



Report of the Black Sash, CoRMSA and Oxfam Monitoring Team

De Doorns, Western Cape

The Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA), the Black Sash and Oxfam have put together a team of independent monitors to assess conditions in the temporary safety site as well as in areas outside the site that relate to the current displacement of Zimbabwean nationals in De Doorns. This monitoring team will collect information on conditions and processes at the safety site as well as on information from areas beyond the site so as to provide information that will be useful in developing ways to resolve the current displacement crisis. This information will be distributed to key role players and will also be published on the CoRMSA website.

Report 7

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INTRODUCTION

The Black Sash, accompanied by the Gender Advocacy Programme and the African Disabled Refugee Organisation, carried out three days of monitoring in the De Doorns area from 23rd March 2010 - 25th March 2010. In November 2009, De Doorns saw an outbreak of xenophobia, resulting in the displacement of the area's Zimbabwean residents to a temporary site. During this time, the Black Sash, in partnership with CoRMSA (Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa) and Oxfam visited De Doorns to monitor the conditions of the temporary site and assess how plans for re-integration were forming. The purpose of this project in March 2010 is to follow up on the monitoring carried out in November and December and to evaluate how the situation has developed during the past four months. In a monitoring trip carried out two weeks previously (10th March – 12th March 2010) the monitoring parties conducted interviews, carried out site visits and met with representatives of the displaced group as well as representatives of South African residents to ascertain how the immediate needs of Internally Displaced Persons (i.e. the conditions of the temporary sites) were being met; and how the process of reintegration was being addressed. The purpose of this second research trip was to build on and expand our understanding of the reintegration process by meeting with further stakeholders, namely local and provincial government officials, representatives from the Hex Valley Table Grape Association (HTA), the station commander of the De Doorns police force, and a health communicator for the Cape Winelands.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1) Funds for the site are running very low. The municipality will soon be unable to support the site, so the local government is looking to pass the responsibility on to the provincial or national government.

- 2) The grape season is nearing an end. This will have an important impact on the reintegration process, as many on the site may leave for Zimbabwe or go elsewhere in South Africa.
- 3) The reintegration process has advanced since the last visit. The opposing sides have been brought together and are now working together to aid reconciliation.
- 4) There still remain a number of threats to reintegration. Service delivery before reintegration is still top of the agenda for the South African residents. Moreover, issues of influx and overcrowding have not been properly addressed, which means that the potential for further crises has not been removed.
- 5) There is no clear understanding of who is responsible for dealing with the crisis in De Doorns. The local government has been carrying the burden since November, but it no longer has the capacity to do so. The parties interviewed during the visit all believed that there should be more clarity regarding who should take the lead, and what the respective responsibilities of local, provincial and national government are.

CONDITIONS AT THE DISPLACEMENT SITE

Basic Services

The report from the visit of 10th March – 12th March 2010 illustrated that the displaced group does have access to basic services on the site. However, the monitors discovered in this trip that the municipality will not be able to sustain these provisions for much longer. The combined monthly cost of water, electricity, sanitation and refuse removal totals R72,000. According to Mr Manfred van Rooyen – a representative from the BreedeVallei reintegration secretariat – this cost is now more than the municipality can maintain. Particularly at threat is the sanitation service. The ninety toilets on the site were being funded by an extra three-month grant. However, this is due to run out at the end of March. The municipality can, at a stretch, still provide water and refuse collection. However, the overall costs of the site are severely over-burdening the capacity of the municipality.

Security

In addition to the costs of basic services, funds for security are also running low. Security has also cost the local municipality R120,000 and the funds paying for the service are almost empty. According to Mr van Rooyen, the municipality will no longer have the money to provide this service from April onwards.

The police force has been providing additional security on the site. From November until presently, the police force has tried to visit the site every day. This commitment can be difficult to maintain, because the force also has to balance other obligations. There are now ten extra members on the police force to assist with the extra responsibility. Still, it is important to recognise that the police provide *additional* security, and are not responsible for the overall security service on the site.

