EARLY DEPARTURES:
THE EMIGRATION POTENTIAL
OF ZIMBABWEAN STUDENTS

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The Emigration Potential
of Zimbabwean Students

Daniel S. Tevera

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Zimbabwe is experiencing a crippling flight of professional and skilled people that has escalated to levels that have serious implications for economic growth and development. Previous studies have discovered extremely high levels of dissatisfaction amongst professionals with the cost of living, taxation, availability of goods, and salaries. Unhappiness goes deeper than economic circumstances to include housing, medical services, education and a viable future for children. There is an urgent need for policies to curb the massive brain drain and offer incentives to make staying and working in the country attractive for professionals and skilled people. Policy-makers also need to be able to predict the size and direction of future flows of professional and skilled emigrants.

In an effort to try and understand the future course of the brain drain, the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) carried out a survey of final-year college and university students in Zimbabwe. The survey aimed to obtain information on the demographic profile of the student body; their attitudes towards national issues and government policies; satisfaction and expectations about economic conditions and about the future; likelihood of leaving after graduation; reasons for moving; most likely destinations; perceived conditions in the most likely destination; and length of stay in the most likely destination. Answers to questions were analysed by gender, age, rural/urban background and other variables.

The university students were from faculties of Law, Science, Engineering, Commerce, Medicine/Pharmacy and Arts/Humanities. The colleges included technical, commercial and teacher training institutions located in several urban centres. A total of 1,192 questionnaires were administered in Harare, Bulawayo, Gweru or Masvingo. The students came from all over the country including some of the more remote rural areas.

The survey first looked at student attitudes towards Zimbabwe and found that:

- Almost 60% of the students said they were proud to be called Zimbabweans; a high proportion but lower than in every other SADC country tested. A similar number agreed that being a citizen of Zimbabwe was a very important part of how they see themselves (high but again low in the regional context). There is also a strong desire among students to help build their nation. As many as 78% of the students felt it was their 'duty' to contribute their talents and skills to the growth of their country.
- Levels of student dissatisfaction about economic conditions are

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higher than in any other SADC country surveyed. Only 3% were satisfied with their personal economic conditions and less than 35% were optimistic that things would improve in the next five years. Less than one per cent were satisfied with current national economic conditions and only 20% expected to see any improvement five years hence. Only 20% were optimistic that the cost of living would be better in the future. Just 25% felt that their incomes would improve in the future. Only 20% felt that they would be able to get the job they want, while just 21% were optimistic that job security would improve in the future. The prospects for professional advancement were seen as slim and the hopes for fair taxation low. Very few felt government was doing enough to create employment opportunities for graduates.

- Perceptions of other quality of life measures were similarly negative. Only 14% said their ability to find the house they wanted would improve in the future; only 19% thought medical services would get better and only 21% were optimistic about their ability to find a good school for their children. A mere 18% felt that their personal and family's safety would improve in the future and just 19% were optimistic that the future of children would get better. Very few of the students expected the quality upkeep of public amenities, the availability of quality affordable products and customer care to improve. Only 11% felt that the HIV/AIDS situation would improve.

Given the prevailing pessimism, it is not surprising that leaving the country after graduation is at the forefront of many student minds. Nearly three quarters of the students indicated that they had given the matter of leaving a great deal of consideration. Gender, age and socio-economic status made little difference to the answer. Only 6% of the students had not considered moving abroad. Just over half (56%) said that they were likely to emigrate within six months of graduating. Some 70% said it was likely they would have left the country within two years. Over a quarter of students had already applied for or were in the process of applying for a work permit in another country. Around 15% had applied for or were in the process of applying for permanent residence in another country. A similar proportion were seeking citizenship of another country.

Southern Africa is the preferred destination for 36% of the students, followed by Europe (29%), and North America (24%). Less than one per cent listed the rest of Africa as their preferred destination. Students are relatively confident of their ability to end up in their preferred destination. Nearly 40% felt it likely they would move within Southern

Africa, while 28% and 22% said it was likely they would end up in Europe and North America respectively.

To what extent do family ties and obligations act as brakes on emigration? In many countries, they probably would. Not in contemporary Zimbabwe. An astonishing 77% of students said that they were being encouraged or strongly encouraged to leave the country by their families. Why are families so eager for their offspring to leave? The answer surely lies in the fact that many families need household members to leave and remit funds, just for survival. Several subsidiary questions therefore arise. Will those who leave do so permanently or on a temporary basis? Once gone will they continue to maintain links with Zimbabwe? And, in particular, will they remit funds once they have left? The survey found the following:

- In contrast to many students in Southern Africa, Zimbabweans are more interested in long-term migration. Around 60% have a great desire to leave for more than two years and 46% said it was very likely that they would do so. Only 12% indicated a preferred stay of less than two years in their most likely destination. As many as half the students said they would stay away for longer than five years, an alarmingly high percentage.

- Although many of the students said they would want to be permanent residents (60%) and citizens (57%) of their most desirable destination, fewer said they would want to retire there (37%) and fewer still to be buried there (18%). Clearly, although many students would like to leave the country, most see themselves eventually returning home.

