

Hoping without Hope:

Murambatsvina - Ten Years On



Vending market in Bulawayo, October 2015

Ukuthula Trust

Solidarity Peace Trust

Bulawayo
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There is desperation. It's hope without hope. You appear to have a job when in real terms you don't have a job. You get up and dress every day and go to town and see people passing your stand, hoping maybe you will sell something.¹

This report is the fifth in a series by the same authors, tracking the impact of Operation Murambatsvina (OM) on the lives and livelihoods of Zimbabweans, in particular in Matabeleland. Once more, we have in many cases managed to relocate specific families and have updated how they have coped, or not coped, with life over the last ten years. We believe this longitudinal research is important as it conveys the lasting impact of gross human rights violations such as those epitomized by OM, as well as providing insight into the current functioning of the informal sector and housing challenges.

The introductory section places the report in the broader socio-economic context. Tracing the damage done by OM over the last decade remains topical at a point where the government of Zimbabwe and the steadily increasing urban vending community are once more at loggerheads. Throughout 2015, there have been running battles between vendors in Harare and the police, and ultimatums issued for vendors to decentralise from Harare's streets. Yet, the broader economic context is that out of 6,300,000 people in employment in Zimbabwe, approx. 5,900,000 are employed informally. Clearly, once more hounding vendors off the streets is not a solution to the nation's prevailing economic catastrophe when alternative employment does not exist.

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¹ Interview, Thabang Nare, BVTA, August 2015.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW	5
2015: A Renewed attack on the Informal Sector	5
The Ghost of Murambatsvina	6
Growth of the Informal Sector	8
The Labour Movement and the Informal Sector	12
Looking to the Future	15
 PART I: MURAMBATSVINA – 2005-2010	 18
A. Operation Murambatsvina in retrospect	18
B. Official justification for Murambatsvina	19
1. Destroying the sites of ‘criminality’	19
2. “Restoring order” by applying colonial building standards	20
C. Other explanations for Operation Murambatsvina	21
1. History of displacement	21
2. Retribution	23
3. Fear of an uprising	24
4. Patronage	25
D. Consequences of Operation Murambatsvina	26
1. Movement of people after OM: 2005-2010	26
2. Informal sector employment, post OM	27
 PART 2: FOLLOW UP ON MURAMBATSVINA: 2015	 28
A. The national economic context: spiraling poverty and unemployment	28
B. Vendors and political parties: an ambivalent relationship	29
1. Vending and politics	29
2. ZANU PF and the vendors	30
3. Ultimatums to vendors: June to August 2015	32
4. Ban on second-hand clothes – and Grace Mugabe	35
5. MDC-T and the vendors: an ambivalent position	37
C. Bulawayo and the vendors	38
1. By-Laws and confiscated goods: clearly being flouted	39
2. Vendors from Harare in Bulawayo	40
3. Vendors and vendors associations, Bulawayo	43
4. Vending: Hope without Hope	44
5. The “ZANU PF” vendors	44
6. Vending bays	45
7. The informal sectors and the vote	46
 PART 3: INFORMAL AND FORMAL HOUSING: UPDATE 2015	 48
A. Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle/Live Well (OGHK)	48
1. Inter Ministerial Committees headed by the army	48
2. Land barons – Harare	49
B. Formal Housing, Bulawayo 2015.	50
1. High density housing, 2005-2010	50
2. Bulawayo: status quo maintained in 2015	52
3. 2015: Depressed rental and housing sales in Bulawayo	52

4. OGHK in Bulawayo	53
5. OGHK in 2015	53
C. Informal housing in Bulawayo, 2015	55
1. Ngozi Mine – 2015.	56
2. Killarney, 2015	60
3. Mazwi, 2015: beautiful homes, no services	64
CONCLUSION	66

ABBREVIATIONS

BCC	Bulawayo City Council
BUTA	Bulawayo Traders Association
CBD	Central business district
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMC	Inter Ministerial Committees
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
JOC	Joint Operational Command
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDC-T	Movement for Democratic Change- Tsvangirai
MP	Member of Parliament
NAVUZ	National Vendors Union of Zimbabwe
OGHK	Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle/Live Well
OM	Operation Murambatsvina
SPT	Solidarity Peace Trust
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe Africa National Union – Patriotic Front
ZCIEA	Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Workers
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZIMRA	Zimbabwe Revenue Authority
ZIMSTAT	Zimbabwe National Statistical Agency

Introduction and Overview

2015: A Renewed attack on the Informal Sector

In early June 2015, the Minister of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing, Ignatius Chombo gave the 'illegal vendors' in Zimbabwe's cities and towns seven days to move their business activities out of the central business district (CBD) to designated areas on the outskirts of the cities. He also directed local authorities to deal with 'illegal settlements' in the cities, expecting the local government officials 'to restore order in this area with immediate effect.' More alarmingly, Brigadier General Anselem Sanyatwe, Provincial Joint Operations Commander (JOC), warned representatives of Vendors Associations, that if they did not comply with the Minister's directive 'we will deal with you.'² In the immediate aftermath of this order the Zimbabwe Informal Sectors Organisation (ZISO), sought a High Court ruling to stop the evictions. The latter ruled in favour of the Ministry but set down that when the vendors were moved, due process had to be followed and the military should not be engaged in the eviction process.³ The Director of the National Vendors' Union of Zimbabwe, Samuel Wadzai, warned:

Forceful removal of vendors across the country's towns and cities will be reminiscent of the Gukurahunde of the early 1980's or even Operation Murambatsvina and we will not tolerate such manoeuvres to bring civil unrest in our country. This is not only a declaration of war, but a clear demonstration of ignorance.⁴

On the 9th July, 26 vendors were arrested for stoning municipal police who were ordered to dismantle the vendors' tent in Speke Avenue in Harare's Central Business District.⁵ By mid-July the number of informal sector traders arrested had risen to 42 with a report that some of the detained informal traders 'were nursing injuries sustained by assault.'⁶ Additionally 11 houses built on undesignated land in Glen Norah were demolished by order of the Harare City Council as the latter proclaimed its desire for 'an orderly and well planned city which resonates with our vision for a world class city in 2025'.⁷ In an area known as Mokum in Harare South, more houses were reportedly destroyed by the Sheriff of the High Court, in what the state controlled Herald newspapers described as the Government's intensified fight 'against land barons, politicians and cooperative chairpersons illegally settling people on council, private and State land.'⁸ In an attempt to assess the extent of the loss caused by the evictions, the Vendors' Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation (VISET) reported that in the month of July some 173,462 vendors were displaced from the central business districts of the different cities countrywide and goods worth \$579,239 were confiscated by municipal police.⁹

² '7 day ultimatum for city vendors.' *The Herald*, 2nd June 2015.