Childcare

There are around 40 children under the age of six on the site. To assist in their care, the Department of Social Development has introduced Early Childhood Development facilities and trained eight parents to look after the children. Those who have been trained now have a certified qualification that can be used for employment purposes in the future. There are currently only two trained parents left at the site, but they are assisted by other untrained women.

Healthcare

All children were evaluated when they moved to the site and treated for any illnesses that were found. The greatest problem was long-term malnourishment. Medical services were also provided in the beginning by Médecins Sans Frontières. MSF were incredibly helpful in contributing to medical care on the site in its early days. However the service was often overburdened because people went to MSF for all ailments and primary health care needs, rather than for emergency or acute cases.

Essential medical services are still provided at the site. All children under the age of 15 are immunised against measles and polio, providing that the child's parents give permission. Children are also given Vitamin A and de-worming treatment. A nurse visits the site to distribute these. In addition to scheduled visits, local nurses continue to visit the site on an *ad hoc* basis.

Besides visits to the site, there are other options available to displaced persons who need to access healthcare. De Doorns has a mobile clinic serving the area and a main clinic for primary healthcare needs. According to Ms Jo-Anne Otto – the health communicator for the Cape Winelands – there have not been any complaints about difficulties in accessing the main clinic in the town. To accommodate those who are at work during usual opening hours, the clinics occasionally extend their opening hours into the evening one day a week or are open on a Saturday morning. For emergencies, the closest hospital is in Worcester.

Despite there being an availability of healthcare for the Zimbabweans, there are a number of obstacles which make it more challenging for provisions to be utilised to a full extent. One key barrier is language. It can be difficult for nurses and doctors to properly communicate with parents and children, which means they may not be fully understanding the treatment or diagnoses they have been given.

Another problem is the flow of information between the displacement site and the healthcare professionals. In a prominent example where a baby died at the site, the healthcare professionals were never made aware that this baby was in need of treatment and the baby later passed away. This outcome may have been prevented had the healthcare workers been kept informed.

A lack of patient responsibility also hinders the effectiveness of healthcare provision. Although medication is available, it is the responsibility of the patients to collect pills and take them properly. According to Ms Otto, it seems that health compliance drops during the peak work season. Only when there is no work do patients collect pills and visit the clinic.

Displacement Site Location

The local municipality is keen to find a new location for the displacement site in the instance that the Zimbabweans are not reintegrated back into the townships in the near future. According to Mr van Rooyen, the continuation of the site has been causing strong resentment from sporting bodies. Five rugby clubs, twelve soccer clubs and three primary schools depend on the field. Over the past four months, the municipality has negotiated greater patience from sporting bodies and assisted the sports club in finding alternative fields to use so that they can fulfil their league commitments. Furthermore, as compensation for the disruption, the municipality has agreed to rehabilitate the field and upgrade its facilities once the area is vacated. This will come at a cost of around R600,000. The field will need to lie dormant for six months before it can be used again, so the municipality is keen to have it vacated by April or May. This means it will be ready for the new season later in the year. The BreedeVallei municipality has been looking at five other sites – referred to as 'Transitional Interim Areas' – so the sports field can be vacated.

EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

Employment Opportunities

During the last monitoring trip, it seemed to be the case that the employment of Zimbabweans over South Africans was a central cause of friction. However, the perception that the South Africans and Zimbabweans are locked in conflict over job competition was rejected by Ms Elza Jordaan, the chairperson of the Hex Valley Table Grape Association. According to Ms Jordaan, there is enough work for both the Zimbabweans and the South Africans at the peak of the season, during which time 17,000 jobs are available. Thus, there should be no competition or conflict over employment at this time. Still, it should be noted that in the earlier and later phases of the season there is less work available. It may be during these periods that tension over employment opportunities is caused.

