

## RESTRICTED

### **DFID Zimbabwe Sitrep Mass Displacements 6 June 2005**

#### Highlights

- Destruction of homes and informal businesses by Zimbabwean armed police causes widespread homelessness, displacement and destruction of livelihoods.
- Estimated 40,000 households (approximately 200,000 people) affected. Estimated 30,000 arrests made (mainly informal traders).
- Humanitarian assistance being provided through IOM, Zimbabwe Red Cross and others. DFID providing financial support.
- Advocacy efforts ongoing bilaterally, through UN and civil society.
- Initial resistance has been quashed, but the situation remains volatile.

#### Background

1. On 24 May, GoZ launched Operation Marambatsvina (translation: "drive out rubbish"), aimed at destroying unauthorised buildings and informal trading operations through the use of paramilitary forces. The focus is on informal settlements around Harare, and more recently Bulawayo, Mutare, Victoria Falls and other towns. Homes and businesses are being razed, and frequently burnt, causing mass homelessness, displacement and destruction of livelihoods. Arbitrary arrests are being made.
2. Households containing chronically ill people, orphans and child-headed households are among those worst affected. There are unconfirmed reports of several infant deaths due to sleeping outside without shelter – it is winter in Zimbabwe and night temperatures can drop to four degrees centigrade. In Mutare, IOM reported that at least two people (one chronically ill and one child) were severely burned when they could not exit their home that was set on fire by police. The campaign is ongoing.
3. There have been isolated pockets of resistance, which have been swiftly quashed by armed police using teargas. There are no reports of live ammunition being used. As yet there has been no widespread reaction. There are rumours suggesting various forms of protest – "stay aways" and marches which could start this week. The capacity of civil society to successfully mobilize numbers in the face of such intimidation is questionable.
4. Publicly, the President has spoken of the need to rid the congested suburbs of criminal elements, layabouts and black market activity. The campaign was launched following a Monetary Policy Statement from the Reserve Bank Governor on 19 May. The Governor blamed informal traders for the continued