³ 'High Court okays vendors' eviction.' *The Herald*, 9th June 2015.

⁴ 'Vendors defy army.' *NewsDay*, 3 June 2015.

⁵ '26 nabbed as city cops, vendors clash.' *The Herald*, 10 July 2015.

⁶ Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, Information Alert, 14 July 2015.

⁷ 'City demolishes 11 illegal houses.' *The Herald*, 14 July 2015.

⁸ 'More illegal houses demolished in the city.' *The Herald*, 7 August 2015.

⁹ 'Over 170000 vendors lose goods worth \$580,000.' *NewsDay*, 4th September 2015.

The Ghost of Murambatsvina

The language of the recent state assault on informal traders bears a great deal of resemblance to the narratives around Murambatsvina in 2005. In July the Minister of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing's demand for the restoration of order was coupled to a reminder about Zimbabwe's modernist urban planning history:

Zimbabwe has a proud history of orderly and aesthetic planning and we have sufficient legal ammunition to enforce the same. The days of lackadaisical plan implementation are over and I am demanding councils become more serious in this aspect of their work.¹⁰

Similarly, Saviour Kasukuwere the new Local Government Minister complained that: "You wake up and find that the planning department is closed.....The planners are on the streets and the land barons take over."¹¹ This was despite the fact the Zanu PF Government has over the years been responsible for both the demise of such planning and the emergence of land barons through the party patronage structures established in the cities.

On the side of the MDC-T, the councillors blamed the central ministry, charging that the 'biggest let-down is the ministry's department of physical planning. It is the most rotten department in that ministry.'¹² The language of criminality was also deployed to mark the activities of the vendors. The Deputy Director of the National Vendors' Union of Zimbabwe explained:

The local authority continues to justify its violent actions on the basis that these are illegal vendors and, therefore, criminals. Vendors, old women and members living with disabilities included, are brutalised because they are termed illegal when their real crime is trying to survive honestly in an economy that has dehumanised them and stripped them of their dignity.¹³

Similarly, as in 2005, there have been reports that the Government has expressed concern that the mobilisation of the informal sector might provide fertile ground for an urban uprising, this time similar to the uprisings of the Tunisian Revolt and the Arab Spring.¹⁴ This insecurity on the part of the state points to both a longer historical tension between Zanu PF and urban movements, and the fact that Zanu PF's conception of national identity has long been based on the land and agrarian citizenship as the sole legitimate signifier of citizenship and belonging.¹⁵ As Sara Rich Dorman has recently pointed out, within this framework

¹⁰ '7 day ultimatum for city vendors.' *The Herald*, 2nd June 2015.

¹¹ 'Stop this madness, Kasukuwere fumes.' *The Herald*, 1 September 2015.

¹² 'MDC-T councillors give demolitions thumbs up.' *NewsDay* 27 July 2015.

¹³ 'Govt has not reformed from 2008 violence.' *NewsDay*, 16 July 2015.

¹⁴ 'Questions mount over vendors.' http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit_questions-mount-over-vendors war Accessed on 14/07/2015.

¹⁵ W. Munro, *The Moral Economy of the State: Conservation, Community Development and the State in Zimbabwe*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1998; B.Raftopoulos and T.Yoshikuni (Eds), *Sites of Struggle: Essays in Zimbabwe's Urban History*. Harare, Weaver Press, 1999.

“urban citizenship required urban citizens to conform to certain ways of being and living,” but the “growing informality of the urban areas revealed the state’s growing inability to regulate this,”¹⁶ within the context of its longstanding attacks on critical urban movements and their demands for human rights and democratisation as a threat to “national sovereignty.”¹⁷

Reviewing the literature on Operation Murambatsvina, it is clear that similar issues were raised in 2005. As Potts has written, the reasons for Operation Murambatsvina included: Firstly, a political response to urban citizens for their support for opposition politics. Secondly, a strong ideological attachment to modernist planning and the idea of a modern city. While the state has been less stringent in its strict application of city planning regulations since the period of Structural Adjustment in the 1990’s, this was in Pott’s words, ‘more of an accommodation to new types of poverty than a true ideological shift towards long-term acceptance of urban informalisation in Zimbabwe.’¹⁸ However as Kamete argues, the invocation of city planning laws and regulations to criminalise the ‘unwanted’ in the cities and to carry out a massive ‘displacement of livelihoods’, was used as the legal premise from which the state launched its authoritarian repressive measures to restore order. This has taken place in the context of increasingly ad hoc ‘non planning’ responses to rapid uncontrolled urban development.¹⁹ Thirdly, the inability of the state to provide food and fuel for the growing numbers of poor people in the towns and cities. Research on OM has also shown that the state’s reassertion of formal bureaucratic planning in this period found a broader resonance amongst many Zimbabweans,²⁰ for whom, in the early part of the post-colonial period, urban areas ‘existed within the national imagination as spaces of modernity and progress,’ constituted by formal employment, commodity availability, and access to state services.²¹ Certainly by the 1990’s and moving into the 2000’s, this conception had begun to change substantially. A further issue in 2015 that echoed complaints made in 2005 was the lack of educated councillors able to deal with city governance challenges.²² In the recent upheavals, the MDC-T Mayor of Harare argued the need for the inclusion of no less than one

¹⁶ S. R. Dorman, “ ‘We have not made anybody homeless.’: Regulation and control of urban life in Zimbabwe.” *Citizenship Studies*, DOI: [10.1080/13621025.2015.1054791](https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2015.1054791)

¹⁷ A. Kamete, ‘In Defence of National Sovereignty? Urban Governance and Democracy in Zimbabwe.’ *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 21, 2, 2003, pp 193-213.

¹⁸ D. Potts, ‘City Life in Zimbabwe at a Time of Fear and Loathing: Urban Planning, Urban Poverty and Operation Murambatsvina,’ in G. Myers, and M. Murray (eds), *Cities in Contemporary Africa*. Palgrave, McMillan, New York, 2007; D. Potts, ‘Displacement and Livelihood: The Longer-Term Impact of Operation Murambatsvina,’ in M. Vambe, *The Hidden Dimensions of Operation Murambatsvina*, Weaver Press, Harare, 2008; D. Potts, ‘Restoring Order? Operation Murambatsvina and the Urban Crisis in Zimbabwe.’ *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32, 2, 2006, pp 273-291. See also the Special Issue: The Zimbabwe Crisis through the lens of Displacement, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36, 2, June 2010.

¹⁹ A. Kamete, ‘Not exactly like the phoenix-but rising all the same: reconstructing displaced livelihoods in post-cleanup Harare,’ *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 30, 2012, pp 243-261; A. Kamete, ‘Planning versus youth: Stamping out spatial unruliness in Harare,’ *Geoforum* 29, 2008, pp 1721-1733; A. Kamete and I. Lindell, ‘The Politics of ‘Non-Planning’ Interventions in African Cities: Unravelling the International and Local Dimensions in Harare and Maputo,’ *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36, 4, December 2010, pp 889-912.

