

COUNTRY PROFILE Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe, referred to as a jewel when it achieved independence in 1980 has in the last decade, experienced economic and political turmoil. It has had hyper-inflation, violence, intimidation, denial of freedom of expression and organisation. It was once regarded as a reasonably well performing middle income country, wealthier (and with more assets) than neighbours such as Zambia and Mozambique. In just over a decade it has plunged to being categorised as one of the poorest countries in the world although some query if it has actually become this poor. In response to concerns about democracy and human rights western nations have imposed measures targeting named individuals and companies. The “power-sharing deal”/Global Political Agreement (GPA) of September 2008 led to the formation of an inclusive (multi party) government, sometimes referred to as a Government of National Unity, In practice there has been little unity but continuing tension, disagreement and stalemate. There has been some improvements, mainly economic, yet much of the GPA has not been implemented, human rights abuses still occur, the military, police and civil service have been politicised and largely support one party, Zanu PF. The legacy of colonial rule, most noticeably concerning inequality of land ownership, has not been effectively addressed. A constitutional referendum maybe held in late 2011 and then presidential possibly parliamentary elections in 2012 or possibly 2013.

Zimbabwe does have significant resources, potential in minerals, agriculture. It did have a service sector and a developed tourism sector. Its citizens were regarded at the end of twentieth century as one of the best educated in terms of literacy and numeracy in southern Africa.

SUMMARY FACTS

Population: 12.64 million, UK: 62.24 million (World Bank, 2010)	GDP per capita: <US\$ 100 (PPP), UK: \$35,844 (World Bank 2010)
Capital: Harare	Human Development Index Ranking (UN HDI 2010): 169/169
Area: 390, 759 sq km (150, 873 sq miles), UK: 243,610 sq km (94,060 sq miles)	HDI Value (2010): 0.140
Major languages: English, Shona, Ndebele, Kalanga	Monetary unit: Z\$ (suspended form 12/04/09) US\$, ZAR and EUR now in usage
Major religion: Christianity, indigenous beliefs	Main exports: Tobacco, cotton, agricultural products, gold, minerals
Life expectancy at birth: 44 years, UK: 80 years (UNICEF 2008)	CO₂ emissions share of world total: <0.1%, UK: > 2%
Under-five mortality rate: 96 per 1,000 live births, UK: 6 per 1,000 live births	Population without access to an improved water source: 28%, UK: 0% (UN 2008)
HIV prevalence: 14.3% aged 15-49, UK: 0.2 % aged 15-49 (UN AIDS 2009)	Population using improved sanitation: 44%, UK: 100% (UN 2008)
Adult Literacy Rate: 91% ages 15 and older, UK: >99% (UNICEF 2009)	Government: ZANU PF & MDC – Inclusive Government

President: Robert Mugabe

Year Women received right to vote: 1919, 1957, 1980, UK: 1918, 1928 (equal rights)

Sources: UNICEF 2008, UN 2008, UN AIDS 2009, UN HDI 2010, World Bank 2010
(Please note that in some cases figures are approximate due to the nature of Zimbabwe's political situation over the previous decades).



History

Evidence suggests that from as early as **1000AD**, Zimbabweans began mining gold and building stone settlements in the area known as “Great Zimbabwe”. Before European invasion, the country was separated into kingdoms and the inhabitants were ruled by leaders. The earliest record of European involvement in the region dates back to **1837** when Boers from neighbouring South Africa drove the Ndebele people out of the Transvaal area and over the Limpopo River into Zimbabwe. The Ndebele leader Mzilikazi established a settlement in what is now Matabeleland.

Although Zimbabwean resistance to brutal European expansion was strong, Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company, by force, acquired mining rights for the region in the **1880s**, and later the country was renamed Southern Rhodesia. Believing the country was extremely rich in minerals, Rhodes plundered the country of its natural resources and promised large reserves of land, many in excess of 3,000 acres, to the first group of European settlers in Southern Rhodesia; a move that would have a lasting impact on the land situation in modern day Zimbabwe. The indigenous Zimbabweans lost land and were denied any political rights.

In **1923**, and after attempts during the *First Chimurenga (Revolutionary Struggle)* by the Shona and Ndebele to drive the Europeans out of the country, Southern Rhodesia became a self-governing colony with the settler population rising dramatically in the years that would follow. Only white settlers were allowed to vote. **1934** saw the passing of yet more land apportionment acts that would reserve areas for Europeans. Britain consolidated Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland (now Malawi) in **1953** into the Central Africa Federation. Joshua Nkomo and others formed the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) in **1961**. Robert Mugabe and others broke from this and in 1963 formed ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union).

