

RETURN INTENTION SURVEY ON RETURNEES AFFECTED BY COVID-19

ZIMBABWE

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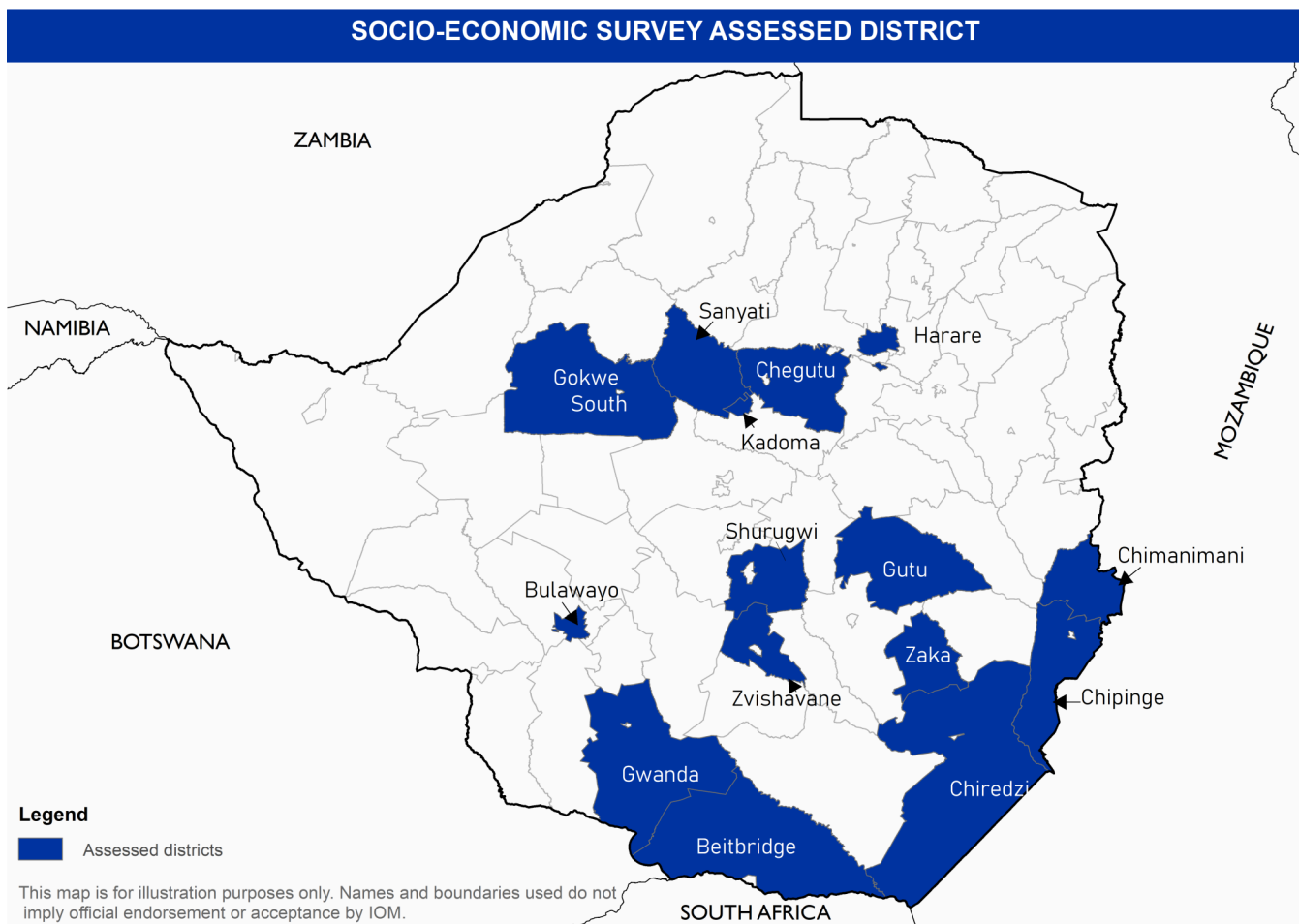
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Executive Summary

Background

This survey sought to assess the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on returnees and the subsequent effects on their intentions. A questionnaire and key informant interviews were used to collect data. A total of 1,014 returnees participated in the return intention survey and 25 focus group discussions with community care workers, village heads, councilors and chiefs in 15 districts under 7 provinces in Zimbabwe. Simple random sampling was used to select the respondents who participated in the survey and a combination of purposive sampling and snowballing were used to gather the respondents for the focus group discussions. Analysis of data was done using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis for descriptive information obtained from focus group discussions and key informant interviews.

