Harare Slum Upgrading Profiles

Compiled by
Dialogue on Shelter and Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation
In Partnership with City of Harare
Hopley

This settlement was established in the year 2005 by the government following the countrywide evictions dubbed Operation Murambatsvina. The residents at Hopley are evictees which were drawn from different areas which include Hatcliffe Extension, Porta Farm and Mbare. Hopley consists of 5 zones which represent the different areas of origin for the residents that live in the settlement. Zones one up to four were allocated to residents that were relocated from Caledonia holding camp. The latter, was a transit camp established to temporarily accommodate families that had been evicted from areas like Porta Farm and Hatcliffe Extension. On the other hand, zone five was allocated to families from Tsiga in Mbare. The last section which is zone six is inhabited by families that were allocated plots by the City of Harare.

Housing

Figure 1: Plastic Shacks are the major housing structures in Zone 6

The majority of housing in Hopley constitutes temporary to semi-permanent shacks that range from plastic shacks to unplanned structures built with ‘green’ bricks. A few houses have been built in Zone One using approved plans and a large part of these structures were constructed by the then Ministry of Local Government and Urban Development during the abortive reconstruction exercise code-named ‘Operation Garikai’ by the government. Some of the polythene one-roomed shacks were provided under the auspices of an emergency response programme to the victims of Murambatsvina that was rolled out by IOM.

Land Tenure

A majority of the residents in Hopley have lease agreements that were signed with the then Ministry of Local Government and Urban Development. In terms of the lease agreements, the lessees are suppose to pay an annual fee amounting to US$50,00. According to the residents, there is a substantial number of families
whose tenure is yet to be resolved as they still finalise the issue of signing their leases. Such cases represent a majority of either the widows or orphans who due to the absence of the necessary legal paperwork are still struggling with tenure. However, families in Zone Six is a different case where the allottees were formally allocated the land by City of Harare.

**Infrastructure and social Services**

Infrastructural facilities in Hopley are a nightmare and this particularly applies to water and sanitation services. As a result of this scenario, various development organisations like UNICEF have come in to provide water services albeit on a communal basis (boreholes and stand-pipes). In addition to these facilities, most of the residents also have wells since tap water supplies are often erratic and the boreholes consistently dry up during August to October. Other development agencies have also supported the Hopley community with the construction of eco-san toilets and more than half the residents have these units on their plots.

*Figure 2: an ecosan toilet constructed by UNICEF*

There are two community-run primary schools and a secondary school in Hopley. The idea of community schools was initiated by parents following serious discrimination against children from Hopley when they attending schools in the adjacent formal suburbs. The long distances that children have to travel to and from school also compounded the matter. There is a clinic that operates in Hopley from the old farm house. Corner-shops are dotted around the settlement and they reduce the burden of travelling outside the settlement in search of groceries.

**Economic Activities**

A majority of the residents in Hopley operate informal business activities such as vegetable vending, corner-shops, fire-wood vending whilst a significant number work as part-time general hands in adjacent suburbs like Waterfalls. Sand extraction is
also widespread even though it is illegal and the sand is sold to suburbs in Harare where construction is taking place.

**Relief and Development Activities**

In 2005, the central government under Operation ‘Garikai’ was involved in the construction of two-roomed housing units but it soon abandoned the project due to inadequate financial resources. UNICEF, on the other hand has been involved in the installation of water and sanitation units. In a move that sought to rescue the emergency housing situation after Operation Murambatsvina, IOM came in to provide temporary polythene shacks. Since 2005, Christian Care has been involved in the provision of food handouts and the programme was only stopped in 2010.

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**Cassa Banana**

Cassa Banana settlement is located about 20km from Harare along Bulawayo Road near where Porta Farm was situated. Cassa Banana was established in 1991 following the evictions in Mbare necessitated by the Queen’s visit for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. However, prior to its occupation by the current residents, the site used to accommodate City of Harare employees who were working at the Morton Jeffrey Water Works which is a kilometre away. Cassa Banana is divided into two sections namely ‘Single Rooms’ and ‘Two Rooms’.
**Housing**

The existing housing stock in Cassa Banana consists of wooden cabins that were built in the 1980s by the City of Harare. The housing facilities in Cassa can be divided into ‘Single Rooms’ and ‘Two Rooms’. The former were originally meant for bachelors who were working at the Water Works whilst the latter were for married employees.

