Struggles for urban land by the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation

BETH CHITEKWE-BITI

ABSTRACT This paper discusses the land struggles of the urban poor in Zimbabwe and the emerging strategies used by the alliance of the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation and its partner Dialogue on Shelter to address these struggles in the face of continued economic and political crisis. The paper looks at how they are navigating this space and creating new solutions for housing and livelihood strategies. It considers the recent history of informal settlements and government measures to control or destroy them, including Operation Murambatsvina in 2005, which made hundreds of thousands of people homeless. It discusses the pragmatic decisions regarding partnership with different government agencies that the alliance has had to make in light of the sustained political and economic crisis, and the positive responses, especially from some local governments. It suggests that these decisions and strategies taken at a time of crisis and rapid change should be seen as part of a longer-term debate that seeks to change the relationship between communities of the urban poor and the state. Today, the alliance presents government with an alternative way of dealing with land and housing issues. Although progress to date has been minimal given the scale of need, there is a strong basis for partnership that can be scaled up.

KEYWORDS Operation Murambatsvina / urban land / urban poor / urbanization / Zimbabwe

I. BACKGROUND

The 2002 national census put Zimbabwe’s population at 12.5 million people, of which 38 per cent live in urban areas. The living conditions of the urban poor in Zimbabwe have worsened over the past decade due to a multiplicity of factors rooted in Zimbabwe’s urban history, paternalistic housing policy and constraining legislation, and the political and economic environment.

Before 1980, blacks were considered temporary immigrants in cities and towns due to policies of racial segregation. Increasing insecurity during the war of independence in rural areas in the late 1970s resulted in an influx of people to the cities and towns. Squatter settlements were set up, mainly around Harare, the capital city. Before this, housing for the urban black population was in the form of male-only hostels often tied to employment, and marriage quarters for the small but growing “professional” black population.
After independence in 1980 there was a second wave of migration into the cities, in search of better opportunities. The frequent droughts in the early 1980s exacerbated the push to the city for a growing young population. The larger cities such as Harare and Bulawayo began to see annual population growth rates of around 4.8 per cent,\(^{(2)}\) which have doubled their population since independence. Legislation governing urban development placed the burden of housing provision squarely on local authorities,\(^{(3)}\) which were ill-prepared to cater for rapid urbanization and the growing population.

During the 1980s and 1990s, and with significant support from donor development assistance, most local authorities embarked on large site and services programmes financed by donor funding through bilateral agreements with central government.\(^{(4)}\) They were required by law to maintain housing waiting lists on a first-in, first-out basis. Families on these waiting lists were allocated land developed under these schemes, and in some instances could access housing finance through building society loans for incremental housing construction.

Despite these efforts in an apparently functioning system, the housing backlog in most cities increased. Local authorities lacked the resources to cater for the growing demand. For example in 1991, urban housing supply was estimated at 15,000 units, which grew to 20,000 units between 1992 and 1994. This still fell short of the documented housing backlog, estimated at 670,000 units at the time. The backlog increased to 1,000,000 by 2002\(^{(5)}\) and peaked at 1,200 000 units in April 2007.\(^{(6)}\) Coupled with this, it became evident that the waiting list system did not work for the cities’ growing number of poorest families. Poor people began to seek alternative ways of housing themselves and this manifested itself in increased occupancy levels within the existing housing stock. As many as 18 households per residential unit\(^{(7)}\) were recorded in some of Harare’s high density residential neighbourhoods. This meant that up to 72 people were sharing dwelling units often consisting of only four habitable rooms. In addition, construction of backyard shacks for rental became a viable option both for urban dwellers in high density suburbs, providing a source of income, and for the new arrivals to the city, who were last on the waiting list for formal local authority housing.

Squatter settlements mainly in the periphery of the cities began to emerge and grow as more and more families failed to get into the “formal” housing system within cities. They put up housing quickly and cheaply, not adhering to the high building standards required for formalized residential developments. They also occupied land that had no upfront services, as was required by the existing building by-laws of most local authorities. The response of local authorities was to demolish these settlements using each local authority’s by-laws as required under Section 183 of the Urban Council Act, which among other things spelt out in great detail what type of housing could be constructed and under what conditions. However, the worsening economic conditions meant that the very poor had no alternative but to continue building unauthorized housing. Although there has never been any official acknowledgement of illegal housing production by the poor, from the late 1990s until May 2005 most local authorities began to “semi-legalize” this informal type of housing delivery by giving “lodgers’ cards” to registered dwellers of backyard shacks, as well as levying a fee for each unit or alternatively just turning a blind eye. This was in recognition of their own failure to supply

---


\(^{3}\) Urban Council Act and Regional Town and Country Planning Act.

\(^{4}\) Mainly financed by the World Bank and USAID under a series of urban local authority programmes.


\(^{6}\) Speech by the Minister of Housing, quoted in The Herald, 6 April 2007.

\(^{7}\) Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation Enumeration Survey of Mbare, Harare, April 1999.
appropriately priced housing for the growing urban poor as a result of falling financial resources.

Over the same period, central government had developed a mechanism to deal with fully-fledged squatter settlements sprouting up on the periphery of most large cities. The concept of “holding camps” was first used in the pre-independence era by the Rhodesian government. In 1976, a growing informal settlement at Derbyshire Farm on the boundaries of Harare, then Salisbury, was razed to the ground and settlers relocated to a holding facility, Chirambahuyo, some 28 kilometres from the city. In the post-independence era, at least three such camps developed in Harare: Hatcliffe Extension and Dzivarasekwa Extension, with an estimated total population of about 7,000 families between 1993 and 1995; and Hopley in 2005. Residents of squatter settlements were evicted and relocated to a “holding facility”, where they were screened and later often relocated to their “rural homes”. There has always been a misconception in official circles that every Zimbabwean has a rural home to go back to if they fail to find “suitable and legal” accommodation in the city. This policy was at its most extreme during Operation Murambatsvina/Restore Order (OPM/RO), which brought to the fore the reality and circumstances of the growing numbers of the urban poor in Zimbabwe.