²⁰ J. Fontein, ‘Anticipating the Tsunami: Rumours, Planning and the Arbitrary State in Zimbabwe.’ *Africa*, 19, 2009, pp 369-398.

²¹ S. Morerira, ‘Living with uncertainty: disappearing modernities and polluted urbanity in post-2000 Harare, Zimbabwe.’ *Social Dynamics*, 36, 2, June 2010, pp 352-365.

²² Dorman op cit p 11.

third of non-partisan individuals with “strong credentials in business, academia, engineering, law, finance and health.” Moreover, he argued that when this is “not achievable or achieved through the electoral process, modalities for accommodating specially skilled councillors must be found.”²³

Growth of the Informal Sector

Yet despite the similarities with the displacement in 2005, there are also clear differences in the way that the state has responded in 2015. Despite opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai’s fears about “attempts by the regime to mount a second Murambatsvina,”²⁴ a decade after the first ‘tsunami’ as it was then called, the state has adopted a more differentiated approach, involving lower levels of violence and populist appeals to the importance of the informal sector, particularly from the First Lady, combined with a more formal bureaucratic approach to the restoration of order. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, the informal sector has grown dramatically since the Structural Adjustment period of the 1990s, expanding even further since 2005. This has made it much more risky for the state to launch a new OM style attack on this sector with the same form of political vulgarity and crude coercion that characterised its response in 2005.

Looking back at state constructions of the informal sector since the early days of the post-colonial period, it is clear that for much of this time, the state showed little concern for this sector except as a peripheral and nuisance factor. In 1980 the Riddell Commission had very little to say about this sector because it constituted only “some tens of thousands of people.” These comprised small scale operators, working as “unlicensed taxi operators, vegetable hawkers, curio-makers and sellers, back-street bicycle repairers, furniture makers, tailors, prostitutes, shebeen operators, shoe polishers, manure and fire-wood sellers, herbalists, builders and carpenters and many other people providing goods and services largely to the poor groups in society.”²⁵ Moreover in setting out its position on the future of the informal sector the Riddell Commission observed that in some respects, this sector arose as a consequence of the “lack of alternative employment opportunities,” and that the residual nature of this part of the economy could not be expected to “provide the solution to employment.” The Commission further advised that:

What is needed is an over-all employment strategy in which policies to improve income generating activities within the informal sector are located and harmonised with other goals for employment creation in the formal sector and peasant economy.²⁶

Also in the early 1980s the state carried out a National Manpower Survey, which ignored the small informal sector and had as its central objective to “assess the size and characteristics

²³ ‘Councillors functionally illiterate: Mayor’, *The Herald*, 28 August 2015.

²⁴ ‘Tsvangirai’s State of the Nation Address.’ <http://thezimbabweemail.com/tsvangirais-state-of-the-nation-address/> Accessed on 29/06/2015.

²⁵ *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Incomes, Prices and Conditions of Service*. Government of Zimbabwe, 1981, p 161.

²⁶ *Ibid* p 162.

of the nation's professional, skilled and semi-skilled workforce," in the formal sector. This study was a prerequisite for the state to "formulate short, medium and long-term policies for education and training to meet the nation's development requirements."²⁷ In addition to the recommendations of these early Government commissions and reports in the period between 1980 and 2013, the Government produced about ten development strategies. Although the latter purported to place an emphasis on formal sector employment creation, they "did not explicitly adopt an action plan to achieve this objective," and relied on the "trickle down" effects of market driven growth to generate employment.²⁸

One major outcome of these policies has been the rapid decline of formal sector jobs and the massive growth of the informal sector. Thus, from its small numbers in the 1980s, the informal sector grew to 1.6 million (27% of the labour force) in 1991, 30% of those employed in 2003, and 84% (4.6 million) of the 5.4 million employed aged 15 years and above in 2011.²⁹ In the most recent Labour Force Survey the figure of the informal sector reached a staggering 94.5% of the 6.3 million people employed aged 15 years and above, with 61% of workers in wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles, followed by 13% in small scale manufacturing.³⁰ As Sarah Bracking explained in her analysis of OM, "popular merchant capitalism" through an informal trading economy has grown into the only viable livelihood alternative for the majority of the working poor.³¹ Thus the overall reliance of the majority of the working population in both the urban and rural areas on informal sector livelihoods in the current era has tempered the authoritarian response of the state.

The second reason for the less violent response of the state in 2015, relates to a combination of its ambivalence to the problem of the informal sector and a much weakened opposition movement. As the report makes very clear in the narrative that follows, in its current response to the vast reality of the informal sector, Zanu PF policy is driven by the tension between its continued adherence to a modernist vision of a city, with a smaller and more controlled informal sector, and the need to court this sector for future electoral support. In its blend of more limited violence and patronage networks in the cities,³² Zanu PF has therefore followed the strategy it deployed in the 2013 elections, in the context of a much reduced opposition effectiveness and a weakened labour movement.³³ The fact that Zimbabwe is now off the SADC regional agenda as a crisis point and that re-engagement with

²⁷ Ministry of Manpower Planning and Development, *National Manpower Survey*, Vol 1, Government of Zimbabwe, 1981, p 43.

²⁸ LEDRIZ/ZEPARU, 'The nexus between Growth, Employment and Poverty in Zimbabwe: The Economics of Employment Creation.' September 2013.

²⁹ LEDRIZ, *Strategies for Transitioning the Informal Economy to Formalisation in Zimbabwe*. Ledriz/Friederich Ebert Stiftung, Harare, 2015, pp.2-4.

³⁰ Zimstat, *2014 Labour Force Survey*, Government of Zimbabwe, March 2015, p 82.

³¹ S. Bracking, 'Development Denied: Autocratic Militarism in Post-election Zimbabwe. *Review of African Political Economy*, Nos 104/105, 2005, pp 341-357.

³² For a very good study of Zanu PF's patronage politics in the city during the period of the GPA see J. McGregor, 'Surveillance and the City: Patronage, Power-Sharing and the Politics of Urban Control in Zimbabwe,' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 39, 4, December 2013, pp 783-805

³³ B. Raftopoulos, 'The 2013 Elections in Zimbabwe: The End of an Era.' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 39, 4, December 2013, pp 971-988.

