

Emigration from Zimbabwe: Migrant Perspectives

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Abstract

This article explores migration from Zimbabwe to the UK and South Africa and the experiences of the receiving countries from the perspective of the migrants. It provides a critical examination of the impact of structural barriers in both the UK and South Africa on the economic experiences of migrants. The effects of immigration status, due to the exclusion of asylum-seekers in the UK and the presence of undocumented migrants in the UK and South Africa, is explored in relation to employment and remittance activities. The clear evidence of the deskilling taking place among the majority of Zimbabwean migrants – and its impact on remittances and other forms of transnational support – is also examined. The article concludes that any real commitment to alleviating global poverty on the part of the world's migrant receiving countries must include a re-examination of barriers to employment, education and the use of skills, since these barriers not only have a short-term impact on remittances to the sending country and fiscal capacity to contribute in the receiving country, but will also impact on longer-term development should the migrants return to their country of origin.

Keywords

Migration; Receiving countries; Employment; Remittances; Zimbabwe

Introduction

At the start of the twenty-first century international migration continues to be high on the global policy agenda for both destination and sending countries. Some 2.9 per cent of the global population now live outside their country of origin and one of the main policy concerns is how to maximize the benefits of such migration and minimize the costs (IOM 2005). It is difficult to measure the total impact of migration because it has economic, social and cultural consequences at the individual, family, community and national levels. Moreover, the effects of migration are not evenly distributed but vary according to the nature of migration and the transnational links between sending and destination countries (HCIDC 2004).

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There has been much international debate focusing on the importance of migration for both sending and receiving societies. The receiving countries, while recognizing the benefits of migration, especially economically, have an agenda that sets out to manage migration, especially forced migration (the search for asylum) (Flynn 2003; Spencer 2003). However, there is far less known about the situation and perspectives of the migrants themselves – and the case of Zimbabweans in the UK and South Africa is no exception. While Zimbabwe, South Africa and Britain feature in so many debates – political, economic, ethical – on the state of Southern Africa, this article focuses on them simply as sending society and receiving countries, respectively.

It draws on data from a survey of Zimbabweans in the UK and South Africa, in order to explore the impact of migration and to consider the ways in which the potential benefits of migration might be better facilitated for both sending and destination countries. The potential costs and benefits are different for all concerned. The article shows that both the UK and South Africa benefit from Zimbabwean workers but could benefit much more if these migrants' skills and experience were better utilized. This in turn would ensure that skills were not lost *and* that greater amounts could be remitted by migrants, back to Zimbabwe and elsewhere. The structural barriers encountered by asylum-seekers in the UK, as well as the exploitation of undocumented migrants, especially in South Africa, is another area that costs society as well as the migrants themselves and their families. Meanwhile, for Zimbabwe as the sending country, the loss of its skilled labour force is a matter of great concern and has left shortages in some sectors, most notably health care and education. This could be compounded in the longer term – should the migrants return – by the under-employment and resultant skills loss meanwhile taking place among Zimbabwean migrants in the two largest receiving countries – the UK and South Africa.

The migration is diverse in terms of its characteristics and motivations. Firstly, it encompasses those who have migrated for political and economic reasons or for a combination of these plus – to a lesser extent – other factors such as the desire to study abroad. Secondly, the skills base of Zimbabweans falls along a continuum ranging from highly educated skilled professionals to unskilled workers (Zinyama 2002). Thirdly, it is characterized by large, though unquantifiable, numbers of undocumented migrants who have either crossed into South Africa irregularly, have overstayed a visa or have had their asylum case rejected (UK and South Africa).

This article will examine the migrants' motivations for migration, their skills base, their acquisition of new skills, their use of these skills in the labour market, and their social and economic remittance activities. The backcloth against which this analysis takes place is that of the social policy-inspired structural barriers, operating especially against those with insecure or irregular status, that impede access to regularized economic and social opportunities and provisions.

Migration: The Zimbabwean Context

Historically, Zimbabwe was a country of immigration (unusual in Southern Africa), importing labour from neighbouring states including Zambia and

Malawi but also from Europe and Asia (Zinyama 1990) but this changed after independence in 1980 (Tevera and Zinyama 2002). In the post-independence period (1980–4), between 50,000 and 60,000 whites left Zimbabwe. In the 1980s, conflict in Matabeleland and the resultant massacre of over 20,000 Ndebele people led to a further black exodus from Zimbabwe. The current context for emigration, which began in the early 1990s, was the introduction of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme which resulted in economic decline and the out-migration of many skilled workers. By the end of the 1990s, Zimbabwe was in economic crisis and the government had adopted violent and repressive policies aimed at curbing political opposition (McGregor 2005).

Zimbabwe is still in crisis, with unemployment levels estimated to be around 70 per cent and inflation running at 180 per cent.¹ Migration has become a crucial way for households to diversify their livelihood survival strategies (Tevera and Zinyama 2002). However, emigration from the black majority (who make up 98 per cent of Zimbabwe's population²) has also been for political reasons (Zinyama 2002). The deterioration of human rights in Zimbabwe since 2000 (see e.g. Human Rights Watch 2003; Amnesty International 2003) is reflected in the increasing numbers of Zimbabweans seeking asylum, with the largest number coming to the UK (peaking at 7,554 in 2002; Heath *et al.* 2004) followed by South Africa (UNHCR 2004). The human rights problems have been recognized by the UK government to the extent that, in August 2005, it halted deportations of 'failed' asylum-seekers so that the Home Office could consider evidence about their safety on return.