- A large proportion of potential emigrants (83%) anticipated maintaining links with Zimbabwe once they had left. Fifty-six percent indicated that they intended to visit either once every few months or yearly, while only 11% said that they would never return. Almost half (46%) would send money home once every month and 16% would send money home a few times a year. Less than 2% would never send money home. A quarter of the students would send money home more than once a month.

- In terms of maintaining links with home, only 29% of students said they would be willing or very willing to give up their homes in Zimbabwe and a quarter would be willing or very willing to take all their savings out of Zimbabwe. In terms of assets, 24% would want to take all their assets out of the county. Only 26% said they would be willing or very willing to give up their Zimbabwean citizenship. On all four of the measures, more women than men were willing to cut their ties with Zimbabwe.

Students have strong opinions on government policies to stop or

control the brain drain. Overwhelmingly, they feel that political measures targeted at individuals will be ineffectual and that government should concentrate instead on fostering economic development and growth. While it is obviously not possible to prevent people from migrating to developed countries for better prospects in this era of globalisation, the adverse impact of such movements on economic development merit urgent attention. The survey showed that a coercive approach to the brain drain would only intensify the level of discontent and for most of the students would make absolutely no difference to their emigration intentions. The best way to curb the high rates of skilled labour migration lies in addressing the economic fundamentals of the country in a way that will ultimately improve living standards.

INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe is experiencing a debilitating flight of professional and skilled people that has escalated in magnitude to levels that have serious implications for future economic growth and development.[1] Tens of thousands of Zimbabwean doctors, nurses, pharmacists, teachers and other professionals have left the country to secure jobs in Britain and neighbouring countries such as South Africa, Botswana and Namibia.[2] Most seriously affected is the health sector where, according to one estimate, 60% of state-registered nurses and about half of the medical doctors have left the country since 1999.[3]

Why are so many of those Zimbabweans who remain thinking seriously about leaving the country? Previous studies have discovered extremely high levels of dissatisfaction with the cost of living, taxation, availability of goods and salaries.[4] During the year 2003, the country's nurses went on strike demanding a salary increase of over 1000%.[5] Doctors, pilots and university lecturers at all the state universities went on strike demanding salary increments ranging from 600 – 1200%.[6] The number of people living below the poverty datum line has surged in the past three years because of the economic crisis and spiralling inflation. Just over 75% of Zimbabweans are now classified as poor, while 50% are living in abject poverty well below the poverty datum line.[7] Until 1998, inflation was fluctuating around 25% but increased to 50% in 2000, 100% in 2001, 200% in 2002 and reached over 700% by the end of 2003. Inflation has eroded the value of pensioners' incomes so that many have become destitute and now rely on handouts. According to one report, some pensioners have stopped collecting their pensions because the bus fare is more than the payout.[8]

Declining real savings compounded by high levels of taxation and rising unemployment levels have exacerbated the situation. The decline in real gross domestic product (GDP) reflects the country's failure to attract foreign direct investment. Increased external debt; chronic foreign currency shortages; inability to procure raw materials, fuel, electricity and spare parts; high inflation; and rising production and labour costs have all led to declining real savings. The contraction in the formal sector, due to company downsizing and closures, has led to a significant rise in unemployment levels. As of December 2002, the unemployment rate was between 75% and 80%. Table 1 shows how the price of basic food items rose significantly during a six-month period from June to October 2003.

Table 1: Price of Basic Food Items, 2003			
	Price (Z$)		
Commodity	June	August	October
Margarine (1kg)	2 820	6 840	11 150
White sugar (2kg)	1 200	2 100	3 000
Fresh milk (500ml)	406	890	1 150
Cooking oil (750ml)	2 750	3 700	5 300
Bread	550	1 600	2 700
Rice (2kg)	1 985	4 550	9 800
Meat (1kg)	2 800	6 500	12 500
Soap (bar)	1 080	2 124	6 000
Source: The Sunday Mail, 2003			

Professional dissatisfaction goes deeper than economic circumstances to include housing, medical services, education and a viable future for one's children.[9] Against this background, many skilled persons and professionals have migrated to other countries and the potential for future emigration among students and other citizens is probably very high.

The brain drain has rapidly emerged as one of the greatest challenges facing Zimbabwe. There is an urgent need to develop policies to curb the massive brain drain and offer incentives to make staying and working in the country attractive for professionals and skilled people. Policy-makers also need to be able to predict the size and direction of future flows of professional and skilled emigrants. As a contribution to this exercise, the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) carried out a survey of final-year college and university students in 2003 to ascertain their attitudes to life in Zimbabwe and their emigration potential. This report describes and analyses the findings of that survey.

METHODOLOGY

The Zimbabwe Potential Skills Base Survey (PSBS) was part of a larger survey of the emigration potential of students in SADC.[10] The Zimbabwean survey focused on final-year students from universities and colleges in Zimbabwe. The university students in the sample were from the faculties of Law, Science, Engineering, Commerce, Medicine/Pharmacy and Arts & Humanities. The colleges included technical, commercial and teacher training institutions located in several urban centres.