Western countries is more firmly in place, has also influenced the Mugabe regime's reluctance to place its policies back on to the regional and international political radar. The MDC-T, nominally in charge of most of the urban local authorities, faced a similar dilemma of attempting to deal with the spread of the informal sector and the demands of central government around this issue, while maintaining a good relationship with its largely urban support base.³⁴ Describing the dilemma of the MDC-T Mayor in Harare in his attempts to forcefully relocate the informal traders to designated areas on the outskirts of the city centre, the Director of the Harare Residents Trust observed:

The mayor of Harare, by agreeing to this, is sending the people's vote to waste, because whatever negative impact of this intervention, the councillors will be blamed for failing to deal with vendors' issues, yet every Zimbabwean knows that to resolve the vendors' issue, the economy has to be revived first, and job creation absorbs the majority of people on the streets.³⁵

The Government's current dilemma in dealing with the attempts to balance its commitments to the IMF, under the Staff Monitoring Programme, and the promise of employment creation in the ruling party's 2013 Election Manifesto, has been apparent in its contradictory pronouncements and policy positions since the 2013 elections. In May 2014 the Minister of Finance promised that in order to increase the competitiveness of the economy, amendments to the Labour Relations Act would be carried out in order to provide for more flexible labour relations that would deal with constraints on retrenchments, terminal benefits, downsizing, working hours and arbitration.³⁶ In his 2015 Mid Term Budget Review Minister Chinamasa repeated this position, noting that "a flexible labour market is key to our economic recovery." He further stated that:

The economy.... cannot afford the inefficiencies currently obtaining in the employment sector where workers accrue wages in circumstances where there is no production.'³⁷

Thus the Minister of Finance, adhering to commitments to the International Financial Institutions has been pursuing the Government's move towards a greater liberalisation of labour relations, in conjunction with the promise to reduce the recurrent expenditure in the National Budget which in October 2014 stood at 92% of the total expenditure, as opposed to

³⁴ As MDC-T Harare city councillor Mbanga explained: 'We are in a tight situation because we cannot act on our own but wait for orders from the central government. They are the ones who supervise us and this has put us in a tight corner.' Crisis in Zimbabwe Report, 'Political Interference worsens vendors' plight.' Harare, 29 July 2015.

³⁵ 'Vendors defy army.' *NewsDay*, 3rd June 2015.

³⁶ Keynote Address by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Hon Patrick Chinamasa, in: SAPES Trust/National Endowment for Democracy, *Report of the International Conference on Zimbabwe Going Forward: Consolidating the Democratisation Process and Reinforcing Re-Engagement with the Global Community*, Harare, 5-6 May 2014.'

³⁷ 2015 Mid-Term Budget Review Presented to Parliament by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Hon P.A.Chinamasa on Thursday 30 July 2015.

the 8% of the budget devoted to capital expenditure.³⁸ This commitment to a more liberalised labour market was severely put to the test in July 2015 in the Supreme Court case of *Don Nyamande and Kingstone Donga v ZUVA Petroleum*. In the judgment the Supreme Court set out the central bone of contention as being “the legal status of the employer’s common law right to terminate an employment relationship on notice,” with the appellants arguing that s 12B of the Labour Act “abolished the employer’s common law right to dismiss an employee on notice.” Confirming a previous judgment of the Labour Court the Supreme Court ruled that s 12B of the Act “does not abolish the employer’s common law right to terminate employment on notice in terms of an employment contract.”³⁹

The judgment led to a slew of layoffs by various private sector companies and parastatals, with claims that between 20,000 and 22,000 workers had been given three months’ notice in the wake of the Supreme Court ruling. Following what the Minister of Labour described as a ‘floodgate of termination of employment on notice,’ she called for a labour review ‘in the spirit of tripartism’,⁴⁰ in order to produce a ‘win-win situation for employers and employees.’⁴¹ Mugabe stepped into the debate stating that while he did not ‘blame the judges because they interpret the law,’ the latter can be ‘dry, dry, dry, as Charles Dickens said, the law is an ass, which if it creates problems must be amended.’⁴²

In August, a Labour Amendment Act was fast tracked through Parliament ‘in recognition of the need not only to align the labour laws with the Constitution.....but also to promote productivity and competitiveness of industry.’ Subsection (4A) of the Act sets out that no employer shall terminate the contract of employment on notice unless:

- a. The termination is in terms of an employment code or, in the absence of an employment code, in terms of the model code made under section 101 ((9); or
- b. The employer and employee mutually agree in writing to termination of the contract; or
- c. The employee was engaged for a period of fixed duration or for performance of some specific service; or
- d. Pursuant to retrenchment, in accordance with section 21 C.

The Act also set out that the law would apply retrospectively to ‘every employee whose services were terminated on three months’ notice on or after the 17th July 2015.’ Thus the Act stopped employers from dismissing workers through unilateral termination of notice and compelled them to follow the retrenchment route.⁴³ It should be noted that the Bill was passed despite an **Adverse Report of the Parliamentary Legal Committee on Labour Amendment Bill (H.B.7,2015)**, which objected that the retrospective application of Section 12 of the Act violated Section 3(2) of the Constitution regarding the separation of powers.

³⁸ ZCTU Critique of the 2015 National Budget presented to Parliament by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Hon P.A.Chinamasa on 27 November 2014, ZCTU 11 December 2014.

³⁹ ‘(1)Don Nyamande (2) Kingstone Donga v Zuva Petroleum (Private) Limited.’ *Supreme Court of Zimbabwe Chidyausiku CJ, Gwaunza JA, Garwe JA, Hlatwayo JA and Guvava JA*. Harare, February 3 and July 17, 2015.

⁴⁰ ‘Govt speaks in job termination ruling.’ *The Herald* 20 July 2015.

⁴¹ ‘Cabinet to discuss workers’ sackings* Over 400 more given the boot* Econet, Zimoco join band wagon.’ *The Herald*, 23 July 2015.

⁴² ‘The Law can be amended-Mugabe.’ *Financial Gazette*, 29 July 2015.

⁴³ Labour Amendment Act No.5 of 2015.