It is difficult to quantify the total number of Zimbabweans outside of Zimbabwe for three main reasons. Firstly, some migrants will by now have taken up the nationality of the destination country. Secondly, in the UK, some Zimbabwean migrants will have been former white colonial and post-colonial migrants not subject to immigration controls, due to the system of 'patriality' operating in the UK (Solomos 2003). Lastly, there is an unquantifiable number of undocumented Zimbabwean migrants in the Southern African region, due to the extensive shared land borders facilitating cross-border migration (Zinyama 2002). Estimates vary, but the largest place the numbers of Zimbabwean migrants at around 1.2 million in South Africa and 1.2 million in the UK (Mbiba 2004).

The Research Design

This article is based on data from a survey of 1,000 Zimbabweans – 500 in the UK and 500 in South Africa. The data were collected using a combination of self-completion online questionnaires (540), of which 402 were completed by Zimbabweans in the UK and 138 by those in South Africa, printed self-completion questionnaires (307) of which 98 were completed in the UK and 209 in South Africa and face-to-face interviews (153) all of which were administered in South Africa. Using different methods of data collection can result in mode effects because the way in which questionnaires are administered can affect the way in which people respond (de Vaus 2002), but it was necessary for three reasons. Firstly, in South Africa some of the target population had

low levels of English language literacy and would have been excluded if face-to-face interviews had not been used. Secondly, especially in the UK, there was a preference expressed for an online version of the questionnaire to be used as it was deemed to be more confidential and anonymous, and easier to access and complete. The advantage of using a web-based questionnaire was that a greater geographical spread could be achieved. Thirdly, the self-completion print version was necessary to ensure that those without access to the online version were included in the study. The fieldwork took place between July and September 2004.

In the absence of a sampling frame three non-probability techniques were used: network or snowball sampling, advertising and outcropping (Lee 1993). Extensive networking was carried out with groups, organizations and employers that worked with and for Zimbabweans or had Zimbabwean employees so that a wide range of different types of organization in different geographical locations helped to publicize the survey and distribute the questionnaire. Included were political, social, cultural and community groups and organizations, health projects, consular and embassy services, human rights groups, and individuals with large numbers of Zimbabwean contacts. The survey was also advertised on Zimbabwean websites and chatrooms, and an interview over-viewing the survey was also held on a UK-based Zimbabwean radio station. The objective of using so many points from which to start the networking was to ensure that the sample was as heterogeneous as possible (Bloch 2004). Relying on a small number of initial contacts as starting points for the snowballing would have reduced the diversity of the sample and led to respondents with more similar characteristics (Welch 1975). In South Africa outcropping – the placement of researchers at a site where large numbers of the target population are located – was used to access agricultural workers at the actual farms where they were employed.

Respondents were ultimately self-selecting, which meant that there was no control over who completed the questionnaire. However, comparisons of the sample characteristics in this study, with data from other surveys of Zimbabweans in the UK and South Africa, revealed similarities between them, in terms of employment and educational profiles (Kirk 2004; Chetsanga and Muchemje 2003).

Characteristics of the Sample

The questionnaire included social and demographic data on gender, age, migration patterns, immigration status and region. Questions were not asked about ethnic group, or about first-language skills, that would have helped obtain a measure for ethnic group. This was due to the sensitivity of asking such questions, particularly in the UK, where exploratory interviews with community representatives and the piloting process revealed that these questions would deter respondents. However, questions were asked about fluency and literacy in all languages and this provided a quasi-measure of ethnic group, as virtually no white Zimbabweans speak the main languages of Shona and Ndebele or other African languages (English being so widely spoken). An analysis of the language data suggests that nearly all our respondents were

black Zimbabweans. Only 15 were monoglot English speakers and 12 of these lived in the UK. Some 84 per cent spoke English fluently, 68 per cent spoke Shona fluently and 41 per cent spoke Ndebele fluently. Some 18 per cent spoke both Shona and Ndebele fluently. Other African languages were also spoken fluently – Zulu and Venda most often.

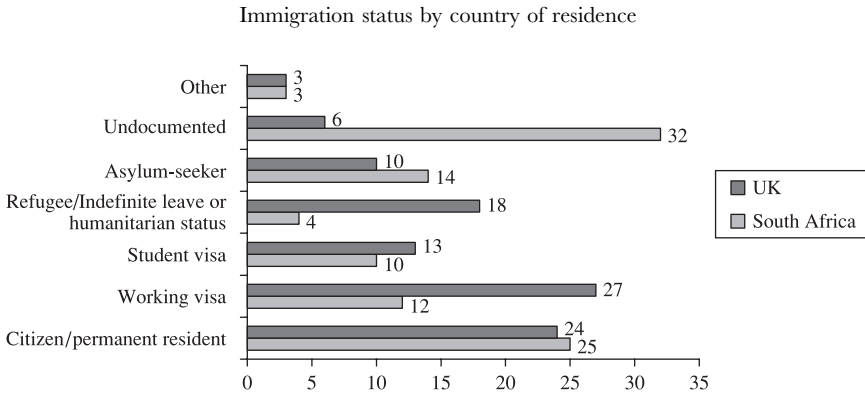
Respondents were drawn from different regions in the UK and provinces in South Africa. In the UK a third of respondents were based in London and two-thirds elsewhere. In South Africa, more than half of respondents (55 per cent) were living in the Gauteng region while around a quarter (24 per cent) were living in Limpopo, which shares a border with Zimbabwe, and where there is a sizeable number of seasonal agricultural workers and cross-border traders.

