54

[H] The food poverty line has been used to describe the level below which a household is unable to meet its basic food needs (The East African Standard 27 Apr. 2007) [back]

3. POLITICAL PARTIES

Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF)

The Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) was formed in 1963 as a splinter group of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). 55 In 1965, both parties began guerrilla action against the Rhodesian government seeking black majority rule. 56 In 1976, ZANU and ZAPU briefly collaborated to form a Patriotic Front (PF) and the party became known as ZANU-PF. 57 During the 1980 pre-independence elections, ZANU-PF won a wide majority in Parliament 58 and formed Zimbabwe's first black majority
government. Party leader Robert Mugabe became Prime Minister. Since independence, ZANU-PF has enjoyed wide majorities in parliament. In 1990, Mugabe was elected President of Zimbabwe. Solidarity within ZANU-PF began to deteriorate in 2004 and the party has become split along three fault lines, though Robert Mugabe continues to enjoy the support of senior party and military officials. The two remaining factions within ZANU-PF have expressed interest in taking a more "moderate" approach and re-establishing ties with western governments. In the 2005 election, ZANU-PF's combined elected and appointed seats totalled 78, or 73.7 percent of the House of Assembly.

**Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)**

The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was formed in September 1999 in response to the ruling party's ever more repressive political tactics and to their landslide win in the 1995 elections. The centrist MDC has broad-based support for its opposition to ZANU-PF and the party counts academics, trade-unionists, entrepreneurs, clergy and human rights activists from various ethnic groups among its leadership. The party advocates for legal land reform processes, privatization, strong industry and international dialogue. MDC leaders have been charged with and acquitted of treason. During the 2005 legislative elections for the House of Assembly, the MDC captured 41 seats or 39.5 percent of the vote. The 2005 Senate election divided the MDC into factions, when its leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, opted to boycott the polls. The International Crisis Group (ICG) reports that during rural district council elections in 2006, the two MDC factions, led by Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara respectively, were preoccupied with internal party schisms, which highlighted the MDC's weakness. Having realized that divisions are detrimental to the party, faction leaders have begun negotiations for reunification.

**Other parties without seats in parliament:**

Conservative Alliance of Zimbabwe (CAZ), Democratic Party (DP), Liberty Party of Zimbabwe (LPZ), National Alliance for Good Governance (NAGG), National Democratic Union (NDU), Popular Democratic Front (PDF), Pro-Democracy MDC, United Parties (UP) (also referred to as the United Party), Zimbabwe African National Union-Ndonga (ZANU-Ndonga), Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), Zimbabwe Union of Democrats (ZUD), Zimbabwe Integrated Party (ZIP), Zimbabwe People's Convention (ZPC), Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM).

**4. ARMED GROUPS AND OTHER NON-STATE ACTORS**

Information not available.

**5. FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS**

The UN Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs has characterized the situation in Zimbabwe as a "meltdown." The ICG, an independent non-governmental organization engaged in conflict analysis and "high level" advocacy, cautions that the country, now in the seventh year of an economic emergency, is in danger of "total collapse." Citing the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the ICG notes that inflation in Zimbabwe, which is already the highest in the world, may reach 4,279 percent by the end of 2007.

The next presidential elections are scheduled for 2008, and the next legislative elections are due in...
However, the ruling party has repeatedly sought to delay the presidential election in order to harmonize presidential and legislative elections in 2010, ostensibly to save money. This would effectively extend President Mugabe's term by two years. As of March 2007, it appeared that presidential elections would likely be held in 2008 as scheduled. The ICG expresses concern that if President Mugabe were to extend his presidential term, the country could experience a "bloody uprising," and that unless immediate action is taken, Zimbabwe risks becoming a "failed state."

ENDNOTES

1 Xe.com 23 Apr. 2007 [back]
2 Ibid. 25 Apr. 200 [back]
3 Solidarity Peace Trust Mar. 2005, 9 [back]
6 The Europa World Year Book 2006 2006, 4889 [back]
7 Solidarity Peace Trust Mar. 2005, 9 [back]
8 Ibid [back]
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16 The Europa World Year Book 2006 2006, 4891 [back]
17 BBC 14 Mar. 2007 [back]
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21 EU 4 July 2000, Ch. 4 [back]


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35 The Europa World Year Book 2006 2006, 4894 [back]

36 Ibid., 4893 [back]

37 AI 23 May 2006 [back]


39 Ibid.; AI 23 May 2006 [back]

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46 Ibid. 1393; The Europa World Year Book 2006 2006, 4894 [back]

48 HRW 11 Jan. 2007 [back]

49 Ibid [back]

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58 *Political Parties of the World* 2005, 661 [back]

59 *The Europa World Year Book 2006* 2006, 4889 [back]


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73 ICG 5 Mar. 2007, 8 [back]
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