A total of 1,192 questionnaires were administered between April and July 2003 to students who were Zimbabwean citizens and resident for

their studies in Harare, Bulawayo, Gweru or Masvingo. The students actually came from all over the country including some of the remote rural areas. The total number of students sampled in each city was determined by the population of the cities according to the Zimbabwe 2002 census. The number of students from each training institution was determined by the size of the institution while the number of students from each faculty was determined by the size of the faculty.

To determine the number of interviews as well as the actual selection procedure of students at each of the training institutions, different types of institution were identified. These served as primary sampling units (PSUs) from which the surveyed faculties were randomly selected. Once the faculties were identified, random sampling was used to determine the classes where the questionnaire would be administered at the beginning or end of lectures. After explaining the objectives of the survey and how to answer the questions, the students were asked to complete the questionnaire.

The survey sought to obtain information on the demographic profile of the students; their attitudes towards national issues and government policies; satisfaction and expectations about economic conditions in Zimbabwe and the future; likelihood of leaving after graduation; reasons for moving; most likely destinations; perceived conditions in the most likely destination; and length of stay in the most likely destination. Answers to questions were analysed by gender, age, rural/urban background and other variables.

THE STUDENT BODY

The demographic profile of the final-year student sample is presented in Table 2. The gender breakdown was males (62%) and females (38%). This imbalance reflects the gender inequality of Zimbabwean society, which gives males more access to education than females. Studies elsewhere in the region confirm this general pattern.[11]

The youthfulness of Zimbabwe's potential skills base is evident in that just over half of the students (59%) were below the age of 24 while 42% were 24 years and above. In terms of race, almost all of the students were black. This highly skewed distribution mirrors the composition of the population in Zimbabwe. About a third of the students considered themselves to be middle class while 61% saw themselves as lower and working class. Only 7% perceived themselves to be upper and upper-middle class.

About a third of the students had their homes in the rural areas (rural communal areas - 33% and commercial farming areas - 2%). The

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Students		
	No.	Percentage
Sex		
Male	747	62.4
Female	451	37.6
Age		
23 years or less	699	58.8
24 years and more	490	41.2
Race		
Black	1154	96.7
White	10	0.9
Coloured	28	2.3
Asian/Indian	2	0.2
Socio-economic Status		
Lower class	344	29.6
Working class	358	30.9
Middle class	377	32.5
Upper middle class/Upper class	82	7.1
Location of home		
Rural communal area	388	32.5
Commercial farming area	26	2.2
Small town	216	18.1
Large town/city	564	47.2
Marital status		
Married	216	18
Separated/divorced/abandoned/widowed	35	2.9
Co-habitating/living together	36	3.0
Single	910	76.1
Language spoken at home		
Shona	879	77.7
English	60	5.4
Ndebele	115	10.2
South Sotho	17	1.5
Other (e.g. Shangaan, Venda, Kalanga, Ndau)	76	6.7

other two-thirds were from urban areas, especially the large towns and cities (47%). The majority of the students (76%) were single, 18% were married, 3% were previously married but were now single, and only 3%

were co-habitating. The relatively high number of students who are single is a function of the generally youthful nature of the student body.

The distribution of the students in terms of language spoken at home also closely approximates the national picture. The most prominent language was Shona (78%) followed by Ndebele (10%) and English (5%). The minor languages (Sotho, Tonga/Shangaan, Venda, Kalanga and Sena/Ndau) were spoken by less than 7% of the students.

Table 3: Number of Dependents		
	No.	Percentage
Current number of dependents		
None	742	62.9
One	106	9.0
Two	110	9.3
Three or more	222	18.8
Number of dependents after graduation		
None	283	24.6
1-2	283	24.6
3-4	263	22.8
5-6	139	12.1
7 or more	184	16.0

The majority of students (63%) had no dependents, again largely a reflection of their age. Only 18% said they had one or two dependents while an additional 19% had three or more dependents. The situation was expected to change after graduation, with a large number of the students expecting to take on more responsibilities (Table 3).

Table 4 profiles the student body according to enrolment status, qualification being sought, sources of support, conditions of support, and faculty. Almost all the students were registered full-time with very few studying on a part-time basis. Just over half of the students were registered for undergraduate degrees, while 40% were studying for certificates/diplomas at the various polytechnics and training colleges. A few students were studying for postgraduate degrees (5%) and only 0.5% were studying for other qualifications.

Most of the students paid for their studies with bank/study loans (36%) and family funds (33%). Those receiving support with some form of payback included 22% from the government, 0.9% from university bursaries and 0.2% from technical college bursaries. Only 4% were supported by government scholarships with no payback and a mere 2% had university scholarships with no payback. Only 3% of the students were