Of the final sample, 68 per cent were male, 81 per cent were aged 39 or younger, and 66 per cent had last lived in Zimbabwe in 2000 or later (meaning only one-third had left Zimbabwe in 1999 or earlier). The South African sample included a larger proportion of more recent arrivals (2002 and after) than did that of the UK (44 and 24 per cent, respectively). This was due, in part, to the imposition of visa restrictions on Zimbabweans travelling to the UK in 2002; however, it was also due to the declining economic situation and high levels of unemployment in Zimbabwe, which made it necessary for a further diversification of livelihood strategies in that country, by travelling to the neighbouring countries of South Africa and Botswana for the purposes of work and cross-border informal trade. Notable in this latter trend has been the feminization of migration (Crush *et al.* 2005). Women now account for half the world's migrants and, as Hothschild notes, 'for men and women alike, migration has become a private solution to a public problem' (2003: 18).

Migration from Africa is characterized mainly by economic necessity compounded by political insecurity and war; so refugees form a key group of migrants (Sander and Maimbo 2003). In the present case, nearly a quarter (23 per cent) had at some point been refugees or asylum-seekers, yet there were differences in the immigration status of those now living in South Africa and the UK. Figure 1 shows that nearly a third of respondents in South Africa were undocumented migrants, whereas in the UK the largest proportion were on working visas.

The data on immigration status are cross-sectional. Because immigration status is fluid – with people moving in and out of categories, when necessary or expedient (Jordan and Düvell 2002) or when their position changes (such as asylum-seekers becoming refugees or refugees becoming citizens of their country of refuge) – this does not necessarily reflect the reasons for the initial migration. However, the importance of immigration status is that it brings with it certain rights, together with a pattern of inclusions and exclusions. The included are the global economic and political elites, as well as those who have obtained citizenship – or else a relatively secure status, such as indefinite leave to remain or refugee status. The excluded are undocumented migrants and asylum-seekers. This exclusion impacts on their social, political and economic rights in the destination country and in turn on their potential to contribute to poverty reduction in the sending country, through remittances. In South Africa regularized farm workers have received a minimum

Figure 1



Missing: 10.

wage, since March 2003; but undocumented workers are not covered by unemployment or health insurance and can easily be exploited. In the UK, as elsewhere in Europe, the asylum system creates barriers to employment opportunities and remittances, since asylum-seekers are not allowed to work legally. It is such structural barriers that have a major impact on migrants' ability to contribute in any direction, as this article will bear out.

Pre-migration Characteristics

The pre-migration characteristics of migrants are known to impact on their experiences in the destination country. Better language and literacy skills, a higher skills base, the presence of social networks in the destination country and the motivations for migration all help in the initial post-migration period (Bloch 2002; Robinson 1993).

The similarities rather than the differences between 'forced' and 'voluntary' migrants are increasingly stressed in the migration literature. The notion of the 'asylum-migration nexus', which emphasizes the multitude of reasons why people migrate and the relationship between poverty, war and political persecution, is one that has obtained currency and challenges the legitimacy and validity of simplistic categorization (Castles and Van Hear 2005). The present data demonstrate just how mixed were the motives for migration. Table 1 shows that nearly everyone (89 per cent) had multiple reasons for leaving Zimbabwe. However, it also shows differences in the balance of motivations between those now resident in the UK and those in South Africa.

The motives for migration to South Africa were predominately economic. Some 63 per cent cited the economic situation, lack of employment or the wish to work abroad as their main reason for leaving. In the UK, by contrast, only 35 per cent gave the economic situation, lack of employment or the wish

Table 1

Main reason and additional reasons for leaving Zimbabwe, by country of residence (%)

	UK main	South Africa main	Total main	UK additional reasons	South Africa additional reasons	Total additional reasons
Economic situation	24	35	29	43	40	41
Political situation	32	18	26	36	37	37
Lack of employment	3	20	11	25	36	31
To work abroad	8	8	8	21	20	20
To study abroad	23	8	19	15	6	10
Join family abroad	7	3	5	11	8	10
Join friends abroad	1	—	0	5	6	5
Other	2	1	1	5	6	5
Never lived there ^a	—	1	1	—	1	1
No other reasons	*	*	*	10	12	11
Total	482	433	915	486	494	980

^a1 per cent of respondents are not included as they had not lived in Zimbabwe.

