



## Report of the Black Sash, CoRMSA and Oxfam Monitoring Team

De Doorns, Western Cape

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*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 8

10<sup>th</sup> May 2010

### INTRODUCTION

The Black Sash returned to De Doorns on April 29-30, 2010 to follow up on the findings of the two monitoring trips carried out in the second half of March 2010. During these previous trips, the monitors learned that reintegration efforts had advanced as both Zimbabweans and South Africans had been brought together; but that funding for the displaced persons' site was running low; that there was a lack of clarity over who was responsible for the site and a lack of communication between the tiers of government; and that the South African community in De Doorns was still dissatisfied with service delivery and overcrowding in the area's townships. The purpose of this trip was to again monitor the conditions on the displacement site and enquire about its funding; to assess to what extent service delivery in the townships had advanced; and to find out how far reintegration efforts had progressed. The Black Sash met a range of important parties, including the Mayor of Breede Valley, community development workers in De Doorns, South African local leaders from the townships and Zimbabwean committee representatives from the site. The information garnered in the monitoring trip to De Doorns was built upon in the following week (May 4 – May 10) where the monitors met with a number of provincial representatives (based in Cape Town) who have also been involved in the reintegration process.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 1) The municipality and province are sharing the cost of providing services to the site. However, the financial burden is becoming almost too great to manage, so governing bodies are keen to push for reintegration and close the site as soon as possible.
- 2) A substantial proportion of the Zimbabweans on the site have left now the season is over. However, the number on the site is not decreasing proportionately, because many Zimbabweans without work or accommodation are moving to the site from elsewhere in the Western Cape and South Africa.

- 3) The municipality and province are now working together to achieve reintegration. A new Reintegration Committee has been formed – replacing the previous committee – and a target date for reintegration has been set for May 31, 2010.
- 4) The South African community leaders are still dissatisfied with basic services, and are still demanding service delivery before reintegration.
- 5) There still remains a number of obstacles to overcome before reintegration can be achieved, notably the appeasement of the South African service delivery demands; the need for physical space for the Zimbabweans to live and materials to rebuild accommodation; along with the question of how the situation may take shape next season when migrant workers return.

## **CONDITIONS AT THE DISPLACEMENT SITE**

### *Service Delivery*

During the last visit at the end of March, the monitors learned that the contracted funding was running out for the site's toilets and security. However, the provision of basic services was at the same level during this visit as it had been in the previous month. The only change was that the kitchen and toilet in the clubhouse had been closed off. During a meeting of the Reintegration Committee on April 15, 2010, it was decided that the province would continue to provide the funding for the toilets, and the Breede Valley and Cape Winelands will jointly fund the site's security until May 31 (Breede Valley is to contribute R80,000 and the Cape Winelands will provide R100,000).

The municipality has decided not to provide any additional food aid during the off-season. This is because the hardship brought on by season unemployment is faced by the whole community, both national and non-national. However, there is a possibility that the Department of Social Development will look into providing the Social Relief of Distress grant to qualifying seasonal workers.

### *Composition of the Site*

The composition of the site has changed significantly since the last visit at the end of March. It was anticipated that the number on the site would drop as the season came to an end, as the workers moved on to look for employment elsewhere. To an extent, this has been the case. During a visit to the site, the monitors witnessed a small collection of the site residents leaving the site with all their belongings. A small number of trucks have also arrived to collect young men to work on citrus farms. However, while a substantial number of the site's original occupants have left, the overall number on the site had not decreased at the time of the monitoring trip. This is because many workers who no longer have employment or a place to live now the grape season has finished are now flocking to the site. One of the Zimbabwean committee leaders estimated that around half of the original occupants of the site had gone, but that the overall number living on the site had actually increased over the past month. Similarly, the Mayor also estimated that the number living on the site had doubled in the last two weeks to almost 1,000. Consequently, the municipality spoke of its intention to audit everyone on the site.

This was underway by the weekend of May 8-9, 2010. A number of Community Development Workers, the Department of Social Development and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) are now undertaking a thorough audit of those on the site. Additionally, they are assessing the number of displaced people who intend to leave De Doorns in the near future, so that the government has greater clarity how many people will need to be reintegrated. By the weekend of May 8-9, there seemed to be more positive signs that the number on the site was decreasing. Many are now voluntarily leaving, either for work elsewhere in South Africa or to return to Zimbabwe.

Indeed, five empty tents were brought down over the weekend, which illustrates that – compared to the situation at the end of April – the overall number is now on the decline. The decrease is also being aided by the IOM, who are offering assistance for repatriation (e.g. transport costs) to Zimbabweans who would like to return to their home country.