1962 saw the formation of the white supremacist party the Rhodesian Front (RF), led by Winston Field and the party espoused similar racist ideologies to that of the

National Party in South Africa, such as opposition to racial integration and provision of separate amenities for different races. After the union of Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland ended in **1963**, Ian Smith rose to prominence as leader of the RF. With Zambia and Malawi gaining independence in **1964** following one person one vote, Ian Smith's RF party announced a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from Britain in **1965** to allow Southern Rhodesia to remain in the hands of the white settler population.

The *Second Chimurenga* was fought in the years following Smith's UDI which consisted of guerrilla action against white land-owners and attacks on RF forces. The government responded by launching military strikes on neighbouring countries thought to be harbouring African terrorists. The war intensified and lasted throughout the **1970s** until in **1978** after international condemnation and sanctions Smith signed an agreement with several black leaders to allow for a power-sharing government of which whites would make up 20 per cent of seats. After being named Zimbabwe Rhodesia in **1979**, the British - who were back in temporary control of the colony - called for further elections at the Lancaster House Conference featuring all political parties, including both ZAPU and ZANU. The Agreement ensured that the white minority would retain as much as possible of its political and economic privileges including the ownership of land for the next ten years. Although the Agreement allowed for democratic elections, it did little to help the new ZANU-PF Government redress the gross economic and social inequalities that resulted from white minority rule.

The elections of **1980** saw Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF party winning a majority of votes and defeating previous comrade Nkomo and his ZAPU party. With independence now achieved, the country was renamed Zimbabwe ('House of Stone') and Nkomo brought into Mugabe's cabinet. Just two years after independence was gained, Mugabe dismissed Nkomo - thought to be plotting against Mugabe - from the cabinet in **1982**. Tensions between the Shona and Ndebele population increased, culminating in the Matabeleland massacres over several years, with an estimated 25,000 killed by government troops. The government claimed they found arms cache in the area and that apartheid South Africa was seeking to destabilise independent Zimbabwe. An attempt to end the violence and reunite the two parties in **1987** led to Nkomo once again being adopted into the government with Mugabe holding the position of executive president. The future Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai became secretary-general of the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) in **1988**.

Mugabe won the **1990** elections and the decade was characterised by further attempts from Mugabe to solidify ZANU as the dominant force in Zimbabwean politics. In the same year, the World Bank imposed an Economic Structural Adjustment Process (ESAP) on Zimbabwe which would have serious implications on the country's economic growth as strict free market conditions were established. Unemployment grew and the standard of living for millions of Zimbabweans fell as the promises of ESAP failed to deliver. In the face of a vociferous trade union response, the government clamped down on dissident civil society groups as criticism of Mugabe's handling of the economy grew. Reports of harassment of opposition party members surfaced in the run up to the **1996** elections as plans to appropriate land from the white population gathered momentum. An economic crisis marked by high interest rates and inflation in **1998** proved the catalyst for the formation by trade unionists and civil society activists of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in **1999** in an attempt to challenge Mugabe's reign.

In February 2000 the opposition campaigned successfully to defeat a proposed new constitution which would have conferred even greater power to the President. The new millennium brought with it the *Third Chimurenga* with increasing rates of farm seizures and reports of violence and intimidation in the run up to the elections of

June **2000**. Although Zanu PF narrowly “won” the parliamentary elections, the MDC won 57 seats and ZANU-PF lost the power to change the constitution. A list was published by Mugabe of over 800 commercial farms to be appropriated by the state with the responsibility of compensation to land owners given to the British government. The UK maintained that no compensation would be paid as the land reforms benefited the political elite, were not transparent and not directed to reducing poverty. The **2002** presidential elections were won by President Mugabe amidst claims of further violence by election observers. Following these elections and with increasing restrictions on freedom of expression and growing concerns of human rights abuses the EU imposed targeted measures, or sanctions, on specified members of the Zimbabwe government which restricted individuals from travelling to the EU, froze the assets of those thought to be responsible for human rights abuses and introduced an arms embargo on the country.

The **2008** elections proved to be the most important event in Zimbabwe’s recent history. In March, supported by exit poll figures, the MDC claimed victory over ZANU PF. The government controlled election commission, however, refused to release the results of the election for over a month. A run-off was declared in June with Mugabe “winning” after Tsvangirai pulled out of the poll citing intimidation from ZANU members. The Southern Africa Development Community for the first time stated the 2008 presidential election run off did not conform with the SADC guidelines for the conduct of democratic elections. This called into question the legitimacy of Mugabe continuing as President. However he could count on the support of military leaders. On September 15, Mugabe, Tsvangirai (MDC-T) and Mutambara (leader of a small breakaway group from the MDC, referred to as MDC -M) signed a Global Political Agreement facilitated by the then South African President Thabo Mbeki on behalf of SADC. The Inclusive Government established by the GPA came into existence in February 2009. Robert Mugabe remained President with executive authority whilst Morgan Tsvangirai became Prime Minister with Cabinet Ministers from all the parties who signed the agreement.