Ethical Considerations and COVID-19 Precautions

Informed consent was sought from all participants and they gave verbal consent before the interview. Confidentiality of their personal information was guaranteed. For COVID-19 considerations, social distancing, wearing of masks and use of sanitizers was constantly used when engaging with the communities during and after the survey sessions. During Focus Group Discussions, an IPC person was assigned to keep reminding participants to adhere to social distancing and use of masks correctly.

Limitations of the study

While our approach was in person administration of questionnaires, a few respondents could not be reached in person due to distances involved to interview one or two returnees and COVID-19 considerations, we administered the interviews telephonically. However, the study sample was adequately representative of the population at large therefore results of the study are generalizable. Based on the estimated population of 30,000 returnees back into Zimbabwe at the time of the study, a sample of 10% of returnees from each district assessed were targeted.

Key Findings

Demographics



1014
returnees



37%



63%

Female respondents were **37 per cent** versus **63 per cent** male respondents. The survey shows that **62 per cent** of female returnees are between 20 and 39 as to **77 per cent** male returnees who are in the same age ranges between 20 and 39.

Host Countries



South Africa

80%



Botswana

12%



Zambia

1%



Mozambique

1%



USA

1%



Other

5%

Most returnees were hosted in South Africa (**80%**) followed by Botswana with **12 per cent** of the returnees. Mozambique, USA and Zambia had **1 per cent** each and other countries contributed **5 per cent** as host nations.



63 per cent of returnees are unemployed



55 per cent of the returnees do not have valid travel documents.



84 per cent of returnees do not have savings in host countries. Only 16 of those who have can access their savings



95 per cent of returnees face financial constraints

68 per cent of the returnees face hunger and thirst

29 per cent of returnees do not have access to travel documents



77 per cent returnees cited search for employment as push factor for migrating

55 per cent of the returnees intend to go back to host countries while **45 per cent** wish to stay in Zimbabwe.

46 per cent of the returnees intend to continue with their job while **36 per cent** of returnees wish to search for a new job.

Introduction

Background

Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has brought a global negative impact to the economies, health systems, and societies. Global migration is no exception to this negative effect of COVID-19, as the world witnessed various mobility restrictions, such as closure of borders and lockdowns. The Government of Zimbabwe also imposed a national lockdown in order to contain the potential transmission of COVID-19.

Many migrants from all over the world were returning to Zimbabwe. As of 3 November 2020, IOM estimated more than 25,655 returnees have come back to Zimbabwe in the time of COVID-19. IOM also predicted that the number of returnees will exceed 30,000 before year end. The current readily available information about these returnees is highly quantitative about their country of departure, and in some instances, their intended destinations. However, the new COVID-19 pandemic shaped new migration trends and intentions of migrants, the push and pull factors influencing their movement, the effect of their immediate and long-term needs, and their intentions upon arrival. To address the problems stated above, IOM conducted a return intention survey with individual returnees and focus group discussions with key informants from host communities in 15 districts.

Several DTM tools are implemented, including regular assessments in villages and displacement sites hosting displaced populations to collect information on the movements and needs of populations; ad hoc event tracking to monitor sudden and unexpected movements of populations, and socio-economic surveys. A community-level assessment was done where surveys with individual returnees and host communities was conducted to learn more about their future intentions and the factors necessary for their sustainable reintegration. This Return Intention Survey was conducted in 15 districts in Zimbabwe namely Beitbridge, Harare, Bulawayo, Chegutu, Kadoma, Sanyati, Gokwe South, Gwanda, Zvishavane, Shurugwi, Zaka, Gutu, Chiredzi, Chipinge and Chimanimani. A total of 1,014 returnees participated in the survey and 25 focus group discussions with key informants from host communities were conducted from 18 November to 22 December 2020.

