



Layers of Vulnerability among Internally and Internationally Mobile Workers in the Context of Southern Africa

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SNEAKING TO SA: Zim migrants 'pay R100 to cross Limpopo in dinghies'

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News24 Correspondent

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government 5.4.2019 07:34 pm

25,000 Zimbabweans Deported in 4 months

Zim migrants in SA to re-apply for permits

Mashudu Netsianda Bulawayo Bureau — SOUTH Africa has announced that Zimbabweans who acquired permits under

Outline of Presentation

❑ Background – Mobility for Waged (Agricultural) Work in Southern Africa

❖ Colonialism and capitalist expansion

❑ Colonial Independence and Southward Migration

❖ Zimbabwe – South Africa labour migration – 3 Layers of vulnerability

- *Migration factors and socio-economic conditions in Zimbabwe*
- *Challenges along the way*
- *Zimbabwean migrants' experiences in South Africa's agriculture sector*

❑ Zimbabwe-South Africa Policy responses

❑ Conclusion

Background – Mobility for waged (Agricultural) work in Southern Africa

European capitalist expansion

- Dislocations from their native lands and pushed into ‘Reserves’
- Restrictions on use of land, colonial taxation regimes (e.g. the imposition of hut tax) and fees (e.g. livestock dipping fees) coerced black natives into the wage economy
- Race and citizenship boundaries - All blacks working in white-owned plantations and mines were treated as ‘Migrants’
- Division of labour and working conditions based on race – e.g. Africans were relegated to physical and unskilled work while semi-skilled and skilled jobs were reserved for the settlers
- Independent governments of Southern Africa inherited racialized labour regime.

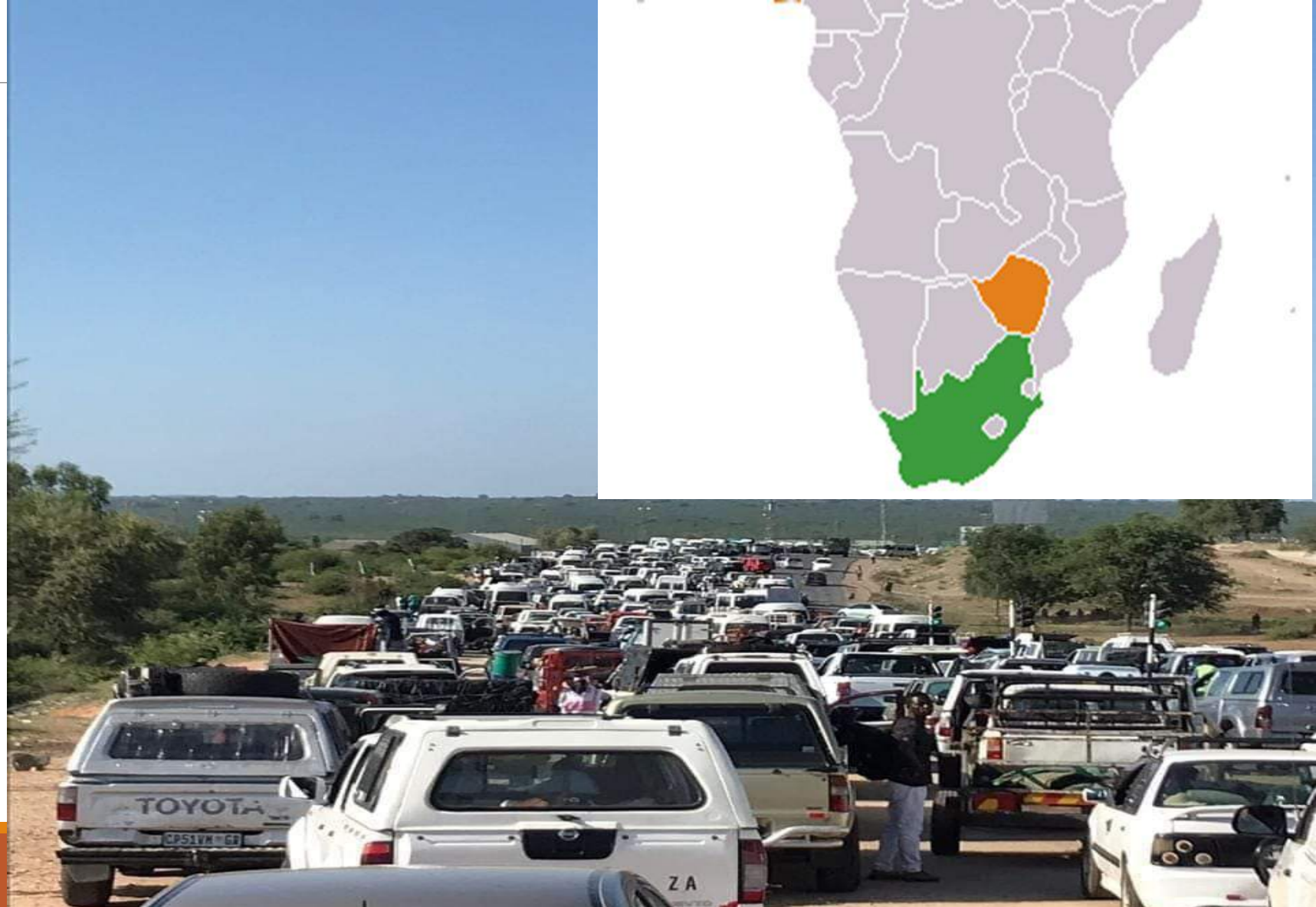
Colonial Independence and Southward Migration: Zim-South Africa