Within the context of the chaotic and hurried land reform programme of 2000, most peri-urban farms around Harare belonging to white commercial farmers were occupied by homeless families. These occupations were often carried out in military style, under the direction of a commanding committee made up of former “war veterans” and loyalists of the ZANU PF political party. These occupations seemed to enjoy political support and were even encouraged. The occupants formed and registered housing cooperatives, giving them the legal right to subdivide and allocate the land. However, as Operation Murambatsvina would show, there was always uneasiness within government around these occupations. Of the 10 occupied farm settlements within the peri-urban fringe of Harare only two were spared the evictions carried out under Operation Murambatsvina. Again, the official justification for the evictions was a breaching of the city’s by-laws. In Harare alone, an estimated 50,000 families who had moved onto such farms were evicted.

According to the UN, Operation Murambatsvina left more than 700,000(8) people homeless across the country and a further 2 million indirectly affected through the loss of their livelihoods. Most of those affected lived in backyard shacks, peri-urban settlements and holding camps, and operated informal businesses from their homes or in the cities. It is important to note that the figures reported by the UN on those affected by Murambatsvina have been contested by the government. In the government’s rebuttal, the evictions are justified under the need to clear Zimbabwean cities of illegality and bring order and sanity to the urban areas, thus enabling local authorities to carry out their mandate of effectively ensuring sustained improvement in all citizens’ lives. The paradox of Murambatsvina was that it was justified under the guise of improving people’s lives. While Murambatsvina was unprecedented in scale, evictions were by no means uncommon. Boxes 1 and 2 tell stories of cyclical forced relocations endured by two communities in Harare over a 10-year period.

In 1992, just before a meeting of the Commonwealth heads of state in Harare, 1,500 families were forcibly removed from the informal settlements of Epworth and Mbare in Harare and relocated to Porta Farm, about 10 kilometres outside the city. Epworth’s close proximity to a major industrial area and reasonable distance from the main informal market of Mbare made it a very attractive place for new immigrants to the city as well as the urban poor. Mbare, centrally located at the heart of all city transportation routes, adjacent to the country’s main bus station and main informal market, and within walking distance of all major industrial areas, was the only such central area where poor people lived. As locations for Harare’s urban poor, Epworth and Mbare are ideal. Government justified the Epworth evictions on the grounds that it had issued a freeze on development there in order to upgrade this informal settlement. Despite the freeze new families continued to settle, as they could buy plots cheaply from unscrupulous landlords who had acquired the land at no cost from the Methodist church.

More than 1,500 families from the two localities were moved to Porta Farm, which was intended as a transit camp (hence the term “holding camp”). Once relocated, families were categorized into three classes: those who were gainfully employed in Harare (i.e. had a formal job) were further relocated to Dzivarasekwa Extension; those with “rural homes” were assisted to go back to their villages of origin; and others were resettled on farms in the Midlands and Manicaland regions. The last category comprised people who had social problems such as mental illness, or who did not fit into either of the other two categories. They were made charges of the government’s Department of Social Welfare and mostly stayed on at Porta Farm.

As the economic crisis began to take hold, families from the high density areas of Mufakose and Kambuzuma moved to Porta Farm, sometimes with the covert approval of their councillors, who were elected members of the ruling ZANU PF party. The table below shows a comparison of survey information by the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation for the years 2000 and 2003. The increase in household size between 2000 and 2003 could be attributed to the composition of the families that moved into Porta Farm after the vetting exercise. Before 2000, residents comprised mainly the “remainder” of the vetting exercise, and in some cases lone individuals; the economic crisis meant more typical families began to move into Porta Farm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes in Porta Farm between 2000 and 2003</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of families</td>
<td>1,069</td>
<td>1,364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>2,841</td>
<td>5,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people per water tap</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of toilets</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population in informal employment</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over the years, Porta Farm developed into a vibrant community, with a school, a clinic, several churches and even a police post. Community members were quickly integrated into the local economy, working on neighbouring farms or retailing fish from the two lakes adjoining the farm. As they would have it, life was good. Their children went to school, there was a clinic and a doctor visited once a week. The community organized and developed self-help groups as well as a development committee that interfaced with donors and government. Savings schemes, federated with the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation, developed in the community and by May 2005, there were 12 community savings schemes.

In 2003, a consortium of local business people bought a horticultural farm adjacent to Porta Farm and came up with a plan that designated Porta Farm as a farming village. The community saw this as an opportunity to discuss regularization of the “holding camp” and called a meeting to discuss the plan with the three authorities involved: Harare City Council, as legal owners of Porta Farm; Zvimba Rural District Council, as the planning authority; and the Ministry of Local Government and National Housing, as the parent ministry. Both the Ministry of Local Government and Zvimba Rural District Council were of the opinion that Porta Farm could be regularized.

It therefore came as a surprise to Porta Farm residents when rumours of an impending eviction started to circulate in late July 2004. A process of negotiation ensued with the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works and National Housing, which, however, failed to change the government’s position, and a small number of people were evicted in August 2004. Because the campaigns for the March
STRUGGLES FOR URBAN LAND IN ZIMBABWE

2005 elections had already started, the evictions were put on hold, only to be revisited as a phase of Operation Murambatsvina in May 2005. By that time, the 2,000 or so families that had settled at Porta Farm had lost their battle to stay on and were once again relocated, first to the Caledonia transit camp and subsequently to Hopley Farm. Only 200 families have been issued with allocation letters for plots at Hopley Farm under a government scheme. The rest remain landless and are rebuilding in yet another locality... for the fourth time in 15 years.

BOX 2
The politics of land; the case of Hatcliffe Extension

In 1990, the owner of Churu Farm, and founder of the original ZANU party, Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole, opened up his farm to the southeast of Harare to poor urban householders who were struggling to find affordable accommodation. A majority of those who took up residency at the farm were lodgers from the high density suburbs south of Harare, and more than 50 per cent of households were female headed. Women are often discriminated against when it comes to finding lodgings in the “formal” housing market. The local authority often required women to prove that they were married, or they had to produce birth certificates for their children in order to be placed on a housing waiting list. These requirements worked against those who, for one reason or another, could not produce these documents, for example because a father might not cooperate regarding getting a birth certificate.