Population

It is unclear how many people currently reside in Zimbabwe. In 2010 the World Bank estimated the population of Zimbabwe at 12.64 million. Some believe this is an over-estimate. The country is made up of mainly Shona (approximately 82 per cent) with Ndebele accounting for around 14 per cent of the population. The small group of white settlers have historically remained the overwhelming minority. Zimbabwe is predominantly Christian, with Catholicism being the largest denomination whilst numerous indigenous beliefs are practiced.

Politics

The power-sharing deal, reached in 2008 through the signing of the Global Political Agreement, led to the formation of an Inclusive Government. It comprises Mugabe’s ZANU PF, Tsvangirai’s MDC-T and Mutambara’s splinter group MDC-M. There have been some improvements, most noticeably the reduction in inflation to 2- 5 per cent. Many schools and hospitals have now reopened and food is back on supermarket shelves although these commodities still remain a luxury for the majority. Political violence still exists, although not as widespread as in the run up to the 2008 elections. However, there remain many failings and outstanding issues to be resolved within the GPA/Inclusive Government. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) states that refusal to share executive powers with Morgan Tsvangirai, refusal to swear-in MDC Provincial Governors, continued farm invasions and refusal to reform the state media are just some of the current issues not being addressed by ZANU PF.

Economy

Following independence Zimbabwe experienced economic growth and the country had the most diversified economy in the region after South Africa but by the end of the 1980s there were signs of problems with economic growth not matching the increase in expenditure in education and health. In early 1990s advised and urged on by the IMF and World Bank Zimbabwe embarked on an economic structural adjustment programme (ESAP). The programme was neo liberal. It required the government to reduce expenditure and privatise assets/services. It did not work. Economic growth did not increase but unemployment did. There was increasing dissatisfaction with how the government of Zimbabwe was dealing with the economy and the role of the IMF and World Bank who continued to push ESAP despite all the evidence showing it was weakening not only the economy but also the education and health sectors. In 1996/97 President Mugabe ordered significant unbudgeted payments to war veterans and then the country's involvement in the DR Congo war these cost hundreds of millions of dollars to the economy which was already weak. The seizure/taking of land, particularly commercial farms, reduced agricultural production, exports and foreign currency. Financial mismanagement led to reduced investment, the collapse of the commercial/ service sector and much of industry. Zimbabwe achieved the fastest and sharpest economic fall of a country not at or immediately after a war. Hyperinflation of the economy reached 11,200,000,000 per cent. The Zimbabwe dollar became worthless with trillions required to buy anything. The inclusive government abandoned the Zimbabwe dollar and moved to the South African Rand and US Dollar as the country's currency. This move and other action helped to reduce inflation to single figures and Zimbabwe is now experiencing its first case of economic growth in over a decade.

Civil society and trade unions

Trade unions and civil society groups are active in Zimbabwe despite the human rights abuses and repression that have continued (at a reduced level) following the formation of the Inclusive Government. The ZCTU, formed in 1981, are the most prominent union federation and were instrumental in establishing the main opposition party; the MDC. The aims of the ZCTU are to organize, develop and maintain a powerful and united trade union movement in the country, although its members experience constant harassment from the state in attempts to quell opposition voices. However, there has been a sharp drop in the number of active unionists due to the rise in unemployment levels (approx. 90 per cent) and the membership levels of the ZCTU stand at around 400,000. Active civil society groups include the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA), Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights and the Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) which all campaign to end human rights abuses and vocalise the aims and objectives of disenfranchised groups.

Aid & Development

UK aid for Zimbabwe is budgeted at £80m in 2011/12; £84m in 2012/13; £94m in 2013/14; £95m in 2014/15. The UK says this is channelled via UN and NGOs, not to government. Support to ministries has however increased since the formation of the inclusive government and the distinction between providing aid through non Zimbabwe government channels or through the government has become more blurred. The UK says if human rights abuses cease and there is a return to democracy it is willing to increase its aid allocation to Zimbabwe.

Achievements:

1. Independence: The war of independence spearheaded by Robert Mugabe's ZANU party is still regarded as an extraordinary achievement in the struggle for liberation on the continent. As well as inspiring other opposition groups in the region to mobilise politically, the event represented a clear victory for African nationalism in the face of European domination.