![Figure 3: single roomed wooden cabins](image)

The housing units comprise four blocks with 16 single rooms which house 64 households and 19 blocks of two-rooms accommodating 114 families. Most of these housing units are in a bad state due to aging and the residents reported that one of the units was gutted by fire in 1998. In order to increase habitable space, some residents at Cassa Banana had built backyard extensions which were eventually demolished during ‘Operation Murambatsvina’ in 2005. The residents pay monthly charges amounting to $17.00 to City of Harare which covers rentals, water and sewer rates.

**Land Tenure**

The land on which Cassa Banana residents are residing is owned by the City of Harare. Although the City of Harare ‘recognises’ the existence of the settlement the tenure status of the residents remains informal. Therefore, the residents can be evicted anytime even though they have stayed in Cassa for the past 18 years. The only aspect that has promoted some semblance of security to the residents is the fact that they pay rates monthly for their stay in the settlement. However, notwithstanding these monthly rates, there is still deep-seated fear of what the future holds regarding the possibility of evictions. It is against this backdrop that some families (76) have joined the Federation as a way of raising prospects for secure accommodation.
Infrastructure and social Services

The residents in Cassa Banana use communal infrastructure facilities. A total population of 731 people was recently surveyed by the Federation and they use two blocks of toilets with 12 seats each – one block is for women and the other one is for men. There are three bathroom facilities for the entire settlement – one for men and two reserved for women. There are 10 communal stand pipes and these supply water for the settlement. Residents indicated that they fetch water from nearby farms in the event of water cuts. There are no tarred roads and residents use dust roads to navigate within the settlement.

Economic Activities

A majority (85%) of the Cassa Banana residents are in the informal sector and of these 23% are into fish vending business. A significant number of the families in Cassa Banana work as contract employees in the surrounding farms.

Mbare Hostels

Mbare suburb which is located in the southern side of the Harare CBD is one of the first high-density suburbs established in 1907. Mbare hostels are housed in this location. These were constructed by the then Salisbury town council in the 1940s using colonial urban housing policies which were crafted to restrict in migration of the populace especially women. The hostels were designed as single quarters for male

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1 Rakodi Carole. 1995. *Harare: Inheriting a settler-colonial city, change or continuity?*
employees who work in town and nearby industries. The advent of independency saw the lifting of the colonial migration laws and inadvertently the influx of population to these hostels. Gross overcrowing took place, and the urban slum we now have was created. It’s evident now that existing facilities such as sewer, water and housing are bending under the excessive pressure exerted on them by the bulging population. The residents live in unacceptable, filthy and life-threatening conditions. Most of these hostels have dysfunctional toilets and the whole infrastructure has collapsed posing a serious health risk for the residents especially children and the disabled.

**Housing**

Mbare hostels are 131 blocks of single roomed flats housing an approximated 8000 families. The flats have an average height of 2 to 4 floors. An average family of eight members shares a single room. To give some semblance of privacy the families informally partitioned the rooms with cardboard boxes, sofas, cloth and any other imaginable materials. They share communal toilets and bathrooms that are located at one end of every floor of these hostels. Two roomed flats of the 10 Matererini blocks were allocated to married couples by the city council in 1979. These have an individual toilet and bathroom. However, the state of breakdown in infrastructure and overcrowding in all of these dwellings has reached alarming rates. The traditional family structure has simply broken down and social ill such as prostitution is rife. The scale of squalor, poverty, overcrowding and dilapidation in the Harare City council’s Mbare hostels is frightening. The condition in which the families live not only presents a fire hazard, but it is also a health time bomb, whose scale of devastation could eclipse the loss to the 2009 cholera epidemic.

**Land Tenure**

Mbare hostel residents pay monthly rentals to Harare City Council. Their tenure status is not secure as the quarters have been ruled unfit for human habitation and family accommodation, therefore temporary. They pay an average of US$70 a month for the one-roomed Mbare, Matapi, shawasha, and Nenyere hostels which is way beyond the reach of the majority of residents in this impoverished community.