*Not applicable.

to work abroad as their main reason. Some 32 per cent gave the political situation as their main reason for leaving, compared with 18 per cent of those in South Africa. Such differences of motivation reflect, on the one hand, the greater geographical proximity of South Africa to Zimbabwe for those in search of employment and, on the other, the greater skills base among Zimbabweans in the UK, itself a characteristic of the comparatively better-off, with the resources for travelling longer distances (de Haan 2000).

Previous research with Zimbabweans has revealed a higher average level of qualifications than among other migrants in their countries of settlement (Kirk 2004; Chetsanga and Muchemje 2003). Certainly, in both South Africa and the UK, Zimbabwean migrants have, on average, higher educational qualifications than the non-migrant population. In Zimbabwe itself, 3.9 per cent of the population are enrolled in tertiary education. Table 2 shows that 38 per cent of our respondents held a degree or higher on leaving Zimbabwe and an additional 22 per cent had either a diploma in higher education or a professional qualification or diploma. However, fewer Zimbabweans in South Africa than in the UK held a formal qualification on arrival (66 and 97 per cent, respectively).³ There was also a greater gender differential in South Africa, with 71.5 per cent of men holding a qualification compared with 52 per cent of women; whereas in the UK there was little difference between men and women (98 and 94 per cent, respectively). The data raise serious issues about 'brain drain', since the loss of such highly qualified

Table 2

Highest level of qualification on arrival, by country of residence (%)

	UK	South Africa	Total
Postgraduate	17	13	16
Degree	26	16	22
Diploma in higher education	21	16	19
Diploma/professional qualification	3	2	3
National certificate	4	6	5
A-level	13	18	15
Cambridge Higher School Certificate	—	2	1
O-level	14	23	17
Cambridge School Certificate	1	2	1
Other	1	1	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>484</i>	<i>329</i>	<i>813</i>

Missing: 33.

Source: Bloch (2005: 36).

people can have a pronounced negative impact on developing countries – due as much to the loss of short-term tax revenue from potential high earners as to the longer-term importance of human resources generally, in development (Newland 2003; Wickramasekara 2003).

Prior to migration, more than two-thirds of respondents had been working (61 per cent of those who went to South Africa and 81 per cent of those who went to the UK). However, a larger proportion of those who went to South Africa had previously been unemployed and looking for work, compared with those who went to the UK (17 and 3 per cent, respectively). Furthermore, the data in table 3 on pre-migration employment show that those going to the UK were more likely to have worked in more highly skilled jobs – managers, teachers, nurses, or health professions⁴ and accountants – than those who went to South Africa, of whom more had been working in the trades (builders, mechanics, electricians, carpenters), as hawkers and street traders, in factory or production operative jobs and as agricultural labourers.

One of the challenges for the future development of sending countries, should migrants return, is the extent to which migrants manage to ‘capacity-build’ and/or use their pre-migration skills in the destination country, in the meantime. The data show that the skills base of Zimbabwean migrants falls along a continuum from highly educated skilled professionals to unskilled workers. There is evidence of some capacity-building through education. However, with some exceptions, there is little evidence of such skills being fully (if at all) utilized in the new environment.

Table 3

Titles of jobs done most often prior to migration, by country of residence (frequencies)

	UK	South Africa	Total
All managerial, including managing directors	89	44	133
Teachers	49	34	83
Administration and clerical	34	22	56
Finance: clerks, cashiers, other	29	21	50
Trades: builders, mechanics, electricians, carpenters	9	24	33
Lecturers	12	13	25
Secretarial/PA	20	5	25
Engineering	14	10	24
Technicians/lab assistants	13	8	21
Retail: sales, cashiers and shop assistants	9	11	20
Nurses/sisters	17	3	20
Accountants	16	3	19
Factory/production operatives	5	13	18
Agricultural labourers	1	16	17
IT	10	4	14
Hawkers/street traders	0	13	13
Health other (including radiography, pharmacy)	11	1	12

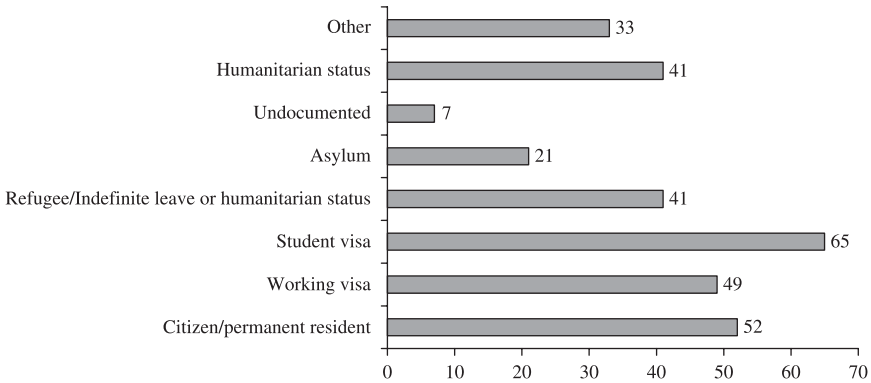
Education and Employment in the Destination Country

Some 30 per cent of respondents had obtained a new qualification in the destination country – more than two-thirds having obtained a degree or higher-level qualification (69 per cent). There was a clear element of ‘brain gain’ among many of those who had obtained such a qualification. Of those who had arrived in their current country of residence without any qualification, 9 per cent had subsequently obtained one. Some 45 per cent of those who had arrived with a qualification had obtained a further qualification in the destination country – 57 per cent of these being higher-level qualifications than the ones they had before. Set against this, nearly a third (31 per cent) had obtained a new qualification which was at a lower level than the one they had on arrival; and 12 per cent had merely studied at the same level as before.