The End of the Season

There is a general feeling of concern voiced by municipal and provincial officials over how the situation will take shape once the season ends in April and there is little work available. At this time, the area will have around one thousand unemployed Zimbabweans, in addition to thousands of unemployed South Africans. During the off-season, some may be able to find work in other places. Apples and citrus fruits can provide a number with employment, but can by no means absorb all those who are currently working in the grape industry.

One suggestion for alleviating the strain of looming unemployment was made by Ashraf Kafaar and Pedro Williams of the Cape Winelands District Municipality. They recommended that a skills audit be carried out at the displacement site to identify trained displaced persons. Subsequently, those with skills can be directed away from the grape industry towards other employment opportunities in the formal job market.

Exploitation

Ms Jordaan refuted the idea that farmers exploit Zimbabweans because they are willing to work for lower wages. According to Ms Jordaan, the Department of Labour in Worcester carried out a financial audit on the farms in the area and found no violations of relating to wage rates. As the grape industry in the area is solely geared towards export, the farmers have to go through a stringent programme to meet international standards. This means every area of the business – from the wage rates to the number of toilets – comes under scrutiny by international assessors. If the farms do not meet the required standards, then the farmers will lose their overseas contracts. Thus, the farmers in the region cannot afford not to apply adequate standards.

Farmers and the Local Residents

In the last visit, the monitors found that many De Doorns residents believed that farmers had little interest in reintegration or in solving the conflict. However, Ms Jordaan argued that farmers are invested in helping alleviate the problems in De Doorns. The success of the Hex Valley is dependent on the grape industry and its workforce. Most importantly, it is an export industry, which means the HTA needs to maintain a positive international image to preserve business. Consequently, it is in their best interests to solve issues of conflict, displacement and xenophobia, because it does not reflect well on their industry and could result in damaging international action such as sanctions.

Besides their role as employers, Ms Jordaan also explained that farmers contribute towards community development in a number of ways, including supporting crèches, improving clinics, funding bursaries, and contributing funds to substance abuse programmes and PDI programmes. Another main area of contribution is in training initiatives. The HTA has spent millions of rand funding several programmes to help train farm workers in new skills such as health care training, occupational safety, personal finances, tractor driving and discipline in the workplace, along with education programmes on HIV/ADS and alcohol and drug abuse. The HTA pays around R600 per person for this training. It is currently only available to permanent workers, but Ms Jordaan hopes to extend it so that seasonal workers can also be included. Ms Jordaan also spearheads a Farmer of the Year competition in the region. This started in 2002 with six farms and thirty-six competitors. It has now spread to twelve areas in the Western Cape, with around 2,000 competitors taking part.

REINTEGRATION

Reintegration Workshops

On the Saturday preceding the visit (20th March 2010) the Western Cape Crisis Committee held a workshop which addressed the issue of reintegration. Major stakeholders were present, including councillors, sporting forums, schools, the Community Policing Forum, the Hex Valley Table Grape Association and business representatives. Crucially, representatives from both the South African and Zimbabwean residents committees were there, with five from the displacement site and seven from the townships in attendance. Their presence represented a major step in the reconciliation process, as the residents representatives from each side had not been brought together before and had remained largely excluded from reintegration talks. A task team was formed as a result of the workshop, which is comprised of one representative from each group. The role of the task team is to work together to seek resolution, while also keeping the government and its officials in check. Both the Zimbabweans and the South Africans were feeling positive following the workshop. In particular, this was for two reasons: firstly, because they had been officially included in the process; secondly, because both sides were finally talking face to face.

'Voluntary Reintegration'

In addition to official attempts at reconciliation, all stakeholders interviewed during the visit spoke of a great deal of 'voluntary reintegration' occurring between the South Africans and the Zimbabweans. It seems to be the case that many Zimbabweans frequent the townships in the evenings and at the weekends, particularly those in relationships. According to the police station commander, there are no negative outcomes or reports of violence or unrest stemming from this.