2. Economic development and Social provision: In the years following independence, Zimbabwe's economy grew, spending on health doubled, funding for education tripled and infant mortality and literacy levels improved dramatically.
3. Reduction in HIV/AIDS prevalence: The first case of AIDS in Zimbabwe was reported in 1985 and the rate of HIV/AIDS prevalence grew thereafter. In the late 1980s, the figure stood at around 10%, rising to as high as 30% in the mid-1990s. However, in the last 15 years, the rate of infection has decreased rapidly. The figure is now reported to be at around 14.3%, (UN Aids). Some have expressed doubt about this figure; some think the significant migration of working age Zimbabweans may be a significant factor in this apparent and welcome reduction. However whatever its political and economic problems it does suggest that Zimbabwe has made a real effort to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic.
4. Establishment of an Inclusive Government: The formation of the Inclusive Government after years of tension between the two parties demonstrates a willingness from both ZANU PF and the MDC to work in unison to aid the recovery of Zimbabwe's shattered economy and reduce political violence. Although accused of making too many concessions to Mugabe, the MDC have maintained that a coalition government is a positive step for the country. Even those critical of the agreement say that whilst they have considerable doubts and concerns they do want it to work.
5. Cessation of runaway inflation: The introduction of a multi-currency system by Finance Minister Tendai Biti of the MDC(T) - who suspended the use of the Zimbabwe Dollar – helped enormously to restore financial stability and as projected, inflation looks set to remain in single figures by the end of the 2010. There are plans to reintroduce the Zimbabwe Dollar only when the Inclusive Government deem the economy to be in a state of relative stability.

Development Challenges

1. Land Reforms: land reform is both necessary and supported by the majority of Zimbabweans. Racist colonial land ownership was both unsustainable and against equity and justice. The land question has not been effectively addressed by either the British government or by Mugabe's government. The GPA commits the parties to a comprehensive, transparent and non-partisan land audit for purposes of accountability and to eliminate multiple ownership. It also calls on the UK government to accept primary responsibility to pay compensation for land acquired from former owners for resettlement.
2. Sustained economic improvement: The economy, although improved significantly by the multi-currency system is still fragile. Although reduced to single figures, the country is now governed by the success of the US Dollar and South African Rand and inflation rates must be kept low to allow for basic commodities to become affordable.
3. Inclusive Government: Although it has led to some improvements, there is considerable tension between the parties who want to strengthen themselves and weaken their opponents. There are concerns surrounding the democratic nature of the Inclusive Government, with many critics claiming that Mugabe remains in full control of the state machinery and that the two MDC factions have a limited say in, and even less control over, the state machinery. At times it appears MDC Ministerial decisions are overlooked in favour of Zanu PF party wishes and certain ministries, such as the Finance Ministry, are bypassed.

4. Harassment of trade unions and civil society: Human rights violations have become less frequent than in the run up to the 2008 elections but deep concerns remain over the harassment of trade union members and civil society activists. Arrests and beatings of unionists and activists are still commonplace and further intimidation of MDC members is feared should a possible 2012 election take place. When Robert Mugabe suggested the holding of elections in 2011, violence appeared to rise once more.
5. Media Freedom: Recent bans on international media have been lifted with the BBC and CNN now able to report from within the country. June 2010 witnessed the establishment or re-establishment of some local print media independent of the state. Local radio and TV is still controlled by the state and the repressive Access to Information and the Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) is still in place. Journalists have found themselves subject to increasing intimidation in 2011, however, with many being subject to draconian security legislation when trying to report on Cabinet decisions.
6. Utilisation of natural resources: Zimbabwe is rich in natural resources such as gold, diamonds and platinum. However, recently discovered and potentially very large reserves of diamonds in Marengue/Chiadzwa, in eastern Zimbabwe are controlled by part of the government and the companies it has appointed which in turn are supporting Zanu PF. Civil Society groups have criticised the lack of transparency on diamond production and sales and queried who is benefiting? There have been debates about whether sales of Zimbabwe diamonds should be permitted internationally under the Kimberley Process established to prevent the sale of “ blood diamonds” fuelling conflict.
7. Migration: It is estimated three million Zimbabweans may have left Zimbabwe in past 12 to 15 years, many currently residing in neighbouring South Africa (with possibly around 1 million fleeing to the country during the election violence in 2008) and there have been attacks on Zimbabweans and other migrants in South Africa population. In the UK, many Zimbabweans are denied work or study as their status remains unclear. The UK resumed forcible deportation to Zimbabwe of those who did not have permission to be in UK in 2011. The Zimbabwe government is currently working on a National Migration Policy which, amongst other schemes, would allow for Zimbabweans in the diaspora to open bank accounts, facilitating the remittance of funds back to Zimbabwe.

For more information on Zimbabwe, visit the following websites:

- Launched in 2008, Zimbabwe Europe Network (ZEN) ensures that the EU and its member states stay engaged on Zimbabwe. www.zimbabwееurope.org
- An organisation that produces regular reports on human rights violations in Zimbabwe which has now expanded its objectives to assist victims of organised violence. www.hrforumzim.com
- Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) is not for profit human rights organization whose core objective is to foster a culture of human rights in Zimbabwe. www.zlhr.org.zw
- Sign up to the Zimbabwe Update from ACTSA at www.actsa.org/page-1429-Zimbabwe%20Update.html