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Table 4: Student Profile		
	No.	Percentage
Enrolment status		
Full-time	1179	98.5
Part-time	18	1.5
Qualification		
Bachelor's Degree	661	55.3
Certificate/Diploma	471	39.4
Master's /Doctorate Degree	57	4.8
Other	6	0.5
Sources of support for studies		
Bank/study loan	588	36.4
Personal/family funds	534	33.0
Government bursary (some payback required)	348	21.5
Government scholarship (no payback required)	56	3.5
Private scholarship	49	3.0
University scholarship (no payback required)	25	1.5
University bursary (some payback required)	14	0.9
Other	4	0.2
Conditions of bursary/scholarship		
None of the above	695	63.1
Require you to work in the public sector in your country	154	14.0
Don't know	147	13.4
Require you to work in the private sector in your country	53	4.8
To remain in the country after you complete your studies	52	4.7
Faculty		
University: Faculty of Arts/Social Science/Humanities	260	21.7
University: Faculty of Science	126	10.5
Technical College/Technicon: IT/Computers	124	10.3
Teacher Training College	120	10.0
University: Faculty of Medicine/Pharmacy	118	9.9
Technical College/Technicon: Commerce/Administration	104	8.7
Technical College/Technicon: Technical Subjects	102	8.5
University: Faculty of Education	81	6.7
University: Faculty of Engineering	58	4.8
University: Faculty of Law	51	4.2
University: Faculty of Commerce – Business	42	3.5
University: Faculty of Computer Science/IT	9	0.7
University: Faculty of Agriculture	4	0.4

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studying on personal scholarships. The majority of students (63%) were not under any obligation once they finished their studies, while 14% were required to work in the public sector after completion. Only 5% were required to work in the private sector and another 5% to remain in the country once they graduated.

The majority of the students from universities were from faculties of Arts/Social Sciences/Humanities (22%). Others included Science (11%), Medicine/Pharmacy (10%), Education (7%), Engineering (5%), Law (4.2%) and Commerce/Business (4%). Very few were from faculties of Computer Science (0.7%) and Agriculture (0.4%). Of the students from technical colleges, 10% were from departments of IT/Computers, 9% from Commerce/Administration and 9% from technical subjects. Ten percent of the students were from teacher training colleges.

VIEWS OF HOME

The survey first looked at the attitudes of students towards their own country. Almost 60% of the students felt proud to be Zimbabwean; a high proportion but lower than in every other country tested (Table 5).[12] Regarding perceptions of belonging, 61% agreed that being a citizen of Zimbabwe is a very important part of how they see themselves (high but again low in regional context). The majority of students (62%) actually felt that it does not matter where one is a citizen as long as one has a good quality of life. Yet there is a strong desire among students to help build their nation. As many as 78% of the students felt it was their 'duty' to contribute their talents and skills to the growth of their country.

Levels of student dissatisfaction about economic conditions in Zimbabwe are higher than in any other country surveyed. Only 3% were satisfied with their personal economic conditions and less than 35% were optimistic that conditions would improve in the next five years. Young, urban males proved more optimistic than most. Less than one per cent were satisfied with current economic conditions in the country and only 20% expected to see any improvement five years hence. Very few (a mere 5%) felt government was doing enough to create employment opportunities for graduates.

Student pessimism goes well beyond general economic conditions in the country. Asked whether they could see various aspects of the situation improving, the majority were not optimistic (Table 7). With regard to economic measures, only 20% of the students were optimistic that the cost of living would improve in the future and just 25% felt that their incomes would improve in the future. Only 20% felt that they would be able to get the job they want, while a mere 21% were

Table 5: Attitudes to Citizenship and the Nation		
	No.	Percentage
It makes you proud to be called a Zimbabwean		
Strongly agree	385	32.2
Agree	316	26.4
You have more in common with people of your profession than with people from your country		
Strongly agree	85	7.2
Agree	186	15.7
Being a citizen of Zimbabwe is a very important part of how you see yourself		
Strongly agree	338	28.5
Agree	383	32.3
You would want your children to think of themselves as Zimbabwean		
Strongly agree	403	34.3
Agree	420	35.8
It really does not matter where you are a citizen as long as you have a good quality of life		
Strongly agree	446	37.6
Agree	312	26.3
You have a strong desire to help build your country		
Strongly agree	521	44.0
Agree	421	35.5
It is your duty to contribute your talents and skills to the growth of your country		
Strongly agree	478	40.2
Agree	447	37.6

optimistic that job security would improve in the future. The prospects for professional advancement were seen as slim and the hopes for fair taxation low. Perceptions of social service delivery were similarly negative. Only 14% said their ability to find the house they wanted would improve in the future; only 19% thought medical services would get better and only 21% were optimistic about their ability to find a good school for their children. Just 18% felt that their personal and family's safety would improve in the future and only 19% were optimistic that the future of their children would get better. Very few of the students expected improvement in the quality upkeep of public amenities, the availability of quality affordable products and customer care. Only 11% felt that the HIV/AIDS situation would improve. On all the questions, younger, urban, socio-economically better off, and male students were more optimistic.