**Infrastructure and social Services**

Water and sanitation is a huge challenge in Mbare hostels. The residents use communal toilets and taps which are not sufficient in terms of number and capacity.
At present a single block are making use of 2 toilets and 2 taps as the rest has broken down. This is further exacerbated by the fact that the infrastructure is very old as evidenced by constant sewer burst, water leaks and free flowing raw sewerage in the area. The dirt and poor sanitary conditions in the communal toilets, kitchens and outside the flats is suffocating. Green flies swamped heaps of uncollected garbage and raw sewerage posing a threat of communicable diseases. During water shortages an average of 10 blocks share a single borehole. Mbare has six government primary schools and three secondary schools. Considering the huge numbers of people living in these flats the objectives of town planning which include the creation of convenience, safe and health environments will never be met.

**Economy**

Mbare has the largest farm produce market [Mbare Musika](#) in Zimbabwe, a Curio Market, a flea market and a central bus station (Mbare Musika bus terminus) which is a Hub linking buses to all different destinations in countrywide and neighbouring countries. These form the livelihood base for the hostel residents. Trade and transport are the pillars of economy in Mbare. They engage in street trading, vending, carpentry, sculpturing, cross borderer trading, touting and motor mechanics. These trades are largely informal. Despite their hard work to earn a living through informal trading, families in the Mbare Hostels say poverty is a permanent feature here due to neglect by council.

**Conclusion**

There was always the intention to move the families in the hostels into new decent housing and then "do something" about the hostels. There have been many ideas about what to do with the hostels, from bulldozing them to converting them to proper flats. The problem for 30 years has been two-fold: what to do with the families already living in them and then where to find the money for conversions. Every year that passes sees the hostels become tattier and an even greater health hazard.

**Ward zero: Amalinda**

The infamous Operation Murambatsvina of 2005 gave birth to this settlement. The Operation was launched by the central government in conjunction with local authorities to remove what they perceived as ‘filthy’ in cities. Most residents were evicted from Churu farm at the height of the Operation. The settlement houses about 125 families under electricity power lines. To the settlers, the servitude provided them with an opportune land for settlement. The settlement is in-between planned settlements bringing issues of stigmatization. The settlement resembles no form of planning and the future of the settlers hangs in balance. The area is composed of commercial sex workers who ply their trade at Glen View 1 shopping centre and a few married people.
**Housing**

The houses are made of plastic and metal shacks. Most of the houses are one roomed which ironically shelters the whole family. The area is limited for any form of expansion hence overcrowding is an issue. Moral and cultural ethics have been subdued as parents and children share a single room. This has possibly led to moral decadence and the possibility of children wanting to ‘mature’ early in terms of having their own families. In addition, secrecy has been compromised leading to disrespecting each other.

**Land Tenure**

There is no defined land administration and management system. The area is unplanned and informal hence anyone can settle anywhere. There are no land rights for the settlers. This therefore raises questions concerning the future of the inhabitants. The area is a ZESA servitude raising issues of safety for occupiers. Thus in terms of urban planning the area is designated for services (servitude) and not for housing.

**Infrastructure and social services**

The water and sanitation system is a healthy hazard. There is no sewer and reticulated water system. The nearby bush is used as a ‘relieving centre’ by the community. They draw water from boreholes in neighbouring suburbs (Glen View 1). Firewood is the main source of energy in the community. There is no school designated in the area, hence they are serviced by Churu farm 2km away from the neighbourhood. The area is accessed by footpaths and there are no roads servicing the settlement. Transporting furniture to the settlement is a heavy challenge since inhabitants have to carry heavy goods by hand due to inaccessibility of the areas by vehicular transport.

**Economic activities**

Prostitution, part time jobs and vending are the major livelihoods means in Ward Zero-Amalinda. However, prostitution is being practiced in the wake of HIV/AIDS which is rampant in most informal settlements. The settlement is not recognized by the City of Harare. This is possible explained by the absence of development agencies in the area. Development agencies usually use local authorities as the entry point. Without the area being acknowledged by the city authorities, chances are very limited for the area to be exposed to interventions from external agencies.