Moreover, despite the Labour Minister's assertion that the amendments would be carried out in a 'spirit of tripartism', both employers and labour complained that their concerns were not sufficiently dealt with. The Employers' Confederation of Zimbabwe (EMCOZ) predicted that the amended Act would lead to further closures of companies and loss of jobs accusing the Government of 'going it alone with labour towards the final stages of that Labour Amendment Act',⁴⁴ while the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions complained that the labour movement had a 'very poor' engagement with the Labour Minister under the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF).⁴⁵ In the parliamentary debates members of the MDC-T supported the need to stop the ongoing dismissals while objecting to particular aspects of the Bill. A good example of this was the position taken by the Hon Khupe, Deputy President of the MDC-T:

... as the MDC we do not support the Supreme Court Judgement of the 17th July 2015. We do not support the common law right to terminate employment on notice. We do not support the powers being given to the Minister to interfere with the running of trade unions and employment councils. We do not support the powers being given to the Minister to interfere with collective bargaining processes.⁴⁶

Yet despite these objections, the amended labour act appears to have had a broad populist appeal, and served Zanu PF's purpose of appearing to come to the rescue of and bringing salvation to desperate workers. As MDC-T MP the Hon Jesse Mujome noted, Zanu PF used the Labour Amendment Bill as a Trojan horse, which while stemming the mass firing of workers, dealt mortal blows to workers' rights by empowering the Labour Minister with 'wide powers to appoint virtual curators to both trade unions and employment councils'.⁴⁷ This broad appeal of the Act was best captured by MDC-T MP Chamisa's contribution to the Parliamentary debate. Perhaps in an attempt to compensate for being on the legal team that represented Zuva Petroleum in the Supreme Court case, Chamisa was effusive in his support for the amended Bill :

What we are beginning to see is something that goes to the very heart of what our war of independence was all about. It goes to the very crux of why we lost blood in this country and why we had sweat and toiling in this country-protecting our own indigenous people against the vagaries of capital. When I debate this, I debate it in full knowledge that I have not switched on political sides. I believe in the independence of our country, in the liberation of our country and I believe that what the Minister is doing is best under the circumstances.⁴⁸

The Labour Movement and the Informal Sector

⁴⁴ 'Employers reject new labour law.' <http://www.newzimbabwe.com/news/news.aspx?newsid+24671> Accessed on 07/09/2015; 'Jobs cuts: Employers speak out.' *NewsDay*, 25 August 2015.

⁴⁵ 'Labour Bill splits Business, Workers.' <http://thezimbabwemail.com/labour-bill-splits-business-workers/> Accessed on 21/08/2015.

⁴⁶ Parliament of Zimbabwe, Hansard, 18 August 2015.

⁴⁷ J. Majome, 'The MDC battle over Labour Amendment Act.' <http://thezimbabwemail.com/the-mdc-battle-over-labour-amendment-act/> Accessed on 31/08/2015.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

As the informal sector has grown, with the accompanying shrinkage of formal sector employment, so the strength and influence that marked the labour movement's interventions in the 1990's and early 2000's, has waned. In 1990 the membership of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions stood at 200,000, representing 16% of the approximately 1.2 million workers in the formal sector. A decade later in 2000, the membership figure had dropped to 165,000 amounting to 12% of the formal sector workforce.⁴⁹ In 2015 the membership of the ZCTU was reported to be 160,000.⁵⁰ The 2014 Labour Force Survey also provides a useful assessment of workers involved in 'employee associations,' with the survey noting that of the 1,531,633 people aged 15 years and over a total of 226, 596 were in these associations, representing 14.8% of those in paid employment.⁵¹ It is likely that this figure includes members of both the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and its rival union federation the Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions (ZFTU), and probably other organisations such as burial societies.⁵²

With informal sector workers constructing their world less in relation to state regulations than to the vagaries of their workplaces on the streets and in their homes,⁵³ the challenge of organising these workers, often locked into individualised survival strategies, has been immense for formal trade unions. Yet the rapid growth of informality and the recent struggles in this sector provide both challenges and opportunities for the formal labour movement.⁵⁴ In the late 1990's the Informal Sector Traders' Association of Zimbabwe was established and affiliated to the ZCTU. In 2001 as a result of a joint project between the ZCTU and the Commonwealth Trade Union Council aimed at bridging the gap between the trade union movement and informal sector workers, the Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Workers (ZCIEA) was formed. At a review workshop in May 2003 it was agreed that ZCIEA and the ZCTU should consolidate their relationship and that the ZCTU 'continue to play a leading role in assisting ZCIEA.'⁵⁵ Since then other organisations have emerged such as the National Vendors Union of Zimbabwe (NAVUZ) which has been one of the central players in the current struggles.

However it is this established form of union organisation drawn from a vision of 'waged employment as a condition of stable social insertion, citizenship, and the employment of social rights,'⁵⁶ that has been substantially challenged by the global deepening of

⁴⁹ G. Kanyenze and B. Chiripanhuru, 'The State of Union Organisation in Zimbabwe.' Unpublished paper, September 2001, p 33.

⁵⁰ R. Ndlovu, 'The slow death of the labour movement,' *Good Governance Africa*, Issue 33, August/September, 2015.

⁵¹ Zimstat 2014 op cit, p 61.

⁵² F. Musoni, 'Operation Murambatsvina and the Politics of Street Vendors in Zimbabwe,' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36,2, 2010, pp 301-317. Musoni observed that most of the informal traders he interviewed in the area of Mukomva belonged to burial societies and savings clubs.

⁵³ M. Denning, 'Wageless Life,' *New Left Review*, 66, Nov/Dec 2010.

⁵⁴ J. Sutcliffe, 'The Labour Movement in Zimbabwe 1980-2012,' *Journal of Politics and International Studies*, 8, Winter, 2012/13.

⁵⁵ Ledriz 2015 op cit p 12.

⁵⁶ F. Barchiesi, 'Hybrid Social Citizenship and the Normative Centrality of Wage Labour Inclusion Nexus in Post-Apartheid South Africa.' *Mediations*, Volume 24, No 1, Fall 2008, pp 52-67.

casualization and informalisation of labour. As Breman and van der Linden write for traditional labour movements, the 'notion that the regime of informality and precarity has come to stay has not yet sunk in.'⁵⁷ Trade unions in the developing world have increasingly had to face what Standing calls an 'environment of shrinking labour entitlements,' benefitting a minority of workers.⁵⁸ The largescale loss of such entitlements has become a reality not only for many in the formal sector but more pervasively for informal sector traders. The struggles in the informal sector have thus been shaped by the loss of formal, more permanent employment, the rights and entitlements that accompanied it, and the need for residents in the cities to develop coping mechanisms to fend for their families. The growing realisation by the organisations in this sector that, as in other parts of Africa, 'informality is the norm'⁵⁹ in contemporary Zimbabwe, has given birth to new sets of demands around the vulnerabilities of working in this sector. These include: The provision of sufficient vending spaces in areas of the city where there is a reasonable market for their goods; putting a stop to the militarisation and politicisation of vending and the patronage networks of the ruling party which have developed in this area, such as the 'space barons' who have emerged as an extension of Zanu PF's patronage structures in the cities and the heightened commodification of urban space under the current environment; affordability of rates for vending sites; the need for Parliament to 'debate and legislate the formalisation of vending as an alternative form of employment.'⁶⁰ In deepening our understanding of informality it is clear as Lindell points out that, as in other parts of the developing world, the informal sector is constituted of different relations of employment such as self-employment, work at home and casual labour.⁶¹ Moreover the varied forms of class relations in this sector and their contested connections with rural social relations makes it imperative for trade unions to understand the complexity of the social relations in this arena and the demands it will make on developing new organisational and mobilisation strategies to deal with these forms of labour. A good example of such a challenge is the antipathy that may be felt by informal sector workers towards what is perceived as the more privileged workers in the formal sector. One report on responses to the recent mass firing of workers by sections of the informal sector may be indicative of a more general antipathy. A second hand clothes vendor responded to the mass lay-offs as follows:

They should fire as many as they can, even if they can fire all of them. We have no sympathies whatsoever for them because they are the ones who have been repeatedly saying ma-vendor anosemesa (vendors are an eyesore) and urging the authorities to chase us away from the CBD. They rejoiced when the City Council started removing us from the streets....They did not even care that, just like them, we

⁵⁷ J. Breman and M. van der Linden, 'Informalising the Economy: The Return of the Social Question at a Global Level,' *Development and Change*, 45,5, 2014, p 936.