A total of 1,014 returnees participated in the return intention survey and 25 focus group discussions with community care workers, village heads, councilors and chiefs in 15 district under 7 provinces in Zimbabwe. Simple random sampling was used to select the respondents who participated in the survey and a combination of purposive sampling and snowballing were used to gather the respondents for the focus group discussions. Analysis of data was done using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis for qualitative data.

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Limitations of the study

While our approach was in person administration of questionnaires, a few respondents could not be reached in person due to distances involved to interview one or two returnees and COVID-19 considerations, we administered the interviews telephonically. However the target 10% of the returnees responded to the survey questions, adequate to generalize to the returnee population.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

1014 Total Respondents

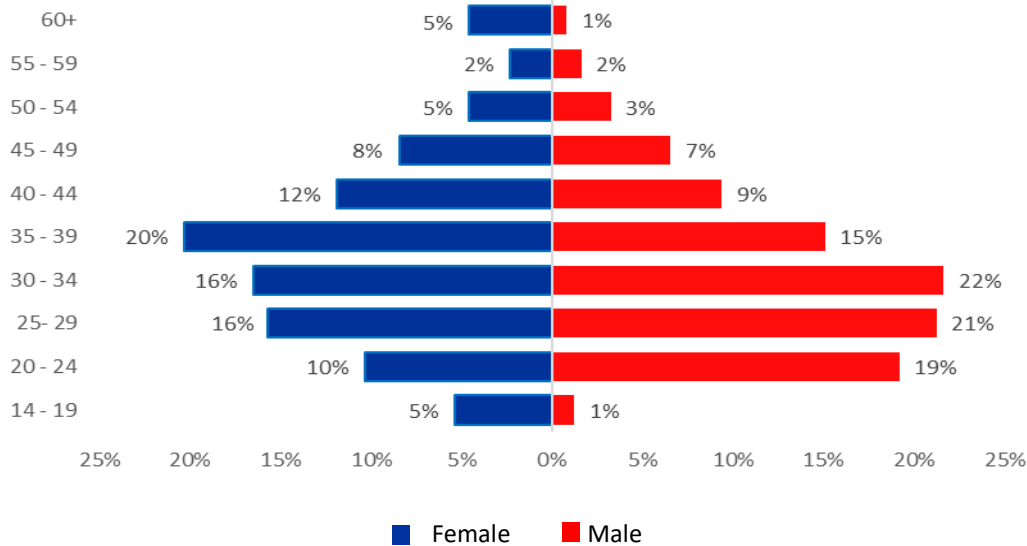


37%



63%

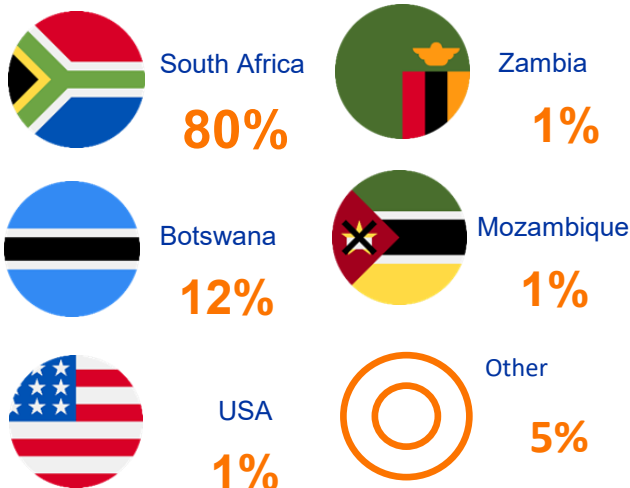
Respondents by age and sex



Female respondents were 37 per cent versus 63 per cent male respondents. The survey shows that 62 per cent of female returnees are between 20 and 39 with 77 per cent male returnees being in the same age range. Ages between 40 and 59 for both male and female constitute 21 per cent and 25 per cent respectively. Children with age of 19 and below constitute 6 per cent and this was the same for the elderly persons above 60. Overall, it can be noted that 94 per cent of the total respondents are between the ages of 18 to 59. Children and the elderly have the least percentage and this can be explained by their less economic activity.