**Highlands Squatter Settlement**

Anecdotal evidence indicates that the settlement started in 1991. The area is located adjacent Highlands Low Density suburb some 15km from the Harare CBD. Most people started working in the Highlands suburb before residing in that settlement. Thus the settlement is ‘home’ to most domestic workers in Highlands. The land is
believed to be owned by other people other than the residents. This may be deemed to mean the area is designated for other activities by the council. This however raises issues of the relations between the occupiers and the owners. The area is susceptible to the spread of HIV/AIDS since cohabitation is rife.

**Housing**

The settlement depicts typical informal settlements in Zimbabwe. Shacks made of plastics, grass and wood characterizes the structures in the area. An estimated amount of 40 families stay at the place. The place looks overcrowded as no further development at the area is allowed. The City of Harare and Zimbabwe Republic Police have evicted the occupants five times destroying their houses. This may indicate the nature of our urban planning approaches which largely show blue print and not incremental approaches to planning. The evictions also show a deprivation of the right to the city and the slowness of the council to adopt a pro-poor urban development approach.

**Infrastructure and social services**

The community fetches water from the nearby suburb and sometimes the owners deny them access. Open defecation is the system for human waste disposal. Contagious diseases like diarrhoea are prevalent in the area. They use a clinic which is 1km away from the settlement. A schools, 4km away also service the area though most parents do not afford to pay the school fees. Firewood is the main source of energy.

**Economic activities**

Selling illicit beer (Kachasu) and vending are the major economic activities in the area. Some make a living from begging, a situation that makes their livelihoods more vulnerable as there is no guarantee to get something.

**Relief and Development Activities**

The community receives food handouts from Lutheran. This has helped the occupants in improving their food and nutrition status. This stems from the fact that food is one of the key ingredients to support ones’ livelihood.

**Kuwadzana Home Industry**

The euphoria of the Washington Consensus\(^2\) led to the relaxation of zoning laws resulting in home industries. To cement the liberalization narrative in development thinking and practice, the Government of Zimbabwe passed SI 216 of 1994. The Statutory Instrument provided for the establishment of non residential activities in residential areas thus home (cottage) industries and Small to Medium Enterprises

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\(^2\) Washington consensus are neo-liberal policy prescriptions crafted in the late 80s and early 90s to mainstream economic development by international entities such as World Bank for developing countries
SMEs were accorded special consent. This also led to the establishment of Kuwadzana Home Industry in the 1990s. The idea of home industries hinged on de-congesting the established industrial areas as well as supporting the SME development. The emergence of the home industry propelled the establishment of the nearby informal settlement. The settlement provided cheap and ready labour for the home industry.

**Industry features, demolition and resurgence**

The industry is in close proximity to the Harare-Bulawayo highway. The Operation Murambatsvina of 2005 marked the destruction and temporary closure of the industry and its support pillars—the squatter settlement which houses about 30 families. After the demolition of their livelihood base, residents started re-building the structures since it was their only means of survival. The settlement is unplanned and the houses are made of a mixture of materials that includes timber, bricks, plastics and metal. They use a single Blair toilet for all their sanitary needs.

**Economic activities**

Several economic and livelihood processes take place at the industry. The industry is a ready produce of home furniture to the nearby suburbs. The marketing of the products is flexible i.e. prices are negotiated as compared to formal furniture companies in the city. This negotiated market can be attributed to increased standards of living of the nearby residents. Most products from the industry are cheap and affordable to the nearby inhabitants. Recycling plastics and bottle making is among the top businesses at the area. Brewing and selling of illicit beer (Kachasu) is one of the cash cows in the settlement.

**Infrastructure and services**

The industry is under-serviced in terms of water and sanitation facilities. It has one Blair toilet which is complimented by the bush. One shallow well service the industry as well as drawing water from boreholes in Kuwadzana suburb. This is at the backdrop of water shortages in Kuwadzana also. Clinics and schools from Kuwadzana service the area.

**Rainharm-Chesa**

The year 2000 saw the birth of a bitterly disputed Fast Track land reform programme which resulted in the transfer of land mostly from white commercial farmers to the black majority. The collapse of Zimbabwe’s land management and administration system could also be traced to this era. It was the beginning of the infamous Fast Track Land Reform Programme instigated by the war veterans. The programme touted as one of the biggest land reform programme in Southern Africa in the 21st century sought to address colonial land ownership imbalances. The process was chaotic as there was no proper land allocation system. It subsequently gave birth to
many informal settlements in cities and Chesa Rainharm was one of them. The settlement houses about 20 families with no proper planning or sufficient services.

