



Zimbabwe – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 29 November 2012

Do single mothers experience discrimination in Zimbabwe, with particular reference to Bulawayo district?

An Australian Government: Refugee Review Tribunal country advice document, in a section titled “Single women/mothers”, states:

“Limited information was found regarding the treatment of single mothers without male family support or protection; however, some sources indicate that single women and mothers, including widows, were significantly affected by the government’s Operation Murambatsvina (Restore Order, or Drive Out Rubbish) in 2005, which involved the demolition of hundreds of thousands of illegally built homes in Zimbabwe’s shanty towns in Harare, resulting in the forced evictions of 700,000 people.” (Australian Government: Refugee Review Tribunal (10 February 2010) *Zimbabwe – ZWE36110 – Women – Single mothers*)

A News Day article on prostitution in Zimbabwe states:

“The unemployment rate in Zimbabwe that currently stands at 90% is a recruitment mechanism for prostitution. Zimbabwe does not have welfare systems in place to support single mothers; majorities of unemployed urban women feel hopeless and have no control over their destiny.” (News Day (1 September 2012) *The agony of selling flesh*)

A Zimbabwe Standard article on corruption states:

“Others who responded to the survey said single women had difficulties in obtaining birth certificates for their children, yet the law allowed them to do so. ‘As a result, some single mothers cannot acquire birth certificates for their children without the father, leaving the children vulnerable and likely to go for prolonged periods in life without birth certificates,’ the report continued.” (Zimbabwe Standard (23 September 2012) *Corruption Behind People’s Failure to Get Identity Documents – Report*)

A report from the Global Press Institute refers to the experiences of one single mother in Zimbabwe as follows:

“Mthethwa says she considered abortion but decided against it when she realized she had no one to help her through it. But she also had few people to support her during her pregnancy. I wanted to end my life, she says. I attempted all the methods of committing suicide I had heard about, but none of them worked. I just wanted to die because I was so ashamed of the disappointment I had caused my family. She says her father disowned her, so she stayed with her aunt for most of her pregnancy. The Zimbabwe government announced a new policy in 2010 that entitles girls who get

pregnant while in school to three months of maternity leave instead of expelling them. But after delivering her baby, Mthethwa returned to school for less than a month before bullying and ridicule from her peers forced her to permanently drop out.” (Global Press Institute (23 October 2012) *Community Debates Primary School Sex Education in Zimbabwe*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

References:

Australian Government: Refugee Review Tribunal (10 February 2010) *Zimbabwe – ZWE36110 – Women – Single mothers*
<http://www.mrt-rrt.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/112/ZWE36110.pdf.aspx>
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