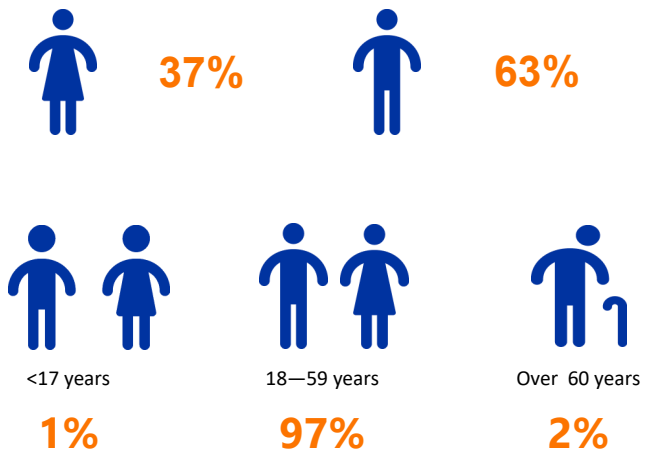
TOP 5 HOST COUNTRY OF RETURNEES

A total number of 1014 respondents from 5 host countries participated in the survey. They indicated that they were in South Africa (80%), Zambia (1%), Botswana (12%), Mozambique (1%) and USA (1%) before the lockdown. Five per cent were from other various countries.



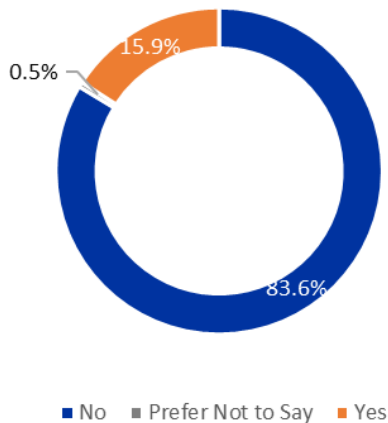
TOTAL RESPONDENTS

**1,014 ZIMBABWEAN
MIGRANTS**



Savings and remittances

Returnees with savings in host countries



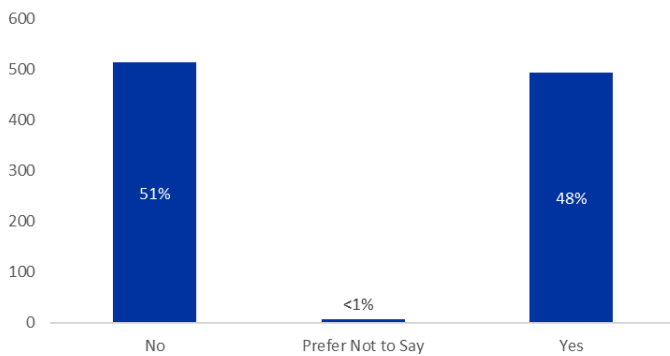
Almost 84 per cent of the returnees do not have savings back in host countries. Only 16 per cent of the returnees have savings in their host country. Of the 161 returnees that said they have savings in their foreign host countries, 88 have access to them. Since returning, 67 per cent of the returnees received money from their family members outside Zimbabwe. Most of the returnees received amount less than USD500 on a quarterly basis. In the survey, almost 90 per cent of the returnees indicated that they are unemployed while 10 per cent indicated that they were employed. These explain why there are little savings amongst the returnees in host countries.

Key Informant Interview in Nemangwe, Gokwe South District

A councillor in Nemangwe was asked to give his views on whether returnees had savings and have access to them and he had this to say, ' All the returnees under Chief Nemangwe leave this community for South Africa every year in March for seasonal work such as harvesting of oranges and come back September every year for farming season.' He added that, " returnees do not have any savings and if at all they do have access to any savings as their work gives them money enough for survival". His experience in the community is that returnees were even struggling to come back home during the COVID-19 lockdown. The views from the community further supports 84 per cent who stated that they have no savings back in their host countries (Councillor in Nenamngwe,30 November 2020).

Employment and Immigration Status of Returnees

Respondent's deportation status



Returnees were asked whether they were deported or not. The findings show that 51 per cent were not deported against 48 per cent of the returnees who were deported. Only less than 1 per cent of the returnees preferred not to declare whether they were deported or not.