Those who had been refugees or asylum-seekers at some point were less likely to have obtained a qualification than others (28 and 41 per cent, respectively). Figure 2 shows the relationship between immigration status and qualifications at the time of survey. Asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants were less likely than others to have obtained a qualification, due in part to the regulations around tuition fees in the UK which require the payment of prohibitively expensive overseas fees for non-residents.⁵ In South Africa, undocumented migrants were on the whole unskilled, with low levels of education, and had been motivated to migrate by economic factors rather than any other considerations.

Figure 2

Proportion obtaining a formal qualification in country of residence, by current immigration status (%)



Base number 384.

Another structural barrier faced by asylum-seekers in the UK, and by all undocumented migrants, is access to the regular labour market. In the UK asylum-seekers are not able to work legally, which was also the case in South Africa until 2004, when their rights to work were reinstated. However, even in South Africa asylum-seekers have difficulties obtaining the correct and necessary documentation, or access to social and financial services, and this leaves them excluded and vulnerable (Landau 2004). Table 4 shows that both in the UK and South Africa citizens and permanent residents and those on working visas were the most likely to be employed or self-employed. In the UK, 44 per cent of asylum-seekers were not working, due to the restrictions imposed by their immigration status. In the UK, 78 per cent of refugees and those with related status (Indefinite leave to remain and Humanitarian protection) were working – which is a much larger proportion than that found in research with other refugee groups, where the average levels of employment were as low as 29 per cent (Bloch 2002). One of the major factors in the comparative economic success of Zimbabweans in the UK has to be their high skills level and their fluency in English.

Nevertheless, both in the UK and South Africa, racism and xenophobia are features that underlie the social and economic structure of society, with refugees, asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants increasingly targeted by the authorities and the general population (Handmaker and Parsley 2002; Schuster 2003). The disadvantaged labour market activity of these groups is evident in table 4. When Cramers V^6 is explored, it is clear that there is a correlation between main activity and immigration status; and that the correlation is slightly stronger in South Africa than in the UK.

The vulnerability of asylum-seekers (in the UK) and undocumented migrants (UK and South Africa) extends not only to access to the labour

Table 4

Main activity at the time of the survey, by immigration status and country of residence (%)

	Citizen/ permanent resident	Working visa	Student visa	Refugee/Indefinite leave to remain or Humanitarian status	Asylum- seeker	Undocumented
UK						
Employed/self-employed	94	94	20	78	28	78
Unemployed looking for work	1	2	3	7	12	4
Student	3	2	74	13	18	7
Home and family	1	2	0	1	0	
Not working for other reasons	0	0	0	1	44	11
Other*	2	1	3	0	0	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>130</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>86</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>28</i>
Missing: 25						
Cramers V = .384						
South Africa						
Employed	88	88	8	48	46	64
Unemployed looking for work	7	10	2	48	47	32
Student	3	0	88	0	3	0
Home and family	2	0	0	0	0	2
Not working	1	2	0	0	5	1
Other*	0	0	2	5	0	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>118</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>153</i>
Missing: 37						
Cramers V = .413						

*Other included voluntary work, internship, accompanying spouse.

market but also to the terms and conditions of employment, since they are forced to work in the unregulated labour market. This is apparent, for instance, in the differential wages earned. All of those who were working at the time of the survey – or who had worked in the past – were asked their last take-home pay. The data showed that asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants were in receipt of lower wages than others. In the UK 42 per cent of citizens and permanent residents earned more than £2,000 per month, whereas no asylum-seekers earned this amount of money. In South Africa a similar pattern was evident. At one extreme were the citizens and permanent residents, 53 per cent of whom were earning more than 10,000 Rand a month; while at the other extreme were the undocumented migrants, 56 per cent of whom were earning less than 500 Rand a month. Some undocumented migrants were working extremely long hours for very little pay. No less than 38 per cent of undocumented migrants were working more than 40 hours a week, for as little as 500 Rand a month. The impact of such low wages affects not only the individuals concerned but their families – and their ability to contribute much in the way of remittances, as remarked below.

Of particular significance for capacity-building – or at the very minimum skills retention – is the level of employment carried out in the destination country relative to pre-migration activity, together with the level of employment relative to any qualifications subsequently obtained. A comparison of employment before and since migration showed a shift to care jobs in the UK while in South Africa the movement has been into agricultural labouring jobs. In the case of the UK, this represented a downward shift, while in South Africa, it meant entrance for some into the labour market from a previous position of unemployment (see table 5).