⁵⁸ G. Standing, 'Understanding the Precariat through Labour and Work,' *Development and Change*, 45, 9, 2014, pp 963-980.

⁵⁹ E. Pieterse, 'Grasping the Unknowable: Coming to grips with African Urbanisms,' in E.Pieterse and A.M Simone, *Rogue Urbanism: Emergent African Cities*, Jacana Media (PTY) Ltd in association with the African Centre for the Cities, University of Cape Town, 2013, p 28

⁶⁰ National Vendors Union of Zimbabwe (Navuz), 'Vendors Petition to Parliament,' <http://nehandaradio.com/2015/06/28/full-text=of-vendors-petition-to-parliament/> Accessed on 30/08/2015.

⁶¹ I. Lindell, 'Informality and Collective Bargaining: Identities, alliances and transactional activism in Africa,' *Third World Quarterly*, 31, 2, 2010, p 210.

have families to look after. So why should we care when, all of a sudden, they are getting fired from those jobs? Now they will be joining is on the street kuti tisimese takawanda (they will be joining us in being a nuisance). They were saying if we do not have anything to do in Harare, we should go back to the rural areas. Now it will be them who would be going first.⁶²

Looking to the Future

Reading the many statements across party lines concerning the future of the informal sector, there appears to be a loose consensus that the latter should be viewed as a short term problem and inconvenience which can and should be transformed by the revitalisation of the formal sector. We have already noted the Finance Minister's hope that a move towards a greater liberalisation of the labour market, in particular more labour market flexibility, will lead to more investment and employment growth in the formal economy. The Commissioner General of the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) criticised what he viewed as the Government's wasted attempts at investing in proper vendor facilities. In Pasi's view:

We are creating a generation which may never know what formal employment is all about and that generation is a wasted investment. We will put a lot of money trying to make sure that vendors are accommodated but when we have created employment as we must, we would have built a lot of white elephants.⁶³

Representatives from both the MDC-T and what was then the MDC Renewal Project concurred with Pasi, with MDC-T's Eddie Cross particularly emphatic:

How do we reindustrialise, how do we give people formal jobs; because a vendor does not want to sell tomatoes. I think Mr. Pasi was largely correct. The emergence of massive street vending is a response to the current economic situation in the country. It can only be short to medium term. It can't be a long term, feature of our economy. Once our wider economy starts recovering and employment picks up I think vending will reduce in size and importance.⁶⁴

Vendors in Bulawayo were reported to have expressed the same opinion at a special meeting with the Bulawayo City Council in June:

Vending is not a sustainable venture, we must eradicate it and provide sustained livelihoods for the people of Bulawayo in the long run. Instead of promoting vending we must eradicate it and provide people with jobs.⁶⁵

The ZCTU remains committed to the ILO Decent Work Agenda with its focus on employment creation and poverty reduction, social protection, tripartism, social dialogue and industrial

⁶² 'Frustrations of waiting for Zanu PF's 2.2m jobs.' *Financial Gazette*, 30 July 2015.

⁶³ 'ZimAsset flop: MDCs back tax boss.' <http://www.newzimbabwe.com/news> Accessed 29/06/2015.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ 'Vendors: Jobs first then we quit the streets.' <http://www.newzimbabwe.com/news/> Accessed on 23/06/2015

relations, and gender equity and women empowerment.⁶⁶ In its critique of the Government's move towards a flexible labour policy, the ZCTU strongly condemned the policy stating that it amounted to a "declaration of war on the working people of Zimbabwe as it ignores issues of security so central to workers' aspirations and productivity, and sustainable win-win integrative industrial relations."⁶⁷

Thus, even if they have different perspectives on ways to revive the formal sector there is a broad commitment to this project across the social and political spectrum. For some analysts such an optimistic view of the possibility of urban industrialisation in the contemporary global context is misplaced. For Pott's the global hegemony of liberalised trade and neo-liberal policies since the end of the 1970's 'has made the route to developing a mature, urban-based economy almost impossible now.'⁶⁸ Under such conditions, for a significant part of the young, vulnerable underclass in Zimbabwean cities like Harare, there is a growing sense of their lack of employability in the formal sector, with crime becoming a 'a normal way of life.'⁶⁹

For other scholars the sense of despair in Zimbabwean cities should be set against the growing optimism of resettled farmers under the Fast Track Land Programme. Prominent land scholar, Ian Scoones writes that generating a new sense of hope and the possibility of a new politics, 'will have to come from the fields and farms of rural Zimbabwe, and especially the resettlement areas.' Drawing on the work of his team in Masvingo, Mvurwi and Matobo, Scoones reports that their figures on production and the growth of purchasing power 'far exceed anything possible in the communal areas from where many came,' and that 'those who came from jobs in towns swear they will never go back.'⁷⁰ Moreover in an important article published in 2014 Scoones analyses the significant reconfiguration of social and production relations in Zimbabwe's rural areas. These changes point to a struggle 'at the heart of the countryside' between a small group of well-connected elites uneasily allied to domestic and international capital and a grouping of poorer smallholder farmers, farm labourers and an emerging class of petty commodity producers.⁷¹ Scoones concludes that as a result of these changes on the land,

.....there is an important constituency out there ready to be enlisted, who neither are attracted to Zanu PFs tired nationalist discourse, nor the 'return to commercial

⁶⁶ G.Kanyenze, T.Kondo, P.Chitambara and J.Martens, *Beyond the Enclave: Towards a Pro-Poor and Inclusive Development Strategy for Zimbabwe*. Weaver Press, Harare, 2011, p 290; ZCTU, 'Country Report', May 2012.

⁶⁷ Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) Communique on the 2015 Mid-Term Budget Review Presented by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Hon. P.A. Chinamasa on Thursday, 30 July 2015.

