

Zimbabwe



Introduction

Background: The UK annexed Southern Rhodesia from the South Africa Company in 1923. A 1961 constitution was formulated that favored whites in power. In 1965 the government unilaterally declared its independence, but the UK did not recognize the act and demanded more complete voting rights for the black African majority in the country (then called Rhodesia). UN sanctions and a guerrilla uprising finally led to free elections in 1979 and independence (as Zimbabwe) in 1980. Robert MUGABE, the nation's first prime minister, has been the country's only ruler (as president since 1987) and has dominated the country's political system since independence. His chaotic land redistribution campaign begun in 2000 caused an exodus of white farmers, crippled the economy, and ushered in widespread shortages of basic commodities. Ignoring international condemnation, MUGABE rigged the 2002 presidential election to ensure his reelection. Opposition and labor groups launched general strikes in 2003 to pressure MUGABE to retire early; security forces continued their brutal repression of regime opponents.

Geography

Location: Southern Africa, between South Africa and Zambia

Area: *total:* 390,580 sq km

land: 386,670 sq km

water: 3,910 sq km

Climate: tropical; moderated by altitude; rainy season (November to March)

Terrain: mostly high plateau with higher central plateau (high veld); mountains in east

Natural resources: coal, chromium ore, asbestos, gold, nickel, copper, iron ore, vanadium, lithium, tin, platinum group metals

Environment - current issues: deforestation; soil erosion; land degradation; air and water pollution; the black rhinoceros herd - once the largest concentration of the species in the world - has been significantly reduced by poaching; poor mining practices have led to toxic waste and heavy metal pollution

People

Population: 12,746,990

Population growth rate: 0.51%

Net migration rate: 0 migrant(s)/1,000 population negligible migrant(s)/1,000 population

Languages: English (official), Shona, Sindebele (the language of the Ndebele, sometimes called Ndebele), numerous but minor tribal dialects

Government

Country name: *conventional long form:* Republic of Zimbabwe

Government type: parliamentary democracy.

Capital: Harare

Independence: 18 April 1980 (from UK)

Legal system: mixture of Roman-Dutch and English common law

Executive branch: *chief of state:* Executive President Robert Gabriel MUGABE

International organization participation: ACP, AfDB, AU, FAO, G-15, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICCT (signatory), ICFTU, ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCs, ILO, IMF, Interpol, IOC, IOM, ISO, ITU, MIGA, NAM, OPCW, PCA, SADC, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNMIK, UPU, WCL, WCO, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WToO, WTO

Economy

Economy - overview: The government of Zimbabwe faces a wide variety of difficult economic problems as it struggles with an unsustainable fiscal deficit, an overvalued exchange rate, soaring inflation, and bare shelves. Its 1998-2002 involvement in the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, drained hundreds of millions of dollars from the economy. Badly needed support from the IMF has been suspended because of the country's failure to meet budgetary goals. Inflation rose from an annual rate of 32% in 1998 to 133% at the end of 2004, while the exchange rate fell from 24 Zimbabwean dollars per US dollar to 6,200 in the same time period. The government's land reform program, characterized by chaos and violence, has badly damaged the commercial farming sector, the traditional source of exports and foreign exchange and the provider of 400,000 jobs.

GDP: purchasing power parity - \$24.37 billion

GDP - real growth rate: -8.2%

GDP - per capita: purchasing power parity - \$1,900

GDP - composition by sector: *agriculture:* 18.1%

industry: 24.3%

services: 57.7%

Investment (gross fixed): 9.9% of GDP

Population below poverty line: 70%

Inflation rate (consumer prices): 133%

Labor force: 4.23 million

Unemployment rate: 70%

Budget: *revenues:* \$1.325 billion

expenditures: \$1.593 billion, including capital expenditures of NA

Agriculture – products: corn, cotton, tobacco, wheat, coffee, sugarcane, peanuts; sheep, goats, pigs

Industries: mining (coal, gold, platinum, copper, nickel, tin, clay, numerous metallic and nonmetallic ores), steel, wood products, cement, chemicals, fertilizer, clothing and footwear, foodstuffs, beverages

Oil – consumption: 23,000 bbl/day

Current account balance: \$-230.3 million

Exports: \$1.409 billion f.o.b.

Exports - commodities: cotton, tobacco, gold, ferroalloys, textiles/clothing

Exports - partners: South Africa 11.9%, Zambia 6.3%, China 3.4% (2004)

Imports: \$1.599 billion f.o.b.

Imports - commodities: machinery and transport equipment, other manufactures, chemicals, fuels

Imports - partners: South Africa 47.2%, Democratic Republic of the Congo 6.2%, China 4.4%

Currency: Zimbabwean dollar (ZWD)

Exchange rates: Zimbabwean dollars per US dollar - 4,303.28 (2004), 697.424 (2003), 55.036 (2002), 55.052 (2001), 44.418 (2000)

Transportation

Railways: *total:* 3,077 km

narrow gauge: 3,077 km 1.067-m gauge (313 km electrified) (2004)

Highways: *total:* 18,338 km

paved: 8,692 km

unpaved: 9,646 km

Waterways: on Lake Kariba, length small

Pipelines: refined products 261 km

Ports and harbors: Binga, Kariba

Airports: 404