Analysing employment with qualifications obtained since migration revealed that some Zimbabweans are not using their qualifications in the labour market. This is most apparent in the UK, where 24 of those working as carers or care assistants had a degree-level qualification or higher from the UK. Other research has found the same pattern of over-qualified Zimbabweans working in the UK care industry, as well as in cleaning, domestic jobs and warehouse work (Mbiba 2004). There were, however, instances where migration had enabled the acquisition and use of new skills, as was evident among the 49 respondents in the UK who were working as nurses. Most had trained in the UK and had successfully entered professional employment.

In South Africa, migration had resulted in some positive changes for the undocumented migrants who, for the most part, had been unemployed in Zimbabwe but who had found work as labourers in South Africa. Although low-paid, most sent remittances which would have a positive impact on the situation of their families in Zimbabwe. However, the data show that those who had formerly worked as teachers or in trades were not using these skills in South Africa; and so the pattern of deskilling, as in the UK, was evident here too.

Remittances

Research carried out in Zimbabwe in 2003 found that 28.5 per cent of households had remittances as one of their income strands (C-Safe 2003). The

Table 5

Main changes in current or recent job, by country of origin and country of residence (frequencies)

	Job title before emigrating to:			Current or most recent job title in:			Increase (+) or decrease (-)
	UK	SA	Total	UK	SA	Total	
Agricultural labourers	1	16	17	1	80	81	+64
Carers/care assistants	3	0	3	58	2	60	+57
Teachers	49	34	83	24	9	33	-50
All managerial, including managing directors	89	44	133	43	45	88	-45
Nurses/sisters	17	3	20	49	1	50	+30
Consultants/analysts	9	2	11	21	15	36	+25
Trades: builders, mechanics, electricians, carpenters	9	24	33	1	10	11	-22
Bar/waiters	0	3	3	8	16	24	+21
Finance: clerks, cashiers, other	29	21	50	21	11	32	-18
Administration and clerical	34	22	56	29	13	42	-14
Hawkers/street vendors	0	13	13	0	25	25	+12
Lecturers	12	13	25	4	11	15	-10
Secretarial/PA	20	5	25	10	5	15	-10
Technicians/lab assistants	13	8	21	8	4	12	-9
Security guards	2	9	11	3	17	20	+9
Domestic/cleaning	1	6	7	5	10	15	+8
Social workers	5	0	5	13	—	13	+8

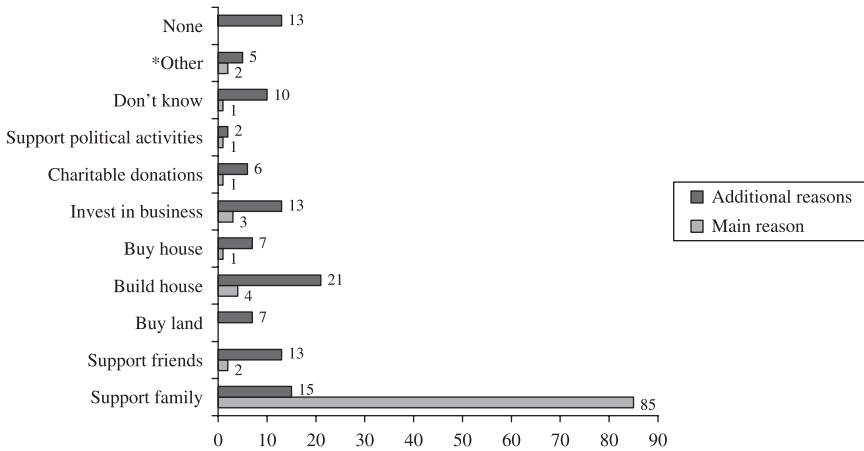
continued trend of out-migration, since 2003, means that the proportion of households receiving remittances is likely to be higher than this. Remittances include cash, goods and social exchanges (Nyberg Sørensen 2004), though their role, certainly as reported in the development literature, is not without contention (Ammassari and Black 2001). On the positive side, most remittances go directly to the migrant's family in the sending country and can help to reduce poverty within particular households. They may also have a wider impact, due to improved education, health, housing and therefore better human development (HCIDC 2004). Moreover, if remittance money is spent on locally produced goods and in employing local people – for example, to build a house – then this will have a wider impact on the local economy through job generation.

Economic remittances

Economic remittances can be the reason for migration – assuming that migrants remain linked to their families and communities through networks of mutual

Figure 3

Main and any reasons, in addition to the main reason, for sending remittances (%)



Base number main reason: 707; Missing: 34.

Base number additional reason/s: 740; Missing: 1.

*Other includes fuel, one-off money for weddings or funerals, food, education costs.

obligation (Curran and Saguy 2001). Remittance activity, as with other transnational activities, incorporates networks of migrants as well as those in the sending country. Certainly, this study pointed to there being a large flow of economic remittances from migrants back to Zimbabwe (74 per cent sent remittances), and to a lesser extent to Zimbabweans in other countries (13 per cent). Furthermore, most (85 per cent) said their main reason for sending remittances was to support family members, as figure 3 shows.

A number of factors influenced the propensity to send remittances, the most notable being immigration status, the location of close family members, the main reason for leaving Zimbabwe and the main activity in the destination country. There was little difference between men and women or between those who had been refugees and asylum-seekers at some point and those who had not. Table 6 shows the proportions that sent remittances to Zimbabwe by different explanatory variables.