⁶⁸ D.Potts, "Urban Experiences 'beyond the West': comparing cities in southern African and BRIC countries." Keynote Speech for Urban Panel: Cities and Trading Networks Today Conference on 'Southern Africa beyond the West: political, economic and cultural relationships with BRICS countries and the Global South.' Livingstone, Zambia, 7-11 August 2015.

⁶⁹ A.Kamete, " 'At the Bottom of the Social Heap': A Youth Underclass inner-city Harare?" *Journal of Youth Studies*, 9, 1, 2006, pp 67-89.

⁷⁰ I.Scoones, "Beyond Zimbabwe's 'politics of despair.'"

<http://zimbabweland.wordpress.com/2015/04/13/beyond-zimbabwe's-politics> of despair Accessed on 11/09/2015.

⁷¹ I.Scoones, 'Zimbabwe's land reform: new political dynamics in the countryside.' *Review of African Political Economy*, 2014, DOI:[10.1080/03056244.2014.968118](https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2014.968118)

farming' position of the MDC. But instead they will seek to ally themselves with a progressive political voice that understands the consequences of radical land reform, and how this has provided opportunities for a significant number of new, relatively younger, educated and aspiring farmers, well linked to urban and other economic and political circuits.⁷²

Whether or not one agrees with Scoones' optimistic projections, especially given the state's lack of policy clarity on the articulation of rural and urban linkages, it is clear that he points to fundamental changes in Zimbabwe's land structure that are likely to impact on both the employment creation capacity of the economy and future alliances in Zimbabwean politics. SPT has also pointed to the importance of the broader reconfiguration of Zimbabwe's political economy, the construction of narratives and their relations to power, and the changing forms of rule in Zimbabwe.⁷³ In this report it seeks to further its analysis of these issue.



Children displaced by Murambatsvina, June 2005

⁷² I. Scoones, 'The Mujuru manifesto: Zimbabwe's 2018 election battle gets going.' <http://zimbabweland.wordpress.com/2015/09/14/the-mujuru-manifesto-zimbabwes-2018-election-battle-gets-going/> Accessed on 14/09/2015

⁷³ Solidarity Peace Trust (SPT), *The End of a Road: The 2013 Election in Zimbabwe*. Durban, October 2013.

PART I: MURAMBATSVINA – TEN YEARS ON

A. Operation Murambatsvina in retrospect

On 28 May 2005, the Chairperson of the Harare Commission, Cde Sekesai Makwavarara released a statement that heralded the beginning of a demolition exercise that in sheer scale and thoroughness set it apart from previous demolitions, not just in Zimbabwe, but across Africa.⁷⁴ Within the first few weeks, 100,000 vendors nationwide were arrested and had their vending stands and goods destroyed. Many of these were licensed vendors operating from stands financed and allocated by city councils. The Operation moved on to the destruction of informal dwellings. By the end of the demolitions, carried out by soldiers and riot police countrywide, an estimated 560,000 people had been displaced as their shelter was destroyed. In the space of only three months, an estimated 2,7 million people countrywide suffered massive losses either directly or indirectly, through loss of markets for their goods or loss of income from family members who used to send money to rural areas.⁷⁵ From Mount Darwin in the north to Beitbridge in the south, no part of the country was spared, as people's homes were bulldozed, burnt and dismantled brick by brick, often at gunpoint or under threat from soldiers. In Harare, approximately 30,000 structures were demolished, and in Bulawayo, a city with one third of the population of Harare, 10,000 structures were demolished. The small town of Victoria Falls was among the proportionally worst affected urban centres, losing 60% of its accommodation in the course of Murambatsvina.⁷⁶

A United Nations investigation by Anna Tibaijuka soon after the demolitions in 2005 confirmed what was already known: 86% of structures demolished did not in fact meet the international criteria for slums, but were mostly robust dwellings with access to safe water, sanitation and electricity.⁷⁷ The government's actions were illegal in terms of Zimbabwe's own laws, as well as in violation of international statutes and protocols.⁷⁸ The government insisted that even though the structures might be robust, they were illegal because they were built without council permissions. Yet, their sundry destruction without due process and rights of appeal was also illegal - and inhumane, as the actions displaced people in the middle of winter, in the absence of a concerted programme to house people in better accommodation.⁷⁹ OM drove millions into destitution, forced children out of school and

⁷⁴ *Report of the Fact-finding Mission to Zimbabwe to assess the scope and manner of Operation Murambatsvina*, prepared by Mrs Anna Tibaijuka, United Nations Special Envoy on Human Settlements issues in Zimbabwe, July 2005. Henceforth the UN report.

⁷⁵ UN Report estimated 2,4 million, which was upwardly revised by Michael Bratton and Eldred Masunungure, "Popular reactions to state repression: Operation Murambatsvina in Zimbabwe". *African Affairs*, 106/422, 21-45, September 2006. Oxford University Press on behalf of Royal African Society. They estimated 2,7 million or more than half of all adults based on surveys conducted in urban and rural Zimbabwe in 2006 (p 31).

⁷⁶ SPT, *Meltdown - Murambatsvina one year on*, 2006.

⁷⁷ The UN Report, op cit.

⁷⁸ International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Treaty of Rome and the Governing Council of the United Nations Compensation Commission were all violated by the demolitions.

⁷⁹ After weeks of demolitions, the government retrospectively claimed to be building 300,000 housing units – no more than a few hundred of which have eventualised 10 years later. SPT, op cit, 2006.

reduced access to healthcare, including to anti retrovirals for HIV treatment, as the displacements scattered communities across the nation as well as across its borders.



Army destroying a house, Harare 2005



Child in the ruins of her home, Bulawayo 2005

B. Official justification for Murambatsvina

1. Destroying the sites of 'criminality'

Makwavara's initial statement and subsequent government positions claimed that OM was aimed at rooting out corruption, prostitution, "crooks, greedy people, opportunists and black market traders".⁸⁰

There are no sacred cows. Criminals have been hiding in the shacks and we are after them. They shall face the wrath of the law.⁸¹

Time and again, **all** those who were vending or living in shacks were criminalized by the state rhetoric coming from some city officials, police, parliamentarians and Ministers, even though there were thousands of legal vending markets and vendors countrywide, and while the majority of citizens of informal, or unregularised housing were law abiding people. Potts has pointed out the problem caused by the "conceptual muddling" of 'illegal' as in not regularised, and 'criminal', a word associated with genuine crime, which can result in all those in informal sectors being labelled 'criminal'.⁸² As most mayors countrywide were from the MDC, some made strenuous efforts to resist the demolitions, but proved ultimately powerless to intervene. The viciousness and unjustifiable scale of the demolitions was ironically pointed out by the Mayor of Bulawayo in an interview:

⁸⁰ *The Chronicle*, 12 June 2005; Comment: "Parliament has serious business".