The Way Forward

Besides workshops geared specifically towards reintegration, officials from the Cape Winelands District Municipality asserted that the way forward was to create platforms of dialogue between both sides that could be maintain *permanently*, rather than used as temporary tools to aid reconciliation. One way of doing this – suggested by the Cape Winelands officials – could be to create opportunities where South Africans and non-nationals can work together in business co-operatives, so that they have a shared interest in success, along with the responsibility to defend each other.

The number of Zimbabweans in De Doorns will likely change in the near future, as the season is due to end later in April. According to Mr van Rooyen, a number of Zimbabweans have decided to return to Zimbabwe once the season ends. Ms Jordaan, chairperson of the HTA, estimated that around seventy-five percent will go home when job opportunities in the grape industry are no longer

available. Others may leave De Doorns and look for work elsewhere in South Africa. This could leave the municipality with a significantly smaller number to reintegrate.

THREATS TO REINTEGRATION

Service Delivery

The stance of the *ad hoc* committee had not changed since the last meeting two weeks ago. Service delivery is still the central concern of the South Africans and the residents' representatives are still adamant that they receive basic service delivery before they will accept reintegration. They are frustrated by empty promises, namely the lack of electricity in Stofland and the lack of show house representing the new stage of building. They are also angry that the site seems to have better basic services, and argued that the municipality is giving more attention to displaced persons than to South Africans.

The *ad hoc* committee had scheduled a community meeting on 24th March 2010 to update the residents on their parliamentary submission and to relay the developments from Saturday's workshop. However, the meeting was postponed until Sunday 28th March 2010 because a venue could not be secured.

The problem of service delivery was also recognised by government officials. The regional coordinators for the Cape Winelands District Municipality recognised that, as long as the municipality does not deal with service delivery issues, the core problems in De Doorns cannot be solved. The government officials believed that, even if the Zimbabweans reintegrated or moved to another site, the anger of residents will not be alleviated until their demands are met.

BreedeVallei municipality does seem to be making an effort to improve basic services. The local authority has secured R25 million to improve Stofland. A significant proportion of these funds is being used to create 500 extra homes with water, electricity and toilets. The municipality is also running a R3.2 million electrification programme and has voted to spend R500,000 on a satellite fire centre. This means the town will no longer have to depend on the fire service in Worcester.

However, according to Mr van Rooyen, the local residents are not appeased by these efforts. Instead, he believes that certain local residents will continue to use service delivery issues to fuel hostility and opposition to reintegration.

Influx and Overcrowding

The constant influx of migrant workers into the region was identified as a major barrier to solving the problems of De Doorns in the long term. Firstly, the influx of migrant workers can possibly bring unwelcome job competition. Secondly, the consequent overcrowding in the area makes it increasingly difficult to provide adequate basic services. These two factors are critical causes of unrest in De Doorns. Consequently, if the town's troubles are to be solved in the long term, then greater control over influx is required.

The police force has already tried to address the problem of immigrants without documentation. In one wide-scale operation in Stofland, 4,900 persons were searched and the 357 who were found to have no documentation were all arrested and referred to Home Affairs. Still, Superintendent Van Der Westhuizen believes the problem starts with poor border control. In his opinion, the borders need to become stricter.

Closely entwined with the issue of influx is that of overcrowded shacks. South African locals can make a substantial amount of money by renting out shacks to Zimbabwean migrant workers. The usual weekly rent charged for sharing a shack is R20, but can be as high as R100. This means home-owners often pack in as many people as possible so that a high profit can be achieved.

Both government officials and residents leaders identified the lack of accommodation, the misuse of RDP housing and the lack of monitoring by the municipality as causes of extreme overcrowding in the townships. The De Doorns residents' representative, Mr Gerry Kolase, suggested that the municipality should make rental units for season workers so the problem of overcrowding shacks was alleviated. The regional co-ordinators for the Cape Winelands District Municipality suggested that the number of shacks should be counted and the owners of the properties should be identified, so that shack rental could be more effectively monitored. This is possibly a project that the Cape Winelands District Municipality can undertake by utilising their Community Development Workers, of which there are around 180.