Employment Status



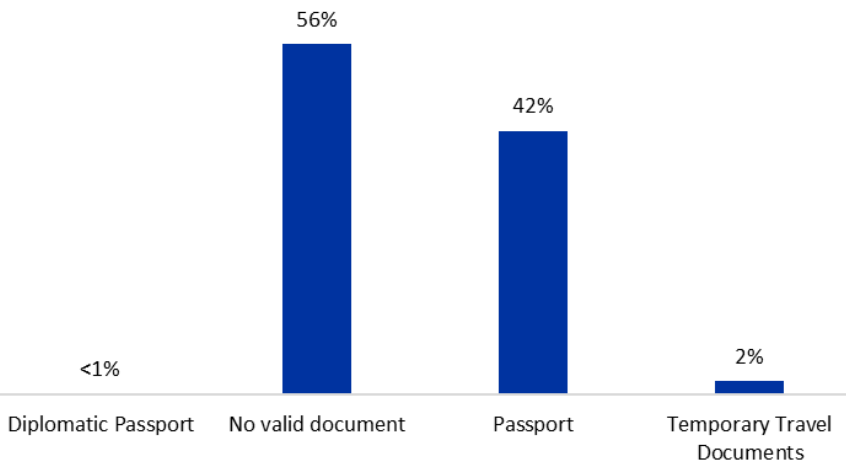
Unemployment amongst returnees who were interviewed in the socio-economic survey is very high as 50.30 per cent of the returnees reported that they were unemployed. Persons between the ages 18-39 constitute 78 per cent of the

Voices from Authorities at Dadaya Quarantine Centre

An official from the Social Welfare at Dadaya Quarantine Centre reported that most returnees who were quarantined during the COVID-19 were either self repatriating or deportees. Based on the available returnee database at Dadaya, most deportees were ex-convicts while others were undocumented migrants.

Immigration status

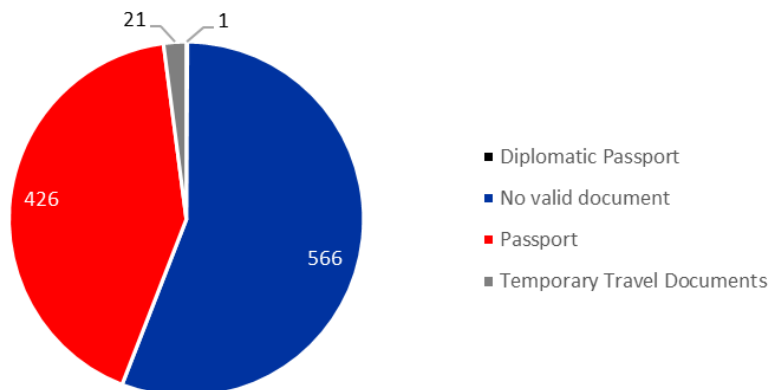
Travel Documents held by returnees



The intention survey sought to establish whether returnees had any travel documents with them. The findings show that 42 per cent of the returnees reported having a passport while 56 per cent who are the majority had no valid travel documents. Only 2 per cent reported that they had a temporary travel documents. The study showed that that a higher proportion of female returnees were irregular migrants in their host country before returning. This also means that women were more vulnerable in host countries.

Returnee Access to Travel Documents

Respondents by travel documents status



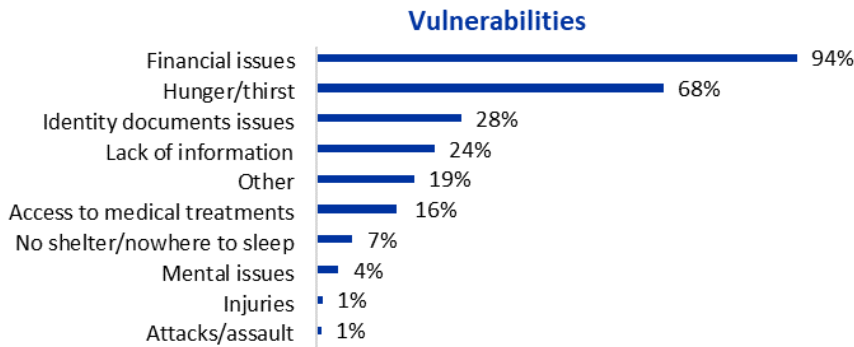
Fifty-five per cent of the interviewed returnees indicated that they had no valid travel documentation. However, 426 returnees (42%) indicated that they had passports. Of the returnees who had passports, 48 per cent of them were female. Four per cent had temporary travel documents and only one person had a diplomatic passport.