Table 6: Satisfaction and Expectations about Economic Conditions		
	No.	Percentage
Satisfaction about current personal economic condition		
Very satisfied	8	0.7
Satisfied	28	2.4
Expectation of personal economic condition five years from now		
Much better	174	14.6
Better	238	19.8
Satisfaction about current economic conditions in Zimbabwe		
Very satisfied	4	0.3
Satisfied	6	0.5
Expectation about economic conditions in Zimbabwe five years from now		
Much better	57	4.8
Better	185	15.4
Is the government doing enough to create employment opportunities for graduates		
Too much	8	0.7
Enough	49	4.1

Table 7: Expectations About the Future		
	No.	Percentage
Get better or much better		
Prospects for professional advancement	328	27.6
Your level of income	302	25.3
The security of your job	249	20.9
Ability to find a good school for your children	245	20.5
Ability to find the job I want	239	20.0
Cost of living	235	19.7
The future of your children in Zimbabwe	225	18.8
Ability to find medical services for family and children	217	18.1
Your personal safety	209	17.5
Customer service	208	17.4
Your family's safety	207	17.3
Availability of quality affordable products	194	16.2
Ability to find a house you want to live in	170	14.2
Quality upkeep of public amenities (e.g. parks, beaches, toilets etc.)	158	13.2
A level of fair taxation	141	11.9
HIV/AIDS situation	136	11.3

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MOVING ABROAD

Given the prevailing pessimism and low expectations, it is not surprising that leaving the country is at the forefront of many student minds. Nearly three quarters of the students (71%) indicated that they had given the matter of leaving a 'great deal' of consideration. Gender, age and socio-economic status made little difference in the answer (Table 8). A mere 6% of the students had not considered moving abroad.

Table 8: Moving to Another Country		
	No.	Percentage
Consideration of moving abroad		
A great deal	849	71.2
Some	248	20.8
None at all	72	6.0
Don't know	23	1.9
N = 1192		

Just because someone is thinking seriously about moving, it does not automatically follow that they will actually do so. The students were therefore asked about the *likelihood* of moving from Zimbabwe to other countries (Table 9). Just over half (56%) said that they were likely to emigrate within six months of graduating. Some 70% said it was likely they would leave within two years. Fewer (60%) said they would be gone in five years, an apparent contradiction which suggests that 10% of students anticipate returning again within five years. The likelihood of emigrating is thus high both in the short and longer-term.

Table 9: Likelihood of Moving from Home Country after Graduation		
	No.	% of Total
Likelihood of moving (% likely or very likely):		
Six months after graduation	654	56.2
Two years after graduation	792	70.0
Five years after graduation	662	59.5

The firmest indicator of emigration potential is whether a person has acted on their intentions by applying for emigration documentation. Despite the high numbers of students who seem fairly confident that they would be leaving the country, fewer have so far applied for or are in the process of acquiring the documents necessary for emigration.

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Still, over a quarter of students had already applied for or were in the process of applying for a work permit. Around 15% had applied for or were in the process of applying for permanent residence in another country. A similar proportion were seeking citizenship in another country. The majority of students have not yet acted on their intentions, although the proportion who have is much higher in Zimbabwe than elsewhere. One explanation for this, of course, could be that until they have a qualification in hand, application to many countries would be premature. The proportion of students who act on their intention to leave could well rapidly increase after graduation.

Table 10: Application for Emigration Documentation		
	No.	Percentage
Applied for a work permit in MLD		
Yes	96	8.1
In the process of applying	229	19.3
Applied for a permanent resident permit in MLD		
Yes	56	4.7
In the process of applying	121	10.3
Applied for citizenship in MLD		
Yes	50	4.3
In the process of applying	121	10.2

Another reason for the gap between intention and action is that most of the preferred destinations have introduced more stringent measures intended to make their borders less porous to migration flows from Zimbabwe. Table 11 summarises recent travel restrictions introduced by the UK, USA and South Africa to try and reduce the flow of migrants from Zimbabwe. Only a third of the students indicated that it would be easy or very easy for them to leave the country (Table 12).

However, most of the students (66%) felt that once they were out of Zimbabwe, they would get a job. Fewer (38%) thought it would be easy to get a job in their field.

PREFERRED DESTINATIONS

Southern Africa is the preferred destination for most Zimbabwean students (36%), followed by Europe (29%), and North America (24%) (Table 13). Very few (only 0.3%) listed the rest of Africa as their preferred destination. Students are relatively confident of their ability to end up in their preferred destination.

Table 11: Travel Controls to Reduce Flow of Zimbabweans to Destination Countries

Country	Dates	Control Measures	Prospective migrants' responses
South Africa	2002	Immigration Act 2002/13 required valid passport and passport photos.	Increased visa applications. Increased border jumping.
	August 2003	Tighter measures requiring valid passport, passport photos, bank statement, letter of invitation and repatriation guarantee fee.	Increased border jumping Provide false information.
	December 2003	Removed tight measures. Only require valid passport, passport photos and travellers cheques.	Increased criticism of South African government. Increased visa applications (more than any other country in Africa and in the world).
United Kingdom	November 2002	Introduction of visa requirements ($72000 for 6 months visa).	Visa applications very high. Despite prohibitive visa application fees, many Zimbabweans still flock to Britain.
	May 2003	Increased visa application fees ($118 800 for 6 months visa).	(>18 000 people had applied for visas between 11/2002 and 07/2003).
	October 2003	Increased visa application fees ($372 000 for 6 months visa).	
USA		Introduction of special visas (HB-1 visa).	Reduced movement of unskilled and non-professional persons.
Sources: Various issues of The Herald; The Financial Gazette; and the Daily Mirror			

Table 12: Ease of Leaving Zimbabwe

	No.	Percentage
Very easy/easy (%)		
To get a job	787	65.8
To get a job in your field	458	38.4
To leave the country	428	35.8

Slightly more (39%) felt it likely they would move within Southern Africa, while 28% and 22% said it was likely they would end up in Europe and North America respectively.