⁸¹ *The Chronicle*, 13 June 2005; "Makokoba structures removed". Police Inspector Smile Dube of Bulawayo.

⁸² Potts, Deborah, "The State and the Informal in Sub-Saharan African Urban Economies: Revisiting Debates on Dualism." Crisis States Working Paper Series No.2. Crisis State Research Centre, London School of Economics, London, 2007.

How do you catch a criminal? You knock down his entire house and then say – aha, now I see you, you are a criminal!⁸³

Mayor Ndabeni Ncube's efforts to save many legal vending markets in Bulawayo, funded by the city council and occupied by licensed vendors, were in vain – countrywide, long established vending markets were burnt to the ground. City mayors and city councils were ignored in spite of it being the cities' legal responsibility to monitor the informal sectors, both vending and housing. Small to medium enterprises consisting of apartment blocks housing tailors, hairdressers, plumbers etc were also raided and shut down as illegal. Yet among the scores of articles in the government controlled press referring to the informal sector as criminal and illegal, it is hard to find a single arrest of an actual criminal, smuggler, carjacker or housebreaker. As Miloon Kothari, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing commented: "It is not the people of Zimbabwe who are illegal, it is their Government."⁸⁴

2. "Restoring order" by applying colonial building standards

Potts has observed that a major reason for OM included "an ideological adherence to modernist planning and the associated image of a 'modern' city, and the desire to drive the poorest urbanites out of the city because of the state's incapacity to provide food and fuel for them."⁸⁵ Zimbabwe stands alone in Africa in its "continuity of official resistance" to informal settlements, and its insistence on maintaining building standards that, if applied in other African cities "could easily render half or more than half of the urban population homeless".⁸⁶

The economic collapse in Zimbabwe, outlined in the introduction to this report, has created mass dependence on the informal sector since the mid 1990s. Street trading and the growth of backyard housing structures have been a direct response to the failure of the government to produce jobs and adequately serviced housing sites. The government of Zimbabwe has failed to accept that suburban 'order' as imposed under racist, colonial by-laws, cannot "be achieved in the cities of very poor countries"⁸⁷ - and Zimbabwe is now one of the poorest countries in the world. Such urban order assumes a wealthier economic base than now exists, with families earning middle class incomes and social services to support the very poor. This is patently not the case in Zimbabwe.

⁸³ Interview, author, 16 June 2005 with Mayor Ndabeni Ncube of Bulawayo.

⁸⁴ Interview with Kothari on BBC World, 18 June 2005.

⁸⁵ D.Potts, 'Restoring Order? Operation Murambatsvina and the Urban Crisis in Zimbabwe.' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32,2, 2006, p.291.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p 284 and p 279. "...nearly all former African colonies have inherited a complex paraphernalia of regulations and by-laws pertaining to, for example, building materials, room size, distance between houses and from the edge of a plot, the building of new structures on-plot and development of non-residential activities, and the availability of services such as water; they also cover regulation of trading and markets. Most of these by-laws remain on the rule books although they are, to put it mildly in the case of most African towns, honoured more in the breach than the observance. In some cases they are honoured virtually only in the breach! (281)

⁸⁷ Ibid p 279.

Potts predicted in 2006 that the attempts to eradicate informal trading would fail in the immediate term, while the eradication of backyard structures was likely to have a lasting impact, as people would hesitate to invest in building materials to build more structures after their experiences of losing everything in 2005.⁸⁸ This has been shown to be correct: households who lost structures during OM have not rebuilt them, with few exceptions. This is remarked upon as a great loss to individual family survival mechanisms, as urban residents have lost the rental income from these structures.⁸⁹



*Family with what they saved when their home was destroyed,
Hatcliff, 2005*

C. Other explanations for Operation Murambatsvina

There was an outpouring of articles, reports and research into the impact and undeclared motivations for OM within the months and years of its happening. Many authors have proposed that the official government position masked more serious reasons for OM taking place at the time and on the scale that it did, in May 2005.⁹⁰

1. History of displacement

There is a long history of enforced demolitions and displacements in Zimbabwe. These were widespread under colonialism, when racist legislation decreed who could live where: the

⁸⁸ Ibid, p 290.

⁸⁹ Interviews with affected residents in Bulawayo, August 2015.

⁹⁰ Vambe, M. (ed) *Zimbabwe: The Hidden Dimensions of Operation Murambatsvina*, Weaver Press, Harare, 2008, has a collection of articles on OM; Kamete, A Y, *Not Exactly Like the Phoenix – but rising all the same: reconstructing displaced livelihoods in post-cleanup Harare*; Environment and Planning D: Society and Space volume 30, pages 243-261, 2012; Kamete, A Y and Ilda Lindell, *The politics of non-planning interventions in African cities: unraveling the international and local dimensions in Harare and Maputo*; Journal of Southern African Studies, 36:4, 889-912, 2010; Solidarity Peace Trust (SPT), op cit: 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2010, to list but a few.

Land Apportionment Act (1930) and the Land Tenure Act (1969) forcibly relocated tens of thousands of black Zimbabweans from the 1930s onwards. Urban housing was racially zoned, and black factory workers resided in segregated high-density suburbs, where it was often impossible for families of workers to live with them. In the 1970s, there were further mass displacements during the war of liberation, when entire rural communities were forced into 'protected villages' in order to try and break the supply chain to guerilla soldiers.⁹¹

State induced displacements and the multi-layered violence accompanying such practices... are not an aberration. Rather they appear to be an ever-present possibility if not actuality, integral to contemporary as well as past modes of rule and state making.⁹²

In this, Zimbabwe is not alone: state making is often a process of deciding who has a right to be a citizen and who is unworthy and should be restricted or expelled. Sovereignty by definition assumes not all can belong in any state. In Rhodesia, colonialism established hierarchies of worth among citizens on racist lines. The pattern of politically driven divisions in the nation continued post independence: in the 1980s, the *Gukurahundi* massacres treated those living in Matabeleland as 'dissidents' to be swept away like chaff. Since the 1980s, other 'operations' by the state have identified segments of the population as 'filth' that needed cleaning away. The first 'operation clean up' targeted prostitutes in 1983, followed by another round up of women in Operation Chinyavada ahead of the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Harare in 1986. In 1992 there were politically driven displacements of 4,000 residents of Churu Farm, near Harare, aimed at punishing political opponent Ndabaningi Sithole. Since 2000, an estimated 300,000 farm workers have been evicted from commercial farms during the farm invasions, while others have been "displaced in place", having to change their mode of survival with resettled farmers who cannot pay them.⁹³ Other "operations" have targeted informal miners (Operation Chikorakoza) and those voting for the opposition in 2008 (Operation