Some 81 per cent of those who were working at the time of the survey sent economic remittances to Zimbabwe. A direct correlation between the amounts sent in remittances and the average monthly salary among those who were working was evident, with the highest earners sending the most money to Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, among some of the lower earners, remittances made up a substantial proportion of their monthly earnings.

The data on immigration status showed that asylum-seekers were less likely than others to be sending remittances, but this also correlated with main activity and the greater likelihood for asylum-seekers not to be working.

Table 6

Proportion who sent remittances and non-monetary gifts and who provided in-kind support to Zimbabwe, by immigration status, whether respondent had close family members in Zimbabwe, main reason for leaving Zimbabwe and main activity at the time of the survey

	Sent remittances (%)	Sent non-monetary gifts (%)	Provided in-kind help and support (%)
Immigration status			
Citizen/permanent resident	68	67	82
Working visa	88	78	83
Student visa	74	77	77
Refugee/Indefinite leave to remain	78	73	71
Asylum-seeker	62	58	67
Undocumented	71	64	57
Other	85	74	65
<i>Total</i>	<i>990</i>	<i>988</i>	<i>953</i>
Close family in Zimbabwe			
Yes	77	71	75
No	35	39	25
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,000</i>	<i>998</i>	<i>963</i>
Main reason for leaving Zimbabwe			
Economic situation	80	73	77
Political situation	67	65	77
Lack of employment in Zimbabwe	77	71	60
To work abroad	81	75	75
To study abroad	73	74	80
To join family	68	65	64
Other	76	65	71
<i>Total</i>	<i>915</i>	<i>913</i>	<i>880</i>
Main activity at time of survey			
Employed/self-employed	81	75	78
Unemployed looking for work	50	44	53
Student	74	73	76
Not working – other reasons	30	36	43
Other	67	78	75
<i>Total</i>	<i>971</i>	<i>969</i>	<i>934</i>

Just over two-thirds of citizens and permanent residents sent remittances – those with close family members in Zimbabwe being the most likely to do so. Those who were on working visas, who had left Zimbabwe to work abroad and who were employed were also the most likely to be sending remittances. However, it is significant that half of those who were unemployed and 30 per cent of others who were not working were still sending remittances; this must have had a large impact on the quality of their own everyday lives.

An analysis of the ways in which economic remittances were transferred shows that only a minority – a third – transferred money through formal routes. Family and friends going to Zimbabwe was the way in which money was transferred most often (43 per cent) followed by the ‘black’ market (38 per cent) and personal visits to Zimbabwe (36 per cent). High money-transfer costs negatively impact on the development impact of financial flows (IOM 2005) and because of this some sending country governments have tried to promote and guide the nature of economic transnational activities (Portes *et al.* 2001). Means of encouraging remittance flows include offering investment breaks and joint ventures with migrant associations (Nyberg Sørensen *et al.* 2003). In June 2004, the governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, Gideon Gono, visited the UK, South Africa and elsewhere in an effort to encourage Zimbabweans to remit money through government channels rather than other routes to bring in much-needed foreign currency reserves.

Remittances in kind

In addition to monetary remittances, more than two-thirds (69 per cent) of respondents sent non-monetary gifts – most often this was clothes (85 per cent) followed by food (43 per cent). An additional 73 per cent provided other help and support to family and friends in Zimbabwe. It was significant that most of this help related to migration: the largest proportion (37 per cent) helping new arrivals with accommodation in the UK or South Africa; 34 per cent providing advice about moving; 24 per cent providing financial help with moving; and 23 per cent helping to obtain visas.

The characteristics of respondents sending non-monetary support and providing in-kind assistance were similar to the patterns found for those sending monetary remittances, as table 6 shows. Gender seemed to have no impact, with similar proportions of men and women sending both economic and social remittances to Zimbabwe. However, the data highlight the importance of structural barriers in not only affecting the everyday lives of Zimbabweans in the UK and South Africa, but impacting also on their families in Zimbabwe. In short, the ramifications of UK and South African policies extend well beyond their own borders. If there is to be a real commitment to alleviating poverty and enhancing development in Zimbabwe and elsewhere, then the domestic policies of receiving countries in respect of their migrant communities, have to be a part of any overall strategy.

Discussion

The article has shown that Zimbabwean migrants are, on the whole, well qualified and migrate with a strong skills base and good employment experience, though migrants to the UK are better qualified and possessed of more pre-migration employment experience in professional jobs than those who have gone to South Africa. Many of the migrants to South Africa had low levels of qualifications (if any) and had never worked prior to migrating. Furthermore, the majority were undocumented migrants in South Africa.

However, among those who arrived in either receiving country with qualifications and work experience, often at a high level, there was a clear pattern of under-employment and downward occupational mobility. Some had obtained additional qualifications in the receiving country but, with few notable exceptions (such as those who had trained as nurses and were working in this field), most had been unable to use their new qualifications in the labour market. Undocumented migrants and asylum-seekers were the least likely to have been able to obtain a qualification – and these were the two groups experiencing exclusion as a result of structural barriers to their participation in the regular economy.