Families paid Z$ 30 (about US$ 3.50 at the time) for plots measuring 150 square metres. They moulded earth bricks and built houses ranging in size from about 20 to 60 square metres. By the end of 1992, more than 4,000 families and 20,000 people had settled on the farm. Collectively, they had invested more than Z$ 2 million (US$ 200,000) in housing construction and had established a school with 800 pupils and 15 teachers.

Unknown to the Churu Farm residents, politics had been playing its game on the sidelines. Churu Farm’s owner, Ndabaningi Sithole, was the founder and first president of ZANU, the political party that subsequently became ZANU PF. Due to strategic differences (he opposed the armed struggle), he was ousted from ZANU and was succeeded by Robert Mugabe. Sithole formed a splinter political party, ZANU Ndonga, which was supported by members of the Ndau ethnic tribe from which he was descended. However, having a community of 4,000 families living at the benevolence of the leader of ZANU Ndonga was something the ruling ZANU PF party would not tolerate. Using the compulsory acquisition powers under the new Land Acquisition Act, the Minister of Lands acquired Churu Farm in April 1993 on the grounds that it was underutilized for farming purposes and that the presence of more than 20,000 people posed a serious health hazard since their pit latrines would contaminate groundwater, leading to the contamination of Lake Chivero, Harare’s main water supply. On 2 September 1993, the Ministry of Local Government and National Housing issued eviction notices to the residents, giving them until 30 October to vacate the farm. The Harare West Rural Council had earlier tried to issue a prohibition order on housing construction on the farm, claiming that this violated the regulations for a “commercial farming zone”. However, their argument could not be sustained.

Government proceeded with its plans and on 1 November 1993, a riot police unit of 100 gave residents 30 minutes to pack their belongings, demolish their homes and vacate the farm. Most people left and camped along Amalinda Road, adjacent to the farm. November is the start of the rainy season in Zimbabwe and people stayed in the open with very little shelter. Furniture and household items were destroyed. The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) assisted the families with tents and also helped institute a class suit on the illegality of the evictions. In December, the Government relocated 2,110 families to Hatcliffe Extension, leaving behind on Amalinda Road the families that had been named in the class suit.

At Hatcliffe Extension, each family was allocated a two-room wooden cabin on an 80-square metre plot. Six communal toilet blocks and five boreholes were built to cater for the community and, in time, a primary school and clinic were built. People found work in the neighbouring commercial farms and provided domestic services such as cleaning, gardening and security services for the adjoining high-income residential neighbourhoods. Rent for the cabins was Z$ 100 per month, paid to the Ministry of Local Government. In 1999, about 200 families who had kept up regular rental payments were allocated permanent plots adjacent to another holding camp in Dzivarasekwa.

New groups were relocated to the settlement in subsequent years, including 100 families who had been left at Amalinda Road, a further 300 families who had been evicted from the Waterfalls and Mbare areas of Harare in 1997, and a group of 150 former farm workers who had been left homeless.
In the ensuing years, organized groups began to negotiate for land and services as well as the regularization of the two holding camps. In 2002, federation leaders from the two communities were invited to serve on the Ministry of Local Government and National Housing’s Informal Settlements Committee, which among other things tried to find a lasting solution to the holding camps. Negotiations for regularization were not successful but resulted in the ministry deciding to permanently relocate all the families at Hatcliffe Extension and Dzivarasekwa Extension to a site adjacent to the Hatcliffe Extension holding camp. The ministry wanted a “once and for all” solution to Harare’s holding camp problem. The Parliament Portfolio Committee on Local Government visited the two holding camps and also received submissions from the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation, and the ministry prepared a layout plan of the area and tendered out works for infrastructure development.

In the run-up to the 2002 presidential elections, the Minister of Local Government made a public gesture by allocating plots to families in Hatcliffe Extension and Dzivarasekwa Extension. Knowing that political promises made during campaigns were rarely kept, the two communities decided to occupy the plots even though infrastructure was incomplete. They had lived in the city without sewers and piped water for more than a decade; a few more months would make little difference. However, the ministry was enraged and the minister claimed that he had been misunderstood and that allocation letters did not mean permission to move onto the plots. In September 2002, the 1,000 families that had moved were once again served with eviction notices and told that those who defied this order would forfeit their right to the plots. The federation undertook a hasty survey and found that nobody had actually constructed a permanent house. Most had just moved their log cabins from the holding camps and others had constructed “cottages” in the interim. The community was willing to work with the ministry to ensure that the services were completed. They proposed relocating to a school site within the development to ensure that the necessary roadworks would be carried out; but they were not prepared to go back to the holding camps, reckoning that they would lose their right to the plots if they left. The situation was symptomatic of the lack of trust between the community and the government. The ministry would not formally accept this compromise but did not proceed with the evictions, and more families that had been allocated plots moved into the growing settlement. The ministry began to prepare lease agreements and a majority of those allocated plots had signed these by December 2004. However, despite the lease agreements, the city of Harare continued to refuse to approve the house plans presented by the community. They claimed the development had to be completed and handed over to the city.

In May 2005, despite the fact that most people who had settled at the new site now had leases, the Hatcliffe Extension community was again faced with forced relocation as part of Operation Murambatsvina. Just before sunset on 26 May 2005, the police, with no prior warning, ordered the community to dismantle their makeshift homes and return to where they had come from. May is the beginning of winter in Zimbabwe and most people had nowhere to go. They dismantled their homes to salvage what they could and some thought that if they returned to the former holding camps, they would be spared. However, after a week the police came to the former holding camp and razed everything to the ground once again. Most people stayed in the open for more than two weeks. Those with relatives in the formal residential areas moved in with them; those prepared to go back to their rural homes were ferried to the bus terminus with their belongings. The remainder was relocated to another holding facility at Caledonia Farm. The farm had been occupied by “war veterans” in the 2000 land occupations and had been designated for urban resettlement. It seemed large enough to accommodate all the families that were being evicted across Harare and would enable the authorities to “contain” the problem in one location.