A key Informant in Bulawayo pointed out that, 'many of the youthful persons in Umzingwane do not have travel documents. Rather they use informal crossing to South Africa and back in the community'. He added that, it is the wish of every youthful person in this district to cross to South Africa for better opportunities to work on farms, restaurants and mining companies'. They do not need work permits and it is easy for them to live as undocumented migrants as they speak same languages with South African citizens (Key Informant in Umzingwane).

Host Community Views on Travel Documents

- ◆ Findings of the intention survey show that 55 per cent of the returnees had no passports. A Focus Group Discussion in Chipinge with community leaders reported that, "most of the returnees in Chipinge district whom they refer to as *majonij-joni* (returnees from South Africa) do not have travel documents" (FGD with Community Leaders).
- ◆ Another respondent who was a village health worker in the FGD added that, "all most returnees cross to South Africa via Save River using the *Malayitsha* (traffickers).
- ◆ A Social Welfare Officer in Chegutu reaffirmed the views of other key informants on issues of travel documents. He explained to us that, "most returnees do not have passports and due to COVID-19 and limited access to travel documents in Zimbabwe many migrants resort to informal crossing to neighbouring countries which increases their vulnerability to abuse and crime (Key Informant, Chegutu District).

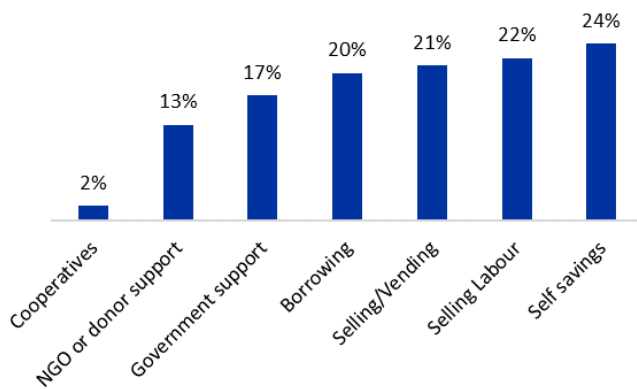
Returnees Vulnerabilities



Ninety-four per cent of the respondents indicated financial issues as a vulnerability followed by hunger/thirst with 68 per cent. The third highest vulnerability highlighted was the issue of identity documents where 28 per cent said they had challenges with access to identity documents. A significant percentage of 7 per cent of the returnees indicated that they had no shelter while health vulnerabilities such as limited access to medical treatments scored 16 per cent of the total respondents.

Returnee Coping Mechanisms

Coping mechanism at household level

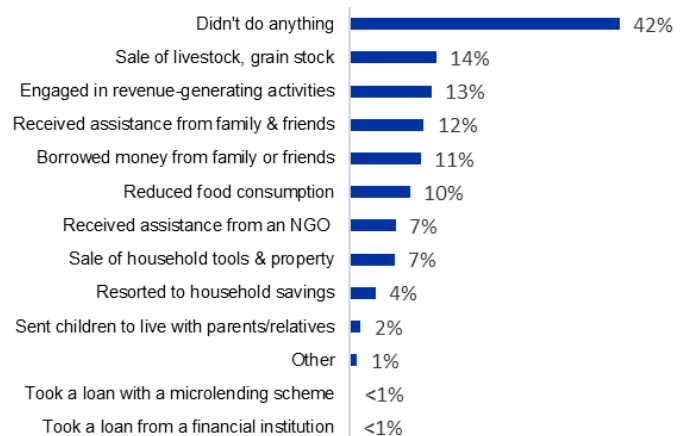


A majority of the respondents were living on self-savings (24%), followed by selling labour (22%), selling/vending constituted 20.9 per cent of the responses. Thirteen per cent of the respondents indicated that they received support from Non-Governmental Organizations in order for them to cope with their vulnerabilities.