Both the UK and South Africa operate hierarchical systems of rights that differentially exclude certain categories of migrants. In the UK asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants cannot work legally, so those that are working have to be in the unregulated labour market. In South Africa, since 2004, asylum-seekers have been allowed to work, though undocumented migrants still do not have legal access to the labour market. The survey found that asylum-seekers in the UK were less likely to be working than others, whereas both refugees and asylum-seekers were the groups with highest levels of unemployment in South Africa. Undocumented migrants were working for the most part as low-paid agricultural labourers in South Africa: in other words, working long hours and earning less than the minimum wage with no employment rights, in contrast to documented agricultural labourers.

At a societal level, both the UK and South Africa can be said to be benefiting, as Zimbabweans fill important gaps in the labour market. In the UK, this is especially the case in the areas of social care and health. In South Africa, agriculture depends on migrant labour from the Southern African region. However, the facts of migrants not working to their capacity, of being unemployed, or of working in the irregular labour market, all limit their capacity to contribute to the economy through taxation. In the UK, the policy of excluding asylum-seekers from work also costs the government money for their housing and subsistence support.

Most respondents in the study maintained strong transnational ties with their families, and remittances were sent to support them in Zimbabwe and elsewhere. However, the structural barriers experienced as a result of immigration status impacted on the capacity of asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants to send remittances and/or on the volume of remittances sent. Nevertheless, for the families and communities of these migrants, there are benefits through the receipt of economic and social remittances, even if they are necessarily limited. Meanwhile, the sending country as a whole experiences costs from migration through ‘brain drain’. In the Zimbabwean case it is evident that many out-migrants are skilled and this has left a deficit in some sectors, of which the health sector has been highlighted. The loss of human capital must impact negatively on reconstruction and development – and the under-employment of Zimbabwean migrants abroad may have a further long-term impact. Nevertheless, the remittances sent to Zimbabwe by migrants can be crucial in the meantime, in the context of high unemployment.

In the short term it seems unlikely that people will return voluntarily to live in Zimbabwe. Those who do return are most likely to have been sent

back involuntarily, due to a breach in immigration regulations (undocumented migrants) or as ‘failed’ asylum-seekers. In South Africa, as many as 24,000 undocumented Zimbabwean migrants were deported between January and March 2005.⁷ Nevertheless, there is generally an increasing interest in voluntary return programmes as part of a wider international development strategy, using the ‘return of human capital’ argument (Blitz *et al.* 2005). For example, IOM has set up a skills transfer programme called Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) with IOM acting as an intermediary trying to match skilled people to jobs. Given the situation in Zimbabwe, however, it is unlikely that this will attract return migrants to that country in the foreseeable future.

Respondents in this study were asked if they would be interested in returning to Zimbabwe to live, some time in the future. Two-thirds of them said that they would definitely like to return to Zimbabwe and 21 per cent said that they *might* want to return. However, nearly three-quarters of those interested in returning gave both economic and political changes as the necessary conditions for their return (71 per cent). Better health (57 per cent) and education for children (47 per cent) were also voiced as concerns. It hardly needs saying that Zimbabwe is currently a long way from creating a viable return environment – which, according to IOM, entails an improvement in the ‘social, economic and political conditions in migrants’ home countries’ (2005: 295).

Ultimately the success of return migration as a development strategy will depend on who returns and on the quality of their experiences, meanwhile, in the destination country (Østergaard-Nielson 2003). It is the experiences in the destination country which are currently the most relevant in the Zimbabwean case. Policy-makers in general need to re-examine their migrant policies in order to maximize the opportunities and capacities of migrants in the destination countries, as a means of ensuring that the necessary skills base exists for any future returns. It is the structural barriers making up part of the managed migration agenda which are curtailing the immediate benefits of migration for both the receiving countries and migrants’ families; but these will also impede longer-term development by reducing the skills base and employment experiences that return migrants could have to bring back with them.

If migrant receiving countries, the majority of which are highly industrialized, are committed to reducing global poverty and inequality and to facilitating development by maximizing the benefits of migration, then a more inclusive rather than exclusionary strategy for the reception of migrants is called for. The benefits of such policies would be seen at both micro and macro levels and could have a positive impact on both receiving and sending societies.

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Notes

1. Source data International Monetary Fund and Standard Bank, accessed on 9 August 2005 at http://www.ed.standardbank.co.za/research/ZWGE_MWRP_050805.PDF

2. Some 1 per cent of the population are white and 1 per cent are Asian or of mixed heritage backgrounds.
3. In the UK the proportion of the total population which has participated in tertiary education is 59.5 per cent while in South Africa the proportion is 15.2 per cent: see <http://www.nationmaster.com/country/zi/People>
4. In addition to the jobs shown in table 3, nine respondents who subsequently migrated to the UK had worked as doctors.
5. Some asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants would previously have had other statuses, such as working visas or student visas, that enabled easier access to education.
6. Cramers V is a statistical measure of association between two variables where 0 suggests no association and 1 equals perfect association.
7. Email received from Southern African Regional Poverty Network, based on press briefing notes from IOM, 16 August 2005.

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