A class suit to challenge the legality of the eviction was instituted by a group of Hatcliffe Extension residents soon after the evictions of May 26. They sited the City of Harare and the Minister of Local Government as respondents in the case. Symptomatic of the impartiality of the courts the case was never placed on the urgent roll even though it had been presented as an urgent matter. After two months, and with very little obvious co-relationship to the case, the Hatcliffe Extension community was told they could go back to their plots at Hatcliffe Extension. On the 15th of August 2005, just under nine weeks since Murambatsvina, the Hatcliffe Extension community moved back to their plots, their fourth move in 11 years.
II. URBAN LAND: THE MISSING LINK

Despite the centrality of the land question in public discussions, and the often highly charged emotive direction these discussions have taken in the past two decades, what is evident is how peripheral urban land issues are to the whole land question discussion in Zimbabwe. Colonial urban history created segregated cities in Zimbabwe based on race, and post-independence policies or the lack thereof have maintained the status quo, further alienating the urban poor. What has been evident in the past two decades is the disproportionate allocation of land among the various competing uses. Table 1 shows the total land use by category in Harare. Residential land available for the urban poor constitutes roughly 2 per cent of the total land area of the city and 10.5 per cent if formal low-income areas are included. Informal commercial and industrial land from which the poor make a living constitutes only 0.25 per cent.

Land allocations for residential development are administered by each local authority through a system of waiting lists, as described above. The system sets out the parameters and eligibility criteria for an allocation, as well as prioritizing allocations on the basis of period of residence in a given local authority area and employment status. The system is viewed by most local authorities as a management tool and the most equitable way to allocate a scarce resource. However, it is overly bureaucratic and marginalizes the urban poor and new immigrants into the city especially, who often do not have the requisite documentation or information to enlist. Because the system uses historical data, it is ineffective at measuring the real housing need in any given local authority; since most people feel the system is inherently corrupt, few actually register. In more recent years, as local authorities have become cash strapped and the delivery rate of new housing and land has become minimal, the waiting list has become merely a symbolic gesture. However, households on the list are still expected to renew their applications annually and pay a fee in order to keep their priority for allocation active. Table 2 shows the status of waiting lists in four selected cities.

### TABLE 1
Land use in Harare

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land use</th>
<th>Area (m²)</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial formal</td>
<td>20,801,000</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial formal</td>
<td>23,085,000</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial informal</td>
<td>1,935,900</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential high-income formal</td>
<td>162,560,000</td>
<td>21.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential middle-income formal</td>
<td>91,620,000</td>
<td>12.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential low-income formal</td>
<td>64,800,000</td>
<td>8.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential very low income – urban poor</td>
<td>15,390,000</td>
<td>2.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional use</td>
<td>63,610,000</td>
<td>8.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open space and other (i.e. parks, golf courses)</td>
<td>317,126,100</td>
<td>41.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>760,928,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 indicates how ineffective the waiting list is as a measure of demand. In Harare, the number of people listed forms less than half the estimated demand for housing, while the rate at which existing applicants on the list renew their applications is only 0.4 per cent annually. What is also striking about the figures is that with the exception of Mutare, more than half of those on the current lists only enlisted after the May/June 2005 evictions.

### III. RESPONDING TO THE CRISIS – THE ZIMBABWE HOMELESS PEOPLE’S FEDERATION

It is within this context that the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation came into existence in 1998. The movement began in the two holding camps of Hatcliffe Extension and Dzivarasekwa Extension, where the first savings schemes were started in 1997. Working in alliance with the NGO Dialogue on Shelter, the federation quickly grew into a national network and, as of 2007, had presence in 27 local authority areas, bringing together more than 45,000 households, with 22,000 saving collectively to address their common development needs. Over the same period, these communities, despite the very adverse economic environment, saved more than US$ 185,000, secured land for 8,500 families, built 1,100 houses, installed piped water and sewerage on 1,200 plots and raised US$ 1,275,000 in equity through an urban poor fund.

The alliance of Dialogue on Shelter and the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation is a partnership between an autonomous network of community organizations (the federation) and an NGO, in which the two combine their relative comparative advantages as strengths for negotiation and articulating issues of urban poverty and landlessness. In some ways, Dialogue on Shelter acts as a technical support organization, but is always mindful to ensure that the voices of the urban poor and the identity of the federation are at the fore in all interactions with the formal world.

Mobilization to address urban poverty in Zimbabwe has always been limited to individual settlement level initiatives in the form of housing cooperatives or burial societies. Urban poverty and the informal housing sub-market have operated on the margins of “mainstream” urban society to the extent that until 1998, most local authorities would not officially

---

**TABLE 2**

Waiting list status in four cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing waiting list</th>
<th>Estimated actual demand</th>
<th>Percentage annual renewal rate</th>
<th>Number who enlisted post-Murumbatsvina</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harare 236,255</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>141,753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulawayo 87,214</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>23,735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutare 50,000</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kariba 1,164</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Information gathered from the respective cities’ Directorates of Housing. Report on Update on Activities, Dialogue on Shelter (June 2007).
acknowledge the existence of squatter settlements within their boundaries. This collective blind spot shaped the approaches that were acceptable in addressing urban poverty, and housing in particular. Self-help collective efforts were fashioned around “formalized housing cooperatives” that, while managing to mobilize a sub-class of the cities’ poor, still fell short of including the poorest. This was in some respects due to the regulatory processes housing cooperatives had to follow, which excluded very poor urban families. The federated format of the savings schemes under the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation provided an alternative model for mobilization, and the simple organizational form at community level appealed to women and the poorest.

The Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation has consistently challenged the use of waiting lists for land and housing allocations. Surveys carried out in 15 communities over an eight-year period show that the average number of very poor urban families that register on these waiting lists is less than 10 per cent in communities where no one has security of tenure and all are in need of a house. The reason is very simple: the waiting list system does not work. However, it is one thing to demonstrate that a process does not work and another to demonstrate what does work.

Over the past 10 years the federation has sought to demonstrate that an alternative process, which is equitable and cost effective, can work. This alternative has developed through partnerships with local authorities. By March 2007, the federation was working on 22 projects in 12 local authority areas. Eight of the local authorities have formal partnership arrangements with the federation.