Vocal Opposition

The government officials, representatives from the HTA and the station commander all spoke of a core of militant and vocal youths who are skilled at mobilising the residents against reintegration. In the Department of Social Development's experience, this small group are able to overpower moderates, take over meetings and fuel hostility. Faced with a powerful and uncompromising group, this makes it even more difficult for the government to win the acceptance of the South African residents and to reintegrate the Zimbabweans.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ONGOING DISPLACEMENT CRISIS

At present, the BreedeVallei municipality is responsible for managing and funding the displacement site. However, during the visit to De Doorns, it was clear that the local authority could not carry the burden alone. Mr van Rooyen, representing the BreedeVallei municipality, said that the local government recently came to the position that it should no longer be responsible for site. Instead, the municipality would like to see the responsibility passed on to the Department of Home Affairs, the Department of International Affairs or the Premier's Office. Mr van Rooyen did not think that the local layer of government should be the lead agency in shouldering such a burden. The BreedeVallei municipality hopes that, after funds for basic services runs out at the end of March, the burden will be passed on another department.

Mr van Rooyen, on the day of the interview, was planning on getting in touch with the province to request financial help. Should they be unable to help, the next step would be for the provincial government to declare the area as a disaster zone. This would mean that the municipality could apply for funding from the national government. Still, it could be many months before national money can be accessed.

The struggle of the BreedeVallei municipality points to an overarching problem that has hindered the speedy resolution of the De Doorns crisis: there are no clear guidelines or policies in place that specifically instruct each level of government on what to do should a situation of xenophobia and displacement occur. This has been a major concern in dealing with the crisis in De Doorns. The lack of clear identification of who is exactly responsible for handling the problem of the refugees in De Doorns was an issue highlighted by the majority of stakeholders interviewed during the visit.

In addition to clarity on leadership and responsibility, another key requirement is communication between departments and tiers of government. The parties interviewed believed that to treat a

displacement crisis more effectively, each government department should be aware of their respective responsibilities and should remain in contact with each other.

The local and provincial representatives interviewed during the visit not only called for a more structured approach when dealing with displacement crises, but also suggested that more effort should be put into preventing these crises before tension boils over. Representatives from both the Department of Social Development and the Cape Winelands district municipality said that it was clear an eruption had been brewing in De Doorns for many months, given the high number of migrants moving to the area and the continued dissatisfaction with service delivery. They suggested that there should be more training and education on how to recognise and treat a potential crisis, along with clear identification of who to communicate with and who should take the lead before tension gets out of hand.

CONCLUSION

The displacement site will not be able to continue in its present state for much longer. Municipal funds are running low and the patience of those who require the sports field is wearing thin. The grape season is also coming to an end, which means thousands in the area will be without work. It remains to be seen how many Zimbabweans stay in the area, and thus how many still need to be reintegrated.

On a more positive note, reintegration efforts have certainly advanced since the last visit. Both the South African and Zimbabweans residents' representatives have now been included in the process. Furthermore, they have been brought together to work out their problems.

Despite this, it is crucial to recognise that even if reintegration is successful this time, it does not necessarily mean that the problems in De Doorns will have been completely solved, or that xenophobic displacement will not occur again. The main issues fuelling unrest – the lack of basic services, influx and overcrowding – are long term and entrenched problems which need to be properly addressed. If they are not, it will not be surprising if De Doorns faces a similar crisis in the near future. Moreover, there is still a lack of guidance and understanding of how to address these crises when they occur. It is critical that some sort of policy or guidelines are developed which outlines an effective course of action and informs all parties of their respective responsibilities.

The monitoring reports are compiled by a team of independent monitors and do not necessarily reflect the view of CoRMSA, the Black Sash or Oxfam.