Host Community Voices on Coping Mechanisms

A Focus Group Discussion in Sanyati with community leaders revealed that youthful returnees who came back during COVID-19 resorted to artisanal mining.

Coping mechanism at household level

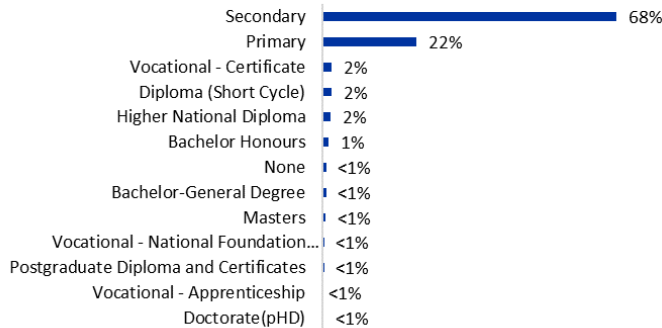


Returnees were asked how their respective households were coping economically with their return. In the graph above, 42 per cent indicated that their households had not made any adjustments in order to accommodate them, 14 per cent indicated that their households had resorted to the sale of agricultural goods (livestock and grain) in order to cope while 0.3 per cent indicated that money had been borrowed from a financial institution in order to cope.

Food consumption in the household was also reduced where 10 per cent indicated that they reduced their meal frequencies to two meals a day. Some returnees (11%) borrowed from families while only 0.3 per cent of the returnees resorted to loans a survival strategy. Overall, it can be concluded that returnees increased vulnerabilities at household level as shown by decreased food consumption, sale of property and dependency on government and NGO support.

Level of Education and Return Intentions

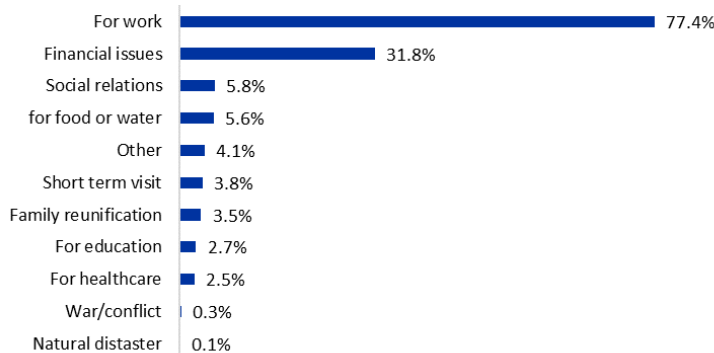
Level of education



Most of the respondents who constitute 68 per cent indicated that secondary education is their highest level of education while 22 per cent have primary level education. Those with a Diploma to a PhD qualification constitute 6.31 per cent of the returnees. Two per cent of the returnees hold a vocational certificate. Of the 689 returnees with secondary level education, 231 (34%) are female compared to 458 (66%) male.

Reasons for Migrating

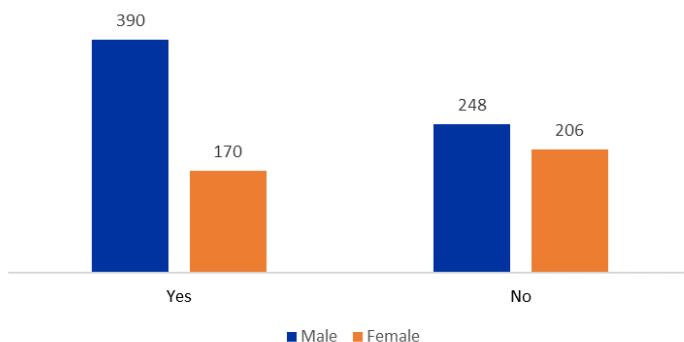
Reasons for migrating



Returnees gave several reasons why they migrate. About 77.4 per cent of the returnees migrate for search of employment. The source country has unemployment issues hence their reasons to migrate. Financial constraints which are directly related to employment are second highest push factors that force returnees to migrate. Social relationships, family reunion, educational reasons and other make a total of 20.7 per cent. Those who cited natural disasters and conflict as reasons for migrating are only 0.04 per cent in total.