The process, while specific to each land identification and negotiation, generally follows the same chronology:

- **Stage one – community enumerations.** This is a systematic process of information gathering by the community. Information gathering has been used by Shack/Slum Dwellers International affiliates in Asia and Africa as an effective tool to rally and gather together communities and help them to articulate their needs better. In Zimbabwe, there is often mystification around information on urban poor communities. Information used for planning purposes by local authorities is often secondary or sample based, while that collected by the federation is generally more reliable. Community enumeration exercises seek to ensure that every household is counted and enumerated. The federation also uses the process of gathering information to mobilize communities to look at their development options collectively.

  The following information was drawn from the enumerations in Dzivarasekwa Extension and Hatcliffe Extension in January 2000.

Dzivarasekwa Extension:

- there were 844 families and 4,700 people;
- on average, 1.42 families shared a cabin;
- the average period of residency was 7 years 4 months;
- on average, six people lived in each room;
- on average, there were 362 people per toilet; there were 13 working toilets;
- on average, there were 33.76 families per water tap; there were 25 working taps;
20 per cent of families were on the housing waiting list and, on average, had been waiting for 7.32 years; and

as of January 2000 and 18 months since its formation, the savings scheme had saved US$ 175,000 and given out US$ 75,000 in loans to members for emergencies and income generation.

Hatcliffe Extension:

- there were an estimated 2,219 families and 13,015 people;
- the average period of residency was six years;
- on average, six people lived in each room;
- there were eight working toilets; on average, 1,626 people used each toilet;
- there were three working boreholes; on average, 739 families used each borehole;
- 23.57 per cent of families were on the housing waiting list and, on average, had been waiting for 4.75 years;
- households were prepared to pay up to 275 per cent more for better accommodation; and
- as of January 2000 and 18 months since its formation, the savings scheme had saved US$ 400,000 and given out US$ 140,000 in loans to members for emergencies and income generation.

**Stage two – community land audits.** When communities approach the local authority with a request for land based on the results of their surveys, they often are told that no land is available. A recent audit in Harare showed that poor families, who constitute more than 60 per cent of the population of Harare, only had access to 2 per cent of Harare’s land. By carrying out land audits and mapping out possible sites for allocation, the federation can present the local authority with alternatives for consideration. The audits involve identifying the land, researching what use it is zoned for and who owns it. Where there are indications of a possible allocation, the community may go even further and propose a development strategy looking at possible plots sizes, layout plans and house plans.

**Stage three – land negotiations.** This stage is often ongoing, depending on the history of savings scheme development in the area. Often, when the first savings schemes start, the local authority is informed and this is often when the first indications of a possible request for land emerge. Negotiations are often long and protracted. It requires first and foremost that communities and the local authority trust each other in terms of building a relationship. Often, this trust has been built with officers in local authorities who see the real potential of a people-centred development process.

A second but important element in the process is often linked to the testing of capacity. Some local authorities prefer to move cautiously and have adopted a “testing” methodology, whereby they allocate land for a pilot phase on the basis of which a substantial relationship can develop. Thus land allocations have ranged from one for 10 plots, to the biggest development, at Mutare, with more than 1,500 plots. Critical to this process of land negotiations are exchanges between local authorities. Often, seeing is believing and when local authorities can see what has been achieved, often they will be more willing to make land available. Local federation groups will negotiate with local authorities as land is often acquired at nominal cost. Despite being
severely insolvent, most local authorities have access to land and, in recent years, government has acquired more than 142 peri-urban farms that local authorities can develop for allocation mainly to low-income housing.

Housing delivery processes in Zimbabwean towns have acknowledged and recognized the crucial role of the beneficiaries for some time now. However, this role has often been limited and operationalized within the confines of regulations and by-laws whose usefulness has long been questioned. It has often been left to “change agents” within the local authority system to create this space and enable land negotiations to move to actual allocations, in the course of which the federation is tested, and once tested able to prove it is capable. As local authorities have become less able financially, and as traditional land and housing delivery mechanisms have failed to produce housing products that are appropriately priced and accessible to the urban poor, the federation’s methodology and capacity have increasingly received a more sympathetic hearing than at the beginning of the federation’s mobilization process 10 years ago.

IV. THREE PRECEDENT-SETTING CASE STUDIES

The three stories that follow are testimony to how far the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation has come, and what remaining challenges there are given Zimbabwe’s current political and economic position.

a. Crowborough North residential development – Harare

Land in Crowborough was allocated to the Harare chapter of the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation on World Habitat Day in 2002. For more than four years, the Harare federation had tried unsuccessfully to negotiate for land with the municipality. In August 2002, they requested the chair of the commission running the city to accompany them on an exchange visit to South Africa to see how similar communities of the urban poor were working with their local authorities. They visited communities in the East Rand and Johannesburg affiliated to the South African Homeless People’s Federation. Upon their return, they asked the city authorities to allocate them land that they could use as a pilot to demonstrate the federation’s capacity, and 150 plots were allocated in October 2002 to mark World Habitat Day.

The municipality offered the land at a nominal cost of Z$ 15 per square metre. However, a private developer had installed the infrastructure, which took the cost of the land to Z$ 1,310 per square metre. Despite this, the federation decided to buy the land and paid Z$ 58 million in February 2003. However, affordability would become an issue for most of the beneficiary families, who had been selected on the basis of need. A formal request was therefore made to the municipality to allow semi-detached units to be developed on plots that measured 300 square metres. This meant that 233 families would benefit from land originally meant for 150 families. Each of the “sharing” families would have sectional title rights to the land and would sign an agreement of sale with the municipality in their own right. The agreement of sale spelt out terms such as the price...
and the responsibilities of individual families regarding the development of the plots, but also contained an addendum specifying the collective responsibility of the federation and the statutory obligations of the local authority relating to specific plots.

Two house plans were developed by the community and approved by the municipality as prototypes for the development. The federation’s loan fund (Gungano Urban Poor Fund) provided loans for the purchase of the land and housing construction. Over the past four years, the Crowborough community has constructed 166 starter housing units and negotiated an innovative land titling mechanism, with each family having sectional title to a piece of land, thereby reducing the plot development costs per family and making it possible to accommodate poorer families in a more conventional development.