The top five countries/regions perceived to be better than Zimbabwe were Australia/New Zealand (93%), Europe (92%), South Africa (91%), North America (91%) and Botswana (90%) (Table 14). All have already received many Zimbabwean migrants who keep in touch with home through the transfer of remittances that have been used to

Table 13: The Preferred Region of Destination		
	No.	Percentage
First preferred region:		
Southern Africa	431	36.1
Europe	348	29.1
North America	284	23.8
Australia/New Zealand	112	9.4
Asia	16	1.4
Elsewhere in Africa	3	0.3
Most likely destination (MLD):		
Southern Africa	462	38.8
Europe	335	28.2
North America	265	22.3
Australia/New Zealand	95	8.0
Asia	25	2.1
Elsewhere in Africa	7	0.6

Table 14: Comparisons of Other Countries with Zimbabwe		
	No.	Percentage
Better or much better than Zimbabwe		
Australia/New Zealand	1112	93.1
Europe	1099	92.0
South Africa	1083	91.1
North America	1083	90.8
Botswana	1070	89.6
Asia/China	877	73.6
Namibia	824	69.7
Mozambique	701	58.8
Swaziland	653	55.9
Lesotho	654	55.1
North Africa	615	52.3
West Africa	505	42.4
Angola	494	41.4
Central Africa	476	40.1
East Africa	468	39.2
Malawi	456	38.4
Zambia	429	36.0
Size of N varies		

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construct impressive houses or to acquire property.[13] Other SADC coun-
tries considered to be better by a majority of students included Namibia
and Lesotho. Countries in other parts of Africa (especially West, East
and Central Africa) were thought to be worse than Zimbabwe by a
majority of students. Three out of every four (75%) students believe
that those living outside the country have much better lives than when
they were in Zimbabwe.

Students were asked to compare their perception of conditions in
their MLD with Zimbabwe. The vast majority of students felt that
income levels (93%), cost of living (91%) and availability of quality
affordable products (90%) were better or much better in the MLD
(Table 15). Other conditions perceived to be better in the MLD includ-
ed ability to find the job wanted, prospects for professional advance-
ment, the HIV/AIDS situation, job security, ability to find housing, a
good school for one's children, medical services, and customer service.
Answers varied little by demographic variables, although on 12 out of
the 15 measures males were more positive about the advantages of the
MLD than females.

Table 15: Perceptions of Conditions in the MLD		
	No.	Percentage
Better or much better in MLD		
Your level of income	1107	92.9
Cost of living	1083	90.7
Availability of quality affordable products	1067	89.6
Ability to find medical services for family and children	1014	85.0
Prospects for professional advancement	975	81.8
Customer service	963	80.9
Ability to find the job I want	960	80.5
A level of fair taxation	941	79.2
Quality upkeep of public amenities (e.g. parks, beaches, toilets etc.)	937	78.7
Ability to find a good school for your children	852	71.5
The security of your job	844	71.0
Ability to find a house you want to live in	842	70.7
Your personal safety	821	69.2
The future of your children in Zimbabwe	807	68.4
Your family's safety	800	67.4
HIV/AIDS situation	681	57.1

Yet, for all the general advantages of the MLD over Zimbabwe, in the end it is the economics of the situation that weigh most heavily. The most important reasons why most of the students would go to their MLD include the lower cost of living (52%), the ability to find the job wanted (18%) and the level of income (16%) (Table 16).

Table 16: Most Important Reason to go to MLD		
	No.	Percentage
Most important reason to go to MLD		
Cost of living	606	52.4
Ability to find the job I want	206	17.8
Your level of income	183	15.8
Prospects for professional advancement	55	4.7
Your personal safety	23	2.0
The security of your job	23	2.0
Availability of quality affordable products	16	1.4
The future of your children in Zimbabwe	11	0.9
Ability to find medical services for family and children	11	0.9
A level of fair taxation	9	0.8
Your family's safety	6	0.5
Ability to find a house you want to live in	3	0.3
Ability to find a good school for your children	2	0.2
HIV/AIDS situation	1	0.1
Quality upkeep of public amenities (e.g. parks, beaches, toilets etc.)	1	0.1

Most students said they are actively seeking information about living conditions and job opportunities in other countries. The main sources of information about possible countries of destination include friends/fellow students (89%), the internet (85%), co-workers/colleagues (82%), newspapers/magazines (82%), family members (78.7%) and radio and television (53,2%). Information on job opportunities in other countries comes from the internet (85%), friends/fellow students (83%), newspapers/magazines (77%), colleagues/co-workers (79%) and family members (74%). Over the past five years, Zimbabwe has experienced a massive exodus of people to different parts of the world and these people are providing information to those who remain.[14] Only a minority of students have acquired information first-hand. Still, nearly 20% said they travel outside Zimbabwe at least once a year to destinations within Southern Africa. About 8% travel at least once a year to other parts of Africa and 10% to other parts of the world.

The importance of the brain drain in stimulating further emigration

is illustrated by the strong connections that Zimbabwean students have with those who have left. Most of the students (81%) have at least one close friend who has left the country and 79% know at least one emigrant from members of their extended family. Seventy-eight percent know at least one emigrant from among fellow students/trainees/colleagues. About half (56%) of the students know at least one person from the immediate family who have emigrated.

To what extent do family ties and obligations act as brakes on emigration? In many countries, they probably would. Not in contemporary Zimbabwe. An astonishing 77% of students said that they were being encouraged or strongly encouraged by family to leave the country. Even if families were more disposed to encourage students to stay, nearly 80% said they would make the decision to leave on their own. Why are families so eager for their offspring to leave? The answer surely lies in the fact that many families need household members to leave and remit, just for survival. Several subsidiary questions therefore arise. Will those who leave do so permanently or on a temporary basis? Once gone will they continue to maintain links with Zimbabwe? And, in particular, will they remit funds once they have left?

PERMANENCE AND LINKAGES

In contrast to many students in Southern Africa, those in Zimbabwe are more interested in long-term emigration from the country. As Table 17 shows, 62% have a great desire to leave for more than two years compared with only 29% who want to leave for less than two years. Forty six percent said it was very likely that they would leave for longer than two years, compared with just 21% who said it was very likely they would leave for less than two years. While the two year breakpoint is a somewhat arbitrary way of dividing temporary from permanent emigration, the figures do indicate the preference for and likelihood of long-term rather than short-term absence. This is confirmed by "length of intended absence" data where only 12% indicated a stay of less than two years in their most likely destination. As many as half the students said they would stay away for longer than five years, an extraordinarily high percentage.

Table 18 gives the attitude of the students towards residency and citizenship in the MLD. Although many of the students said they would want to become permanent residents (60%) and citizens (57%) in the MLD, fewer said they would want to retire in the MLD (37%) and fewer still to be buried there (18%). Clearly, although many students would like to leave the country, most see themselves eventually returning home.

Table 17: Length of Stay in MLD		
	No.	Percentage
Extent of desire to move to MLD for a short period (less than two years)		
Great extent	302	28.6
Extent of desire to move to MLD for a long period (longer than two years)		
Great extent	713	62.2
Likelihood of moving to MLD for a short period (less than two years)		
Very likely	232	20.8
Likelihood of moving to MLD for a long period (longer than two years)		
Very likely	523	46.3
Length of stay in MLD		
Less than 6 months	15	1.3
6 months to one year	32	2.7
1 to 2 years	92	7.7
2 to 5 years	363	30.3
More than 5 years	595	49.7
Don't know	99	8.3

Table 18: Attitudes to Permanent Residence in MLD		
No.	Percentage	
Extent of desire to become a permanent resident in your MLD		
Large extent	391	32.8
Some extent	322	27.0
Total	713	59.8
Extent of desire to become a citizen in your MLD		
Large extent	363	30.8
Some extent	313	26.5
Total	676	57.3
Extent of desire to retire in your MLD		
Large extent	221	18.8
Some extent	217	18.5
Total	438	37.3
Extent of desire to be buried in your MLD		
Large extent	129	11.0
Some extent	87	7.4
Total	216	18.4

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As many as 83% of the students said they would maintain some links with Zimbabwe once they had left. Fifty-six percent indicated that they intended to visit either once every few months or yearly, while only 11% indicated that they would never return (Table 19). Almost half (46%) would send money home once every month and 16% would send money home a few times a year. Less than 2% would never send money home. A sizeable percentage of students said they would send money home more than once a month (25%).

Table 19: Maintenance of Links with Home		
	No.	Percentage
Frequency of return to home country:		
Weekly	7	0.6
Monthly	80	6.7
Once every few months	247	20.7
Yearly	426	35.6
Once every few years	235	19.7
Never	126	10.5
Don't know	75	6.3
Frequency of sending money home:		
More than once a month	301	25.2
Once a month	551	46.0
A few times a year	193	16.1
Once or twice a year	45	3.8
Just once or twice	19	1.6
Never	16	1.4
Don't know	72	6.0

Only 29% of students said they would be willing or very willing to give up their homes in Zimbabwe while a quarter would be willing or very willing to take all their savings out of Zimbabwe (Table 20). In terms of assets, 24% would want to take all their assets out of the county. Only 26% said they would be willing or very willing to give up their Zimbabwean citizenship. On all four of the measures, more women than men were willing to cut their ties with Zimbabwe.

Table 20: Links with Zimbabwe		
	No.	Percentage
Willingness to give up your home in Zimbabwe		
Very willing	204	17.1
Willing	143	12.0
Willingness to take all savings out of Zimbabwe		
Very willing	168	14.1
Willing	144	12.1
Willingness to take all your assets out of Zimbabwe		
Very willing	174	14.7
Willing	114	9.6
Willingness to give up Zimbabwean citizenship		
Very willing	203	17.0
Willing	106	8.9

STOPPING THE BRAIN DRAIN

Various measures have been mooted to keep skilled people in the country. Students were asked what they thought about these measures and whether or not they would work (Table 21). Generally, students were against national service prior to tertiary education (only 11% in favour) or bonding (requiring students to work in Zimbabwe for a period). Only 18% felt government would be justified in requiring students with bursaries to do some form of national service. Only 20% thought that government would be justified in requiring them to work in the country for several years after completing their education.

The second question is whether various policy alternatives would, if implemented, have the opposite effect to that intended and actually encourage people to emigrate. By and large, the majority of students did not feel that this would be the case. Around a third felt that measures such as making it more difficult to emigrate, holding only one passport, requiring a year of national service or increasing emigration fees would actually increase emigration.

Third, given opposition to bonding and compulsory service, what do students feel that government should do to tackle the problem? Consistent with personal opposition to legal and policy measures, only 25% thought that legislation making it more difficult to leave would stem the brain drain. A mere 23% thought government should "prohibit" emigration. Only 22% thought it would be worth Zimbabwe's while to forge links with receiving countries to make it more difficult for

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Zimbabweans to land. Easily the most popular response (with 77% replying in the affirmative) was that government should encourage economic development. Just over 49% felt that government could also institute measures to attract Zimbabweans back to the country.

In sum, Zimbabwean students generally think that economic incentives rather than regulatory mechanisms are more likely to reduce migration rates from the country.

Table 21: Home Government Policies Influence		
	No	Percentage
Government would be completely justified or justified to:		
Require citizens to work in the country for several years after completion of their education	239	20.1
Require citizens who have received government bursaries for education to complete some form of national service	209	17.5
Require citizens to complete some form of national/public service before enrolling at institutions of higher learning	133	11.2
People are much more likely or likely to emigrate:		
If the government required people leaving professional schools to do one year national service in their area of expertise	428	35.8
If the government took steps to make it more difficult to emigrate	387	32.3
If the government was going to allow people to hold only one passport	362	30.3
If the government were to increase fees for emigration	322	26.9
Government should (% Yes):		
Encourage economic development, which will discourage people from leaving	912	77.1
Other steps	54	46.2
Institute measures, which encourage the return of qualified professionals abroad	492	42.7
Enact legislation that will make it more difficult for students to migrate	296	25.4
Prohibit emigration	266	23.2
Forge links in destination countries of emigrants from Zimbabwe to discourage them from employing emigrants from Zimbabwe	250	21.8
None	20	3.7

CONCLUSION

The likelihood of emigration is very high amongst the Zimbabwean student body with the major push and pull factors being economic rather than political. The country is currently experiencing an economic 'meltdown' characterised by an escalating cost of living and deteriorating quality of life with more than 70% of the population leaving below the poverty datum line. High inflation (more than 500% at the time of the survey), a high unemployment rate of 70% and political tensions compound the problem. Very few of the students felt that the government was doing enough to create employment opportunities and decent living standards for graduates.

The brain drain of skilled people and professionals from Zimbabwe to other countries is likely to continue in the foreseeable future. Not only are levels of pessimism and dissatisfaction at an all-time high amongst Zimbabwean professionals, but the next generation of skilled workers appears to be equally disgruntled. Despite the dissatisfaction and pessimism amongst students, there remains a strong sense of identification with Zimbabwe, a desire to help build the country and a personal obligation to contribute talents and skills to national development.

Government does need to develop measures to curb the crippling emigration of current and future skilled people and professionals from the country. However, this study has shown that outright prohibition of or discouragement of destination countries from employing Zimbabwean emigrants would not help in stemming the brain drain. Very few of the students felt it would be justified for the government to require citizens to complete some form of national service before enrolling at institutions of higher learning. Most indicated that sustained economic growth is a prerequisite for curbing the outflow of professionals and skilled people from leaving the country.

The general feeling among most of the students was that the economic, social and political conditions in their most likely destination are better than in Zimbabwe. The most likely destinations for most of the students were Southern Africa, followed by Europe and North America. These are the regions where chances of getting employment are better, the cost of living is relatively low and incomes are higher than in Zimbabwe.

Most of the students want to stay away for a period longer than two years. Also, a high percentage would send money home several times a year, while very few would never send money home. Although many of the students desired to become permanent residents and citizens overseas, very few desired to remain there permanently.

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Zimbabwe faces an immense challenge in stemming the mass exodus of professionals and skilled personnel to other countries within Africa and oversees. The basic conclusion of this study is that the emigration potential among students in the country is very high. There is some indication that women are more dissatisfied and less optimistic about the future than men. Many of the students have seriously considered emigrating due to dissatisfaction with the economic conditions in the country. If the government does not enact reforms that make staying at home attractive and rewarding for educated Zimbabweans, the country stands to lose much-needed professionals and skilled personnel and the damage could be irreparable.

While it is obviously not possible to prevent people from migrating to developed countries for better prospects in this era of globalisation, the adverse impact of such movements on economic development merit urgent attention. The survey showed that a coercive approach to the brain drain would only intensify the level of discontent and for most of the students would make absolutely no difference to their emigration intentions. The best way to curb the high rates of skilled labour migration lies in addressing the economic fundamentals of the country in a way that will ultimately improve living standards.

In policy terms, there is a need for government to address the economic ills that are driving people out of the country. It is encouraging to note that some efforts are being made to address the problem. However, since the malaise is serious a lot more medication will be needed before the economic malady can be cured and the brain drain flows reduced.

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