The committee leader said that the Zimbabweans who are intent on staying in the area were keen to reintegrate and did not want to stay on the site indefinitely. They were happy to return to the townships, despite being forcibly removed in November 2009. The only remaining point of contention was over compensation. The Zimbabweans were keen to receive compensation for the property and belongings that were destroyed when they were evicted in November. However, the municipality has informed them that they will not be granting any reimbursements. This is because the municipality has already spent a significant sum on the site and its services, so will not be outlaying any expenditures on compensation.

## **SOUTH AFRICANS AND SERVICE DELIVERY**

### *Conflict over the New Development Site*

During a meeting with the South African residents' leaders, the monitors learned that the municipality planned to move the residents in the 'danger zone' (located between Hassie Square and Maseru) to the new development area adjacent to Stofland on May 3. This area was prioritised because it is located on a floodline, which means that landslides and flooding occur during winter. The intended movement of these people caused discontent for two key reasons. Firstly, those moving would not be moving to newly-built houses, as had been expected. Instead, they would be moving their shacks from the danger zone to a plot of land on the new site. Thus, they would be moving from a shack to a shack, with the municipality only providing four poles and a bag of cement to aid the new construction.

Secondly, the residents' representatives were angered because the danger zone was receiving priority over other areas. According to the interviewees, many who reside in the danger zone are not De Doorns locals, but seasonal workers from Lesotho and the Eastern Cape. The representatives were therefore unhappy that persons who had been living in the De Doorns townships for many years without a home of their own were being sidelined for persons who were not local or permanent residents in the area. The discontent of the De Doorns residents towards this resulted in a protest on May 3. Unfortunately, the monitors were no longer in De Doorns to witness the course of events on that day.

### *Electricity*

Another point of contention is the lack of electricity. The residents originally expected Stofland to be electrified by March, but this has not yet happened. This has caused much frustration and dissatisfaction towards the municipality. Still, it should be noted that (as the Community Development Worker pointed out) electrification of the area is incredibly complicated, because it is difficult to fit the requisite poles and wires in between the tightly-packed shacks.

### *Employment*

The problems of poor service delivery are further compounded by the employment situation in the area. The townships now have a high level of unemployment as the grape season is coming to a close. It is estimated that only around ten or twelve trucks are coming in the mornings to collect workers. A number have moved on to find work in the citrus industry. These people tend to be non-

locals, or migrant workers. The locals stay in De Doorns townships during the off-season. However, there is very little for those without work to do all day.

## **REINTEGRATION**

### *Reintegration Efforts Prior to April*

During the last visit, both the South African and Zimbabwean representatives spoke positively about a reintegration workshop that had been held on March 20. The monitors met separately with three of the individuals involved in running the workshop, and all concurred that it had been a success. According to those involved, the workshop was peaceful, inclusive and generated a sense of unity. The South African and Zimbabwean attendees also shared this opinion. The facilitators encouraged the opposing sides to directly talk to each other, rather than talking through a mediator. In addition to addressing social-economic issues, the co-ordinators also used a spiritual approach, drawing on collective prayer as a medium for reconciliation and unity. The co-ordinators ran training on human rights, local government and the Refugees Act. Moreover, as outlined in the previous report, a task team was formed at a workshop held on March 20.

Between November and the end of March, this reintegration committee held three official meetings in De Doorns (meeting with the South Africans and Zimbabweans separately) and the workshop on March 20 (where both sides were brought together). The co-ordinators of this committee recognised a significant change in atmosphere over their months of involvement. In November, the situation was very tense and a number of individuals – namely the ‘Top Five’ (the De Doorns South African residents leaders) – were apprehensive towards meeting with the Zimbabweans. However, this attitude changed over the months, and those previously opposed became more keen to be involved in reconciliatory plans.

Reflecting on their experience in De Doorns and in other reconciliation efforts in Cape Town and elsewhere in the Western Cape, the individuals involved in the reintegration committee outlined a number of factors that were essential to ensure successful reconciliation and reintegration. Firstly, facilitators need to gain the trust and confidence of the residents through constant communication and perseverance. Secondly, plans for reintegration should not be imposed from above. Rather, the reintegration strategy should be forged between *all* parties, from governmental figures to residents. Thirdly, it is essential that monitoring of the situation be continued long after reintegration has taken place, so that any potential for unrest can be diffused before major problems arise again.

### *Reintegration Efforts from April Onwards*

Reintegration efforts have now changed hands. In April, the municipality informed the previous reintegration committee that they wished to take over the reconciliation process. Together with the province, Breede Valley municipality has established a new Reintegration Committee headed by Sifiso Mbuyisa of the Department of the Premier. The other members of the Committee are: Jackson Rikhosto (Provincial Disaster Management), S Mayeki (De Doorns Area Manager for BV Municipality), Manfred van Rooyen (BVM), Richard Haridien (Department of Social Development), Shaun Minnies (CWDM), Councillor Mthi (CWDM) and Councillor Elza.

