



Home Office

Home Office Response to IAGCI Review Zimbabwe COI Report, December 2013

17 June 2014

<i>Review Conclusions/ Recommendations</i>	Response
<p>General comments, pages 2-3 Structure, Format, and Substance</p>	<p>We appreciate the generally positive comments made about the report and acknowledge the suggestions for improvement. We will review these when we update this.</p> <p>We will no longer be producing COI reports. These are being replaced by unified country information and guidance (CIG) products, providing both COI and advice on handling country specific issues and which will focus on the main category(ies) of claim and related issues.</p> <p>These products will not have detailed sections on general background information, though we will include a range of background sources and links as an annex. However, each COI section in the CIG reports will provide, where appropriate, contextual background relevant to the issue/category of claim being considered to evidence the guidance provided.</p> <p>We will continue to make use of cross-referencing within the reports and to external sources.</p>

Review Conclusions/ Recommendations	Response
<p>Current Sources, page 3</p> <p>On the whole the COI report makes careful use of a range of authoritative sources, whether academic, journalistic, institutional or organizational. However, some of the sources relied on fairly extensively in the report are only available on subscription (eg The Economist Intelligence Unit, Europa, Jane's) – such restricted access excluded this reviewer and must exclude any individual asylum applicants and (more problematically) a significant proportion of their legal representatives. Assuming that adjudicators and Home Office representatives have unimpeded access to such subscriptions services, the question remains whether this impeded access matters? It does not undermine the veracity or authority of these sources – they remain useful in that regard. But it does mean that it is not possible (for me or other users) to assess the extracts used from these sources in the context of their publication or original production.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>We have reduced the range of our subscriptions, increasingly favouring open source material. However, we do retain a number of subscriptions, including to Africa Confidential (recommended by the reviewer, below) as a useful source, which we consider add breadth and depth to our COI material.</p> <p>While access to these sites is limited to the general reader, we will provide copies of relevant articles to those involved in the decision making process, including the courts and applicants/their representatives, on request.</p>
<p>Additional Sources, pages 4-5</p>	<p>Accepted. Thank you for recommended sources above, including the most recent census data, and observations about the reliability of the various sources. We will consult and make reference to these in future products.</p>
<p>Review of Sections 1-6, pages 5-16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geography • Economy • History • Recent Developments • Constitution • Political System 	<p>Thank you for the sources/observations re: these sections of the COI report.</p> <p>Please see comments in response 'General comments/ Structure, Format, and Substance' (above) about our intention to cease producing COI reports and replace them with a unified country Information and guidance product which will focus on the main claim categories / relevant issues for decision makers and include COI (and guidance) relevant to these. We will, however, consult and refer to the various sources and material above in developing the CIG reports on Zimbabwe.</p>

Review Conclusions/ Recommendations	Response
<p>Review of Sections 8 and 10, pages 16-19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security Forces • Judiciary 	<p>Noted, thank you. We will take these points into account in developing the Zimbabwe CIG report(s).</p>
<p>Review of Sections 11-13, pages 19-20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrest and Detention • Prison Conditions • Death Penalty 	<p>Noted, thank you – in particular for the additional source for section 12. We will take these points into account in developing the Zimbabwe CIG report(s) and much of it will be incorporated as part of the general updating of information, notably to take into account the new constitution.</p>
<p>Review of Section 14, pages 20-21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political Affiliation • Limitations on Quantitative Data 	<p>Noted, thank you. The treatment of political activists will be covered in the CIG report, and will look at the current ‘political space’, taking into account the elections and recent events since.</p> <p>We accept that observation made about the limits in quantitative data applies to sources other than ZPP (which we refer because it is the principal source for the data referred in the section) and will ensure that this is made clear in future CIG products.</p>
<p>Review of Section 15, page 22</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom of Speech and Media 	<p>We do not plan, at this time, to cover ‘freedom of speech and media’, largely relevant in the consideration of the position of media workers, in a future CIG.</p> <p>However, the limitations placed on the press and individuals’ ability to express themselves freely has, of course, relevance in considering the position of those perceived to oppose the government/state so may be relevant when providing COI on these groups.</p>

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<p>Review of Section 16, pages 22-23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil Society and Human Rights Defenders 	<p>Noted, thank you.</p> <p>Para 16.09 is a complete quote from a source, which we are unable to alter. However, in regard to the general point about providing more explicit information about the situation of human rights defenders, we will take these into account when considering the position of opposition groups in a future CIG report.</p>
<p>Review of Section 20, pages 23-26 (plus Annex E)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil Society and Human Rights Defenders 	<p>Noted. We will review the available COI on LGBTI persons before producing a CIG report on sexuality/gender identity and consider if the material obtained by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in August 2011 remains relevant and accurate. If we do refer to the FCO material, we will add context about the sources so the information can be given appropriate weight.</p> <p>We will also take into account the effect of the new constitution and omit information about the affinity programme. The paragraph in the COI report is prefaced that the information was accurate as of 2004, indicating the information is dated. Likewise, we will carefully review and qualify the information about Bulawayo being 'gay-friendly'.</p> <p>Thank you, also, for the observation about the risks of using undated material. It is a useful reminder for us to look critically and seek to corroborate information by referring to a number of sources, wherever possible, to ensure we provide robust COI.</p>

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Review of Section 22, page 26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women 	<p>Noted, thank you. We will take these points into account in developing the Zimbabwe CIG report(s).</p>
Review of Section 26, pages 26-27 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Reform 	<p>Noted, thank you. The observations are useful in providing information in future CIG reports, although we may not cover land reform as a discrete subject but rather its relevance to particular categories of claim.</p>
Review of Section 29, page 27 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marange Diamond Fields 	<p>Thank you for providing a useful additional source.</p>
Concluding Remarks, page 27	<p>Much like the start, we appreciate the generally positive assessment. Although we are moving to a different style of product, we aim to maintain the same high level of quality.</p>