- Cross-border migration for labour has always been mostly southward to South Africa – **mines and agricultural plantations, and then manufacturing**
- borders became more open at the end of apartheid in 1994
- The drastic performance of the Zimbabwean economy since 2000 has pushed millions of its citizens out of the country – majority are in South Africa



Contemporary Labor Migration Flows

- At least 3 million Zimbabwean citizens are living and working in South Africa
- Many working 'illegally' in plantations in the northern provinces – mostly Limpopo Province
- While others use the plantation work as a stepping stone to other sectors



Layers of Vulnerability

Layer 1: Pressures at Home

Economic hardships

- Unemployment
- Inflation
- Informalization of the economy

Institutional challenges

- Failure by government to process travelling documents (passports)
- Lack of safety nets for the vulnerable

Political challenges

- Violent invasions of plantations,
- Political violence/ Contested election results since 2000

- Since 2000, more than a third of the population forced to migrate to neighbouring countries and abroad
- Plantations in Limpopo is a destination of preference for undocumented migrants - **Near the border; Easy to find seasonal work**

Layers of Vulnerability

“None of us had a passport and I was surprised to see that there is an organized syndicate that help people cross the border.....” (Virginia (36), 28 January 2016)

Layer 2: Challenges along the way

- Extortion by border authorities
- Sexual and physical attacks by border patrol gangs - '*maguma-guma*'
- Attacks by crocodiles in the Limpopo river
- Apprehension and arrests by border control agencies

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Layers of Vulnerability

Layer 2: Migrant experiences along the way

- The cost of staying at home is far much more than the risks associated with crossing the border
- Perceptions of risk is minimized once (undocumented) migrants get into the plantations on the other side of the Limpopo - **mostly engaged as seasonal agricultural workers.**



Layers of Vulnerability

Layer 3: Zimbabwean migrants in SA Agriculture Sector

- Desperation for waged work push many to accept 'below minimum' wages
- General poor living and working conditions in the sector
- Persistent concerns about potential apprehension, extortions, detention, and deportation constrain undocumented migrants' capacities to access social services, including healthcare and legal support and from seeking better employment
- Geographic isolation of plantations – constraints access to social services and limits integration
- Limited legal protection
 - Fear of moving outside the boundaries of the plantations because of their legal status
 - the short-term nature of contracts (seasonal) does not allow for effective mobilization and collective bargaining
 - Not aware of their legal rights
 - **BUT even if they are aware – they are always reminded of past experiences of Police round-ups and Deportations**