Returnee Intentions Upon Return to Host Country

Intentions to return to host country

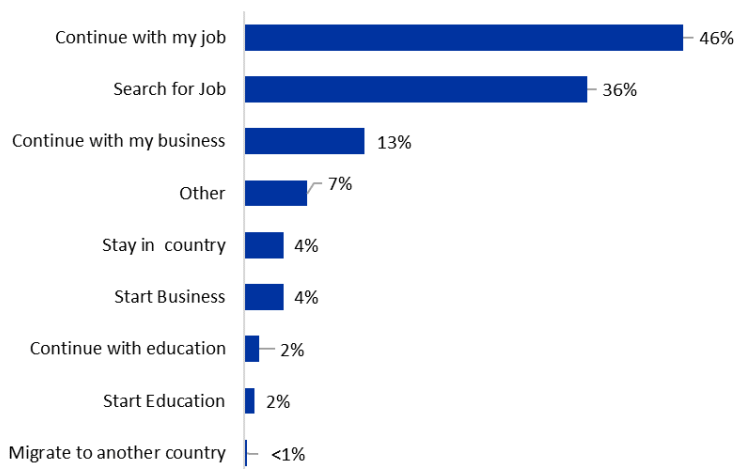


Returnees were also asked if they had intentions to go back to their host countries or not. One hundred and seventy (30.35%) female returnees against 390 (69.65%) male returnees indicating that they intend to return to host countries after COVID-19 lockdown relaxations and when border re-open. Of those who do not intend to go back to their host country, 46 per cent were female and 55 per cent were male. In total, 55.23 per cent intend to go back to host countries while 44.77 per cent do not wish to return.

Host Community Voices on Coping Mechanisms

Key informants who participated in FGDs such as CCWs and Village heads in Esigodini, Gokwe South, Chipinge and Chiredzi reported that, 'the majority of returnees do not wish to stay as some were already returning at the time of this survey'. In addition, the key informants also pointed out that most returnees only came because of COVID-19. Their intentions are to stay in those host countries.

Intentions of returnees



Of the returnees interviewed who plan to return to their host countries soon, forty-six per cent would like to continue with the job they had before returning whereas 36 per cent intend to look for employment. About 13 per cent indicated that they would like to continue with the businesses they had. The remainder either want to start a business (4%), migrate to stay in the host country (4%), migrate for education (4%) or migrate to host country then move to another country (less than 1%)

Focus Group Discussions Responses from Community Leaders

A Child Care Worker in a Focus Group Discussion pointed out that, ‘returnees here in Zaka who are mostly hosted in South Africa are suffering from stigma because community members think they have COVID-19 and they are usually associated with lavish lifestyles when they come back.’ A Village Head from Zaka District added that, ‘because the returnees did not come back home with money and other properties as they normally do, they are less likely to stay in the communities because of the stigma they suffer from community members who view them as *Injiva (the rich migrants)*’.

A youth coordinator in Chiredzi added that, ‘all the returnees he interacted with had plans to go back as soon as the borders re-open because there are no economic opportunities in the host communities’.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This return intention survey sought to assess the plans of returnees who came to during COVID-19 to ascertain whether they intend to settle in Zimbabwe permanently or they plan migrate to their host countries.

The findings of the survey show that most returnees (80%) came back from South Africa during COVID-19 lockdown. Of these returnees, 55 per cent indicated that they intend to go to back to their host countries. While more than half of the returnees intend to go back, it was also found out that 55 per cent of the total returnees do not have valid travel documents.

In addition, it emerged that 63 per cent of returnees are unemployed hence this influences their intention to go back to host countries.

Sixty-eight per cent of the returnees also cited that they face hunger and financial constraints. It is therefore, suggested that an immediate intervention such as cash transfers, non-food items and agricultural kits be extended to them in the short-term to meet their needs.

In the long-term, a sustainable reintegration and COVID-19 recovery plan is needed such as livelihoods project which suit their occupational skills and other potential economic activities that may be available in their host communities. Eighty-four per cent of the returnees do not have savings in host countries and as a result, they face other challenges such as limited access to healthcare and education for their household members. A comprehensive reintegration package that may include social grants in partnership with the Government of Zimbabwe may be required to ensure safe, secure and successful re-integration of returnees.

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