**b. Mbare wholesale market community sanitation unit**

In August 2002, Dialogue on Shelter staff and Harare federation leaders held a one-day workshop with department heads within the city of Harare. Since its inception, the federation had struggled to get the city to understand its housing development process. In addition, the lack of capacity of Harare sewage treatment works to take in more residential development had been offered as an excuse to limit residential development in the southern part of the city. Earlier in 2002, the federation and Dialogue on Shelter had gone to India, accompanied by the then chair of the commission of Harare and a sewerage engineer, to visit the National Slum Dwellers Federation and their community sanitation programmes in Mumbai. In Zimbabwe, shared or communal toilets conjure up images of filth and ill-maintained facilities. It was therefore quite a novel experience for the city officials to see communal toilets that were clean and well maintained. The officials were keen to see if this could work in Harare. The highest component of land costs in most Zimbabwean cities relates to individual water and sewerage reticulation. Household plumbing represents at least 20 per cent of the total development cost of any housing estate. The city officials wanted to see if the communal facilities could work and whether it would be feasible to allow families to move onto their land with basic but adequate sewerage reticulation and then at a later stage begin to develop individualized facilities. The housing estate would be planned in such a way that household level provision would always be possible. Thus, as families’ economic circumstances changed they could improve their level of development.

At the August 2002 meeting, a commitment was made to develop sanitation units in Mbare. A survey carried out by the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation in 1999, and updated in August 2003, found up to 40 families sharing a single toilet in the hostels of Mbare. Mbare, built for 30 000 people, had an official population of 250,000. The sewer system was overloaded and pipe bursts were common. The federation was keen to demonstrate that communal facilities, if community managed, could work.

The community toilet unit was completed in December 2004 and cost Z$ 150 million, double what was anticipated. Escalating building costs and a hyperinflationary environment made it very difficult to control prices. Delays with approvals also meant that costs escalated while no construction was taking place.
The toilet unit is being managed as a pay toilet and the city has built another unit in the area. More toilet sites have been proposed although escalating prices have made them costly. Local authorities have been willing to accept the concept of alternatives, for instance Mutare has accepted “sharing” facilities as an alternative to up-front individual toilets.

The financial model developed for the toilet unit would have worked better in a more stable environment. Over the first year of operation, the proceeds from the unit covered operations and left a surplus that was invested in other federation profit-making ventures. However, as inflation rates hit the four figure mark this became increasingly difficult. The committee running the toilet unit resolved to maintain charges at a level affordable to most users while at the same time ensuring that they covered the operational costs.

c. Mutare–Dangamvura development

Mutare is a medium-sized city with an estimated population of just under 200,000. Nearly 60 per cent live in the poor neighbourhoods of Chikanga and Sakubva, and most poor urban families live with no security in backyard shacks popularly known as “maboards” (they are made of wooden boards). A survey carried out by the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation in 2005 found that a total of 18,809 families lived in backyard structures.

The Mutare chapter of the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation is made up of more than 5,000 families mobilized into 12 housing savings schemes. In 2002, after carrying out their first community survey, the community approached the city to negotiate for secure land where they could build their own homes. Findings from the survey indicated how much they were paying to unscrupulous landlords for sub-standard housing, and these resources could be channelled towards more permanent and secure housing for the poor themselves. Collectively, the 18,809 families living in the backyards were paying more than Z$ 290 million a year for rentals (US$ 290,000 at the time). This would be enough to construct at least 2,900 basic housing units.

These negotiations culminated in the allocation to the federation of 20 hectares of land in Dangamvura, where most of the community was living. The land was sold at a nominal cost of Z$ 20 per square metre. The federation opted for communal titling, with all the land owned collectively by the federation, and a layout plan was developed after a series of community planning exercises.

The site, with 1,505 plots measuring 200 square metres or more, is being developed in three phases, and the water and sewer installations for the first phase of 323 plots has been completed. The federation also managed to negotiate with the city to accept incremental development, also a concession to provide shared toilets as well as a deferment of road construction and an agreement that families could move onto site as soon as some water was connected. To date, more than 150 families have moved to the site and the first 50 housing units are under construction.

The land was allocated in 2002, but it took three years for a residential layout plan to be approved by the city as well as the Department of Physical Planning within the Ministry of Local Government. Delays in
plan approvals are a recurring theme in all major developments. To hedge against inflation, most materials for housing have already been purchased and the community has made its own bricks, doors and window frames in preparation. The Mutare chapter of the federation is providing all the labour for the water and sewer project, with project management undertaken by a firm of consulting engineers. There is no formal contractor and only specialist aspects of work such as rock blasting are being contracted out. Funding for the project has been provided through the Gungano Urban Poor Fund.

The Mutare project is one of the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation’s flagships. It is the largest development and has presented a lot of learning opportunities for the federation at large and for other stakeholders, informing government and local authorities about the capacity of the poor to develop their own housing, with an enabling environment and start-up resources. The communal titling of the land is also a test of a new mechanism to ensure security for individual families while protecting a communal asset. The development has resulted in a wide range of technical skills being imparted to the community, from the development of the layout to the actual installation of infrastructure.

V. FINANCING: THE ROLE OF THE GUNGANO URBAN POOR FUND

Urban poor funds are increasingly being used by affiliates within the Shack/Slum Dwellers International network as tools to secure tenure and housing. The Gungano Urban Poor Fund, established in 1999, is a dedicated loan fund for the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation. It was conceptualized as a fund that would be capitalized by savings of the urban poor, government contributions and donor funding. Each member of the federation would contribute Z$ 5 per month (the price of a 300 millilitre bottle of cola at the time) for an initial five years. The NGOs Misereor and Homeless International pledged about UK£ 70,000 each and government was requested to match this. The fund would operate on a revolving basis, offering loans to communities at 15 per cent per annum for periods not exceeding 15 years and for amounts not exceeding Z$ 30,000. The fund is administered on behalf of the federation by the NGO Dialogue on Shelter. At the conception of the fund in 1999, the Zimbabwe Homeless People’ Federation made a formal request to government to match the capital raised to bring it up to US$ 200,000.