The previous reintegration co-ordinators provided background to the new committee, and officially handed over the project on April 28, 2010. The former committee has now completely stepped back to let the new task team take control, thus avoiding any confusion or complications that may be caused by having two different groups involved. However, the former committee remains involved in an oversight role, and is prepared to contribute should the new team require help.

The new Reintegration Committee will now be responsible for the overall co-ordination of the process. It will draw upon available resources and persons to facilitate reintegration, including religious groups and Community Development Workers. The Committee will also work with the UNHCR to create relocation packages for the displaced persons. Furthermore, the Committee has developed a communication strategy for keeping the displaced group and the South African De Doorns residents informed of their plans and progress. The Reintegration Committee has also decided to keep all third parties (including NGOs) off the site while trying to put the process in action. At a meeting on April 15, 2010, the Reintegration Committee set a target date of May 31, 2010 for the Zimbabweans to be reintegrated and the site to be closed.

Besides mounting costs, the impending winter has also heightened the necessity to reintegrate the Zimbabweans and close the site as soon as possible. The site is a highly unsuitable location for the displaced people to continue residing during these months. The tents may not be able to withstand the wet and windy weather, while the cold night-time temperatures and lack of heating will be challenging for the displaced people to endure.

## **CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES**

### *Physical Relocation*

A major practical obstacle to reintegration is that the Zimbabweans currently have no physical location to return to. The shacks they resided in before November were demolished when they were forcibly removed. The municipality intends to provide hampers with plastic, nails and other materials needed to rebuild their homes in the townships. Each hamper contains R1,500 worth of equipment, which is the standard UN amount. However, the Zimbabweans were not aware of how many people would be receiving these hampers, nor did they know when they would be receiving them, or what site they would be building on. Entitlement is further complicated by the lack of clarity regarding who actually lived in De Doorns in November, where they lived and who came from elsewhere to live on the site. Moreover, according to the De Doorns residents' leaders, the South Africans in the area may be afraid of renting out their properties to returning Zimbabweans for fear of a backlash.

### *Service Delivery*

All parties interviewed during the monitoring visit in De Doorns and in Cape Town – government officials, South African residents and Zimbabwean displaced persons – recognised that xenophobia itself is not the cause of conflict in the area. Rather, it is the frustration over the lack of service delivery that is driving the unrest. In short, until adequate basic services and housing are provided for the South Africans residing in the De Doorns townships, the local nationals are unwilling to accept the return of Zimbabweans. This stance was voiced during the first visit in mid-March, and has remained unchanged over the monitoring period. It seems unlikely that the service delivery demands will be met in the near future, because much of the area is still without electricity, non-locals are being prioritised to move to the new site, and this area will not be providing permanent housing. Rather, it is likely that the residents will be moving from a shack to a shack.

### *Long-Term Peace*

Another consideration regards the *maintenance* of reintegration in De Doorns. Is it certainly encouraging that the municipality and province are working in partnership in a new Reintegration Committee, and have set a target date for reintegration. However, it is also important to address the difficulties in ensuring that reconciliation is preserved once it has been achieved. It is essential that

the government look to tackling the long-term issues at the root of discontent, i.e. poor service delivery, overcrowding and migrant influx. Unless these issues are systematically addressed, the situation in De Doorns will still remain conducive to another displacement crisis once the season begins again later in the year.

## **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

- 1) It is commendable that the municipality has managed to keep the site running for a further month, despite reports of serious financial difficulties at the end of March.
- 2) The South Africans in De Doorns are still incredibly unhappy with service delivery, particularly due to the municipality's policies regarding movement to the new area adjacent to Stofland
- 3) It is a positive sign that the municipality and province are co-operating and working together to achieve reintegration. This marks a significant step in the growth of shared responsibility with regards to ownership of the problem.
- 4) The former reintegration committee should be commended for their efforts in organising a successful workshop and trying to aid reconciliation in the area.
- 5) It remains to be seen how successful the newly-formed Reintegration Committee is. However, it is encouraging that they have set a target date for reintegration, and have established what their tasks and responsibilities are. Furthermore, it is a positive sign that the Committee contains both municipal and provincial representatives.
- 6) However, there still remain a number of hurdles that need to be overcome if reintegration is to be successful. Firstly, a physical location and sufficient housing needs to be established before the Zimbabweans can leave the site. Secondly, the South African residents' leaders are still demanding service delivery before reintegration, and there seems little indication that these demands will be met in the near future. Thirdly, it remains to be seen whether reintegration, if achieved, will last in the long term. It is certainly possible that another crisis will erupt later in the year when migrant workers flood back into the area if more living space and better service delivery have not materialised.

*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.*