Regulation of agricultural labour recruitment since 2000

(a) B1-17 Permits – A provision of the Aliens Control Act of 1991

- Was a special arrangement for growers
- Undocumented Zimbabwean migrant workers could be issued with special permits (B1-17 permits) which allowed them to stay and work in South Africa as long as they remained with their employer
- Issuing of permits was an attempt to regularize the stay of undocumented Zimbabweans who had been living and working on the plantations.
- Zimbabweans could use these permits as “proof of legality” in some instances – but could still be apprehended and deported back to Zimbabwe
- The B1-17 permits scheme was abandoned by 2005 after outcry from other sectors

Regulation of agricultural labour recruitment since 2000

(b) Corporate Permit Scheme - 2004

- Objective was to regularize the status of Zimbabweans working in South Africa illegally.
- Corporate entities, (including mine groups and plantations) could apply to the Department of Home Affairs to employ a predetermined number of migrant workers
- Many growers avoided the bureaucratic process of registration and continued to engage undocumented Zimbabwean migrants clandestinely.
- The scheme abandoned by 2009 following concerns that it was being abused

Regulation of agricultural labour recruitment since 2000

(c) The Dispensation of Zimbabweans Project (DZP) – 2010 to 2014

- Focus was now to create a record of Zimbabweans who had, until 2010, been living illegally in South Africa
- The South African Department of Home Affairs (DHA) waived some of the restrictive work permit application requirements,
- The DHA only received a total of **294 511** applications, **242 731** were granted permits while 51 780 [were] either rejected or not finalised
- Reasons for not applying - **suspensions that it was a ploy to deport them, not getting passports from the Zimbabwean consulate, not even aware of the facility**

Regulation of agricultural labour recruitment since 2000


(d) Zimbabwe Special Dispensation Permit (ZSP) (2015-2017) and Zimbabwean Exemption Permit (ZEP) (from 2018).

- Only cater for Zimbabwean migrants who had been listed in the DZP database.
- Implementation methodology failed to contextualise the delicate situation of undocumented Farmworkers, and as a result, did not adequately respond to their unique needs.



Zimbabwean Workers' Responses

- Complicated networks already working on the farms – facilitating mobility and recruitment
- 'Self-legalization' – forging citizenship documents and work permits
- Hide-and-seek strategies that allow them to maximize incomes



“After divorcing the father of my 2 sons, I worked as a house maid ... where I was getting a monthly wage of \$50. The money not enough to provide for our needs ... now I am able to send monthly groceries for my kids and make some savings for their education ...” (Virginia (36), 28 January 2016)

***Zimbabwean labour is needed in South African
Plantations Yet the “Migrant body” is criminalized***

The facts

- ❑ Need to come to terms with the realities that agricultural work has become more and more casualised, and is competing with other industries for local labour
- ❑ No guarantee that the Zimbabwe socio-economic and political situation will change for the better soon
- ❑ Instead of criminalizing undocumented migrant workers, a **bilateral agricultural workers recruitment programme** that relieve potential workers of passport and/or work visa restrictions can be negotiated.
- ❑ Pursuing this approach will yield at least 4 WINS.

The 4 WINS

- ❑ Reduce the cost of policing the border in order to deter '**illegal migration**'
- ❑ Reduce the **layers of vulnerabilities** that undocumented Zimbabweans face as they negotiate their way into the South African agricultural labour market
- ❑ **Improve labour practices** - in cases where their rights are infringed upon, they would be more able to report these infringements to relevant authorities;
- ❑ Promote efficiency in **agricultural production** as farmers would be assured of a consistent supply of labour as and when required.

Thank You..!