From its inception, the fund aimed to harness the urban poor’s own resources as well as augment this with government resources for the development needs of the urban poor themselves. There was always recognition that formal sector lending in its current form did not meet the requirements and needs of the urban poor, who more often than not had no collateral with which to secure loans and who required small incremental loans for their development needs as opposed to wholesale housing mortgages.

The loan fund aims to offer accessible loan terms and conditions. Loans are given to groups with group solidarity as guarantees, in the absence of monetary collateral. To qualify for a loan, a group has to have a record of its capacity to save. The amount saved is less important than how they save; emphasis is placed on regularity over quantity. The decision to make a loan is made at the community level. Over the past eight years, since
the first loans were made, the fund has undergone considerable changes in terms of strategies and terms. The first loans were fixed at Z$ 30,000 per family and were for a maximum repayment period of 15 years at 15 per cent per annum. The federation has sought to cushion the fund from inflation by increasing the interest rates as well as shortening the loan repayment period. In 2003, they agreed that there would be six-monthly reviews of interest rates and repayment periods. Table 3 shows changes in the terms of the loans over the eight years preceding 2007.

As the economic situation worsened, the federation took a decision in 2005 to index all loans for building materials under a strategy they code-named “Imba to Imba”(9). Each group constructing housing would receive an initial loan for a given number of families and would ensure that repayments were immediately used to purchase further materials that would be used in a subsequent phase. The jury is still out, but indications are that some groups have managed to revolve the materials, albeit very slowly. In any case, the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation’s pragmatic position on loan repayments in the current economic environment has been to accept that a majority of their membership will struggle to make repayments. However, the process of instilling a culture of loan repayment as well as responsibility for others who have not yet benefited outweighs the financial losses.

### VI. PRAGMATISM IN CONFLICT – ENGAGING CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

In the last 10 years, since 1999, the alliance of Dialogue on Shelter and the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation has managed to build working relationships with more than 15 local authorities in the 27 local authority areas where the federation has an active presence. This was easy in some respects, as the measure of judgement has always been capacity. As long as the federation could demonstrate the capacity to deliver on promises,
then the local authority was happy. The economic crisis in Zimbabwe has moved most local authorities out of their comfort zone to look more seriously at alternatives being presented by the urban poor. While acknowledging the limitations placed on them by existing statutes and procedural precedents, local authorities are more willing to experiment. Thus the federation’s proposals have often been met with sympathetic ears.

In reviewing policy and strategy papers on the housing delivery system in Zimbabwe, one is struck by the huge contradiction between the rhetoric in policy pronouncements and actual practice. Zimbabwe’s latest urban housing policy is full of good intentions and reads like most conventional housing policy documents fashioned on UN–Habitat’s enabling ethos. In other words, it places great emphasis on government creating an enabling environment for stakeholder involvement in the housing delivery process. However, despite the policy principles of ensuring secure tenure, none of these intentions have been put into practice. On the contrary, judging by the scale of Murambatsvina alone, the chronology of forced relocations in Zimbabwean cities over the past 20 years, and the extremely bureaucratic procedures of planning and land allocation practice, the verdict is quite damning.

Political commitment to addressing the housing crisis has also been very inconsistent. There were huge investments in housing in the euphoric years soon after independence but these had declined to insignificant levels by the early 1990s. In 1982, the housing investment budget was more than 22 per cent of the Public Sector Investment Programme; by 2003, the allocation for the whole Ministry of Local Government was insufficient to complete the infrastructure of a 3,000-plot residential development at Hatcliffe Extension on the outskirts of Harare.

More recently, the growing alienation between government and NGOs has made it increasingly difficult to identify or reach a meeting point. Often, this rift has been in terms of policy implementation or lack thereof; however, the alliance of Dialogue on Shelter and the Zimbabwe federation made a conscious decision to continue engaging government, even in instances where government policy and the alliance’s position were at odds. The logic has always been that without dialogue it is difficult to influence.

To a large extent, the May/June 2005 Murambatsvina evictions were a watershed for the Zimbabwe federation. The evictions and their scale shocked the world into condemnation of the Zimbabwe government, as Murambatsvina was a clear indication of how far it had degenerated. While the federation and Dialogue on Shelter had called on the government to stop the evictions, they knew from experience that condemnation alone would not lead to secure tenure for the affected families. They sought a strategy to emerge from the impasse and demonstrate that a lasting solution could only come from constructive engagement. In the period immediately following the evictions it was difficult to find this opening, as government became very defensive with the onslaught of criticism. Efforts to engage government at central level around this issue had fallen short, with no real tangible commitment. The alliance of the federation and Dialogue on Shelter took a measured approach to continuing with these efforts.

In August 2005, in coalition with the Housing Cooperative movement and Housing People of Zimbabwe, another NGO, a post-eviction strategy was presented to government. The retrogressive nature of the
evictions was explicitly outlined, but the strategy went further and presented a way forward. At the time, the Ministry of Local Government had called on all landless and homeless people to register with their respective local authorities for land allocations. The coalition embarked on a countrywide land identification exercise and presented four pilot projects in the areas most affected by the evictions. The communities affiliated with the Housing Cooperative and the federation already had the capacity to develop housing projects to scale and could mobilize resources. They requested that the land be made available and called on government to work with them by creating an environment conducive to housing development. This would mean halting the evictions.

This process moved very slowly, and it was only in June 2006 that the Minister of Local Government accepted a proposal for formal partnership with the federation, Dialogue on Shelter and Shack/Slum Dwellers International. The Ministry of Local Government agreed to make land available to an initial 5,000 families and has undertaken to work with the federation in designing and executing pro-poor development strategies. This is very significant in a country where government has little trust in civil society capacity and intentions.

Progress on the actual implementation of the agreed activities under the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been very slow, with the actual agreement only being signed in June 2007. There has also been understandable apprehension on the part of the federation and Dialogue on Shelter as to the nature of this partnership, especially as the human rights violations by the ZANU PF government continued. What was especially important for the alliance was that the MOU should result in real and tangible benefits for the urban poor and that the process should help to harness the political will that is required to come up with pro-poor urban policies at both central, but more importantly at local, authority level. The first stage was to expose the minister and senior government officials to the work that the federation has so far done, to enable them to appreciate the capacity of the federation. By the end of 2007, the Minister of Local Government and his deputy had been to four of the federation’s developments in four towns. The federation and Dialogue on Shelter have regular briefing meetings with ministerial officials, and land for more than 600 families has been secured in three local authority areas. The federation has carried out a countrywide survey to identify land and to start land negotiations with respective local authorities.

The political landscape in Zimbabwe has changed somewhat since the beginning of 2009. With the establishment of the inclusive government, new government structures have come into existence. This has meant that the alliance of Dialogue on Shelter and the federation has had to establish new relationships. What has been beneficial from this MOU process is the institutionalization of the relationship established with the ministry that preceded the new Ministry of Housing and Social Amenities. This has meant that the agreed activities of the MOU signed in 2007 could be transferred to this new ministry and the process could continue.

Figure 1 shows the anticipated relationship flows with all parties that are involved in this process. The Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) community will be part of the MOU process to ensure wider exposure of the local partners to the MOU through exchanges. This will be especially important given the continued isolation of Zimbabwe. The ongoing partnerships of other SDI affiliates will be very important. A key part of the
activities under this MOU include sustained exchanges with Namibia. In June 2007, the Minister of Local Government in Namibia, the late Minister Pandeni, visited Zimbabwe, while the new Minister of Housing and Social Amenities is also expected to visit Namibia on a return exchange.

To date, the following has been achieved through the process of partnership with government:

- Agreement by the ministry to enter into an MOU with the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation and Shack/Slum Dwellers International that will see the allocation of an initial 5,000 plots across the country to the federation. The MOU commits government to working with the federation to find pro-poor solutions to the housing challenge in Zimbabwe and to use this process to influence policies that hinder the development of housing by the urban poor. This includes an implicit agreement to include incremental development as a policy strategy for providing housing.
- Building of a better understanding of how the federation and its partner Dialogue on Shelter work. This has resulted in the minister visiting four of the federation’s lead projects in Harare, Kariba, Mutare and Victoria Falls.
- A government commitment to security of tenure for all people affected by Operation Murambatsvina and subsequent allocation of

**FIGURE 1**

Anticipated relationship flows with all parties

SOURCE: Based on the articles and anticipated relationship flows contained in the Memorandum of Understanding between the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation, Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) and the Ministry of Local Government Urban Development and National Housing, June 2007.
land under Operation Garikai, the government’s housing programme after Operation Mirambatsvina. The local government minister, in his 2005 World Habitat Day speech, reiterated this position. On its part, the federation has carried out surveys to ensure that all those who were allocated land or re-allocated land under the government’s Garikai programme have their lease agreements in place and are making preparations to start housing construction.

- Actual land allocations in four cities. The ministry has agreed to use its influence with local authorities regarding land allocations, as well as help the federation navigate the complex politics of land allocations. In 2005, a new tier of local government in the form of metropolitan governors was introduced in the cities of Bulawayo and Harare. These metropolitan governors have no real statutory powers and are largely viewed as political appointees by the then ruling ZANU PF government. This has made the land allocation process in the two cities more complex, as while the city can generally allocate land under the Urban Council Act, the metropolitan governors’ offices have often forced their own allocation lists onto the cities. This complexity is further exacerbated by the fact that since 2000, city governments in both cities have consistently opposed the ZANU PF government.

- A proposal to carry out countrywide housing needs assessment surveys with the ministry and UN–Habitat. The process has started with a settlement-profiling exercise of Harare’s largest informal settlement, Epworth. A more detailed enumeration survey is scheduled for July 2009.

- Since the MOU was first discussed, the ministry has formally accepted the concept of incremental housing and infrastructure development proposed by the federation.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

Zimbabwe’s urban poor continue to live in extremely difficult circumstances. An environment fraught with uncertainties has existed for the urban poor in Zimbabwe over the past seven years in the context of a sustained economic decline. They face uncertainties in their individual and collective lives as the state of the economy declines, but also with the government’s incapacity to make any meaningful financial contribution to their development needs. The social and political environment has been characterized by mistrust and a lack of confidence. These aspects are ever present. However, by adopting a certain measure of pragmatism, the federation and Dialogue on Shelter acknowledge that building trust and confidence cannot exist in a vacuum. They continue to present government with an alternative and practical way of dealing with the land and housing situation. They recognize that a measure of tension in their interaction with central government is necessary, and in some respects self-preserving, and realize that these relationships are very fragile and have to be managed carefully. However, they also recognize that the urban poor have to demand a different set of relationships with the state, whatever form or shape these might take. Within the context of this new set of relationships, paternalistic policies with very little real consultation are being replaced by an agenda developed and determined by the poor
themselves. The progress and gains thus far are minimal, and are limited to a large extent to the tangible benefits in terms of land accessed and housing developed. However the long-term benefits of considered and consistent dialogue are more difficult to measure. The confidence to participate as citizens and challenge government to join them in their development efforts has been the biggest achievement of this process thus far. While the immediate scenario is bleak, the prognosis for Zimbabwe’s future is better. The work of Dialogue on Shelter and the federation is laying the groundwork for scaled up, engaged and real change for Zimbabwe’s urban poor.

Through intense negotiations with central government, the federation and Dialogue on Shelter have learned to manage this set of relationships, build a collective coherent voice across its membership, build and manage alliances with other organizations working towards the same goals and constructively engage with government on a set of very tangible outcomes, as opposed to abstract demands for rights. The non-confrontational relationship with the state has enabled them to interact more equally in partnerships with the second tier of government at local authority level, where the politics is less contested. The federation recognizes that the situation in Zimbabwe is in a state of flux, and when the dust settles these alliances might have to be renegotiated. This renegotiation, however, will be carried out from a platform that is informed by current experiences.

REFERENCES

The Herald, 6 April 2007.