**Housing**

The land is believed to be owned by some rich people of whom most of them reside in Borrowdale. The stands were grabbed on a first come first saved basis. Those who were late in the land grabbing service could not get the stands. Their structures are made mainly of grass, dagga and plastic. The area is occupied by tenants only who pay rent to the owners. The tenants pay $10 a month to the landlords. This amount compared to other rentals in the city shows the fragmentation and informality of urban land markets in most Zimbabwean cities. A penalty of $40 is meted out by most landlords if the rent is overdue for 15 days. This further incapacitates the efforts of the poor people living in this settlement to work towards accessing their own housing.

**Land tenure**

The land under the settlement is under contest over ownership and control. The tenure situation in the area is fragmented as other have offer letters which raises concerns as to whether the area is for housing and farming. The other group does not have papers showing ownership. Mbuya Nehanda housing co-operative claims owning the land and threatens evicting the occupants. The co-operatives’ joining fee is $100 which remains beyond reach of the informal settlers.

**Infrastructure and services**

The area does not have improved water and sanitation facilities. Shallow wells are the main source of water and the bush is used for human waste disposal. Clinics and schools in Dzivarasekwa extension save the community. To encourage affordability and accessibility of education in this informal settlement the government’s Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) pays schools fees for some children. Those children not catered by BEAM are out of school since their parents can’t afford the fees.

**Economic activities**

The community engages in urban agriculture in which mainly sweet potatoes and maize are grown for sale within the community and in the nearby Dzivarasekwa suburb. This forms their livelihood base. Therefore, farming and vending are the two main economic activities in the area.

**Whitecliff**

The settlement started in 2000 after they were evicted from Potter farm. The settlement lies about 20km from the CBD along Harare-Bulawayo highway. The settlement depicts governments’ realization towards upgrading and improving
services in informal settlements. Though the process is piecemeal but it resembles a turning point in governments’ perception on informal settlements. Approximately 600 families stay at Whitecliff.

**Housing**

Housing delivery in Zimbabwe has been mainly through self help schemes, cooperatives, financial institutions, government provision and private land developers. Most poor people have accessed housing through cooperatives. Likewise from Potter farm, residents joined Whitecliff Cooperative with a view to using critical mass to access housing. They started paying monthly subscriptions which were banked. After Operation Restore Order, they realized that the co-operative was not registered. Subsequently there was a cash freeze putting an end to the hopes of owning houses to the residents.

The government offered the residents offer letters after paying Z$5000. DVC is transferring the residents to Operation Garikai. City of Harare is refusing to upgrade the area due to topographical difficulties. These include huge boulders. The local authority is said to have promised residents septic tanks and thereby allocating them bigger stands.

**Infrastructure services**

The area is adjacent to the Bulawayo-Harare highway. A dusty gravel road saves as a local distributor to the settlement. Shallow wells are the water sources present. Blair toilets and the nearby bush are used for human waste disposal. Schools and clinics from neighbouring suburbs service the area. These facilities are 3km away.

**Economic activities**

Farming, self employment and vending are the main survival strategies. The nearby Lake Chivero supports most livelihoods from the settlement largely due to buying and selling of fish.

**Gunhill Forest**

The settlement started in 1972 housing both locals and foreigners. Most occupants work in the city and nearby Gunhill suburb as maids and garden minders. They use the place as shelter during the night. The settlement is very small with a total of about 12 families. The settlement is housed in one of the top suburbs Gunhill Low Density Suburb, with richest and well known people living in the area. This settlement relationship and composition is ironic as a stone throw away lives millionaires of Harare. They are often stigmatized and discriminated against by their rich counterparts. This shows the extent and magnitude of the rich-poor dichotomy in independent Zimbabwe which the government has done little to avert.
Housing

The houses are made of plastic, wood and sometimes grass shacks. The houses reflect the extreme chronic poverty conditions of the inhabitants. The area has restricted growth since it lies nearer most senior government officials. Numerous evictions and burning of property characterize this settlement. The Zimbabwe Republic Police constantly harass and burn the houses. This shows the governments’ stick approach towards informal settlements. This has been done instead of more contemporary approaches like upgrading and regularization of informal settlements.

Land Tenure

The future of the residents in Gunhill forest is uncertain. There are no land rights for the settlers and there is no defined land administration and management system. The area is unplanned and informal hence anyone can settle anywhere. The residents live in constant fear of eviction as the council don’t recognize their existence and their neighbours are always fighting for their displacement.

Infrastructure and social services

The state of water and sanitation remains below acceptable standards. One pit is used as a toilet complimented by the nearby bush. The nearby school and clinic in Gunhill provides them with service. However, due to their socio-economic malaise they can’t afford to access these services in most instances. Firewood is the main source of energy.

Economic activities

Most of the people work in the city and surrounding suburbs as maids and garden boys. Vending and plastic bottle recycling is another income earning venture in the area. Their livelihoods are vulnerable mainly due to the ‘micro-economy’ that exists
in the surrounding area. The area largely houses rich families who in most cases do not rely on buying from vendors.

**Pomona Dumpsite**

The land is formally and legally a City of Harare dumpsite which is controlled by the City Waste management Department. This dumpsite has become home and working area to many homeless people who have retired from society after failing to cope with the escalating cost of living, unemployment and stigmatization. They have created a temporary settlement to evade daily transport costs. These people have formed their own sub-society surviving on rubbish scavenging, selling recyclable rubbish and converting garbage into laundry soap. They have even formed a burial society that offers assistance for their dearly departed. Their existence in the dumpsite is regarded temporary as they have residence elsewhere, mainly in the urban periphery. Most people hail from Domboshava, Hopley, Epworth, Porta Farm and Hatcliffe, Extension, where they are lodgers. An approximated population of 300 people lives and work in the dumpsite. These people are living in abject destitution. The shelter is made mainly of plastic, cloth and poles.

**Housing**

The existing shelter in Pomona Dumpsite depicts typical informal settlements in Zimbabwe. Shacks made of plastics, cloth and wood characterizes the structures in this area. These structures are planted amongst the rubbish and litter indicating no caution to hygiene and order. The structures are however susceptible to fire and prone to extreme weather conditions. The infamous operation Murambatsvina of 2005 escaped this settlement. They were however threatened with evictions during this period. Nearly all of the residents are not on the council housing list but only three own stands in Crowbrough and Hopley. High unemployment levels have forced these people from their legal settlements to eek out a living in this pathetic and stinking area.

**Land tenure**

The land on which the people have put their structures is owned by the City of Harare. Although the Department of Waste Management ‘recognizes’ the existence of the settlers on this plot, their tenure status remains informal. To cushion themselves against evictions the residents make it clear to any visitor that they their houses are temporary so is their stay.

**Economic activities**

The rubbish dumps form their economic base. The occupiers play a vital role in the recycling of degradable materials by reintroducing the waste back into the system. This reduces environmental effects of Harare waste and thus pushes forward the green agenda. It is an agreeable fact that the dumpsite would have been full by now
since it was opened in 2000 had it not been the unrecognized works of the dumpsite squatters. They scavenge for tradable goods which they later convert to personal use and sell for recycling. Some use liquid waste to make soap which they later sell to the nearby suburb of Hatcliffe Extension. Moreover, the rubbish dumps has created good soils for subsistence agriculture.

**Infrastructure and Social services**

Water and sanitation services are a huge challenge in Pomona Dumpsite community. The community of 300 people makes use of four makeshift blair toilets and a single water system toilet that is located a kilometre away at the entrance to the dumpsite. The surrounding tall grasses and scrubs are used as an alternative ‘relieving centre’ by the community.

**Conclusion**

It is now imperative to introduce affordable building technology in order to solve the worsening housing crisis in Zimbabwe. This would change the face of Harare and provide decent shelter for the thousands of people living in squalid conditions around the city, a large fraction of the society, will apparently be redeemed from chronic destitution. Decent accommodation, health-care and sanitary facilities for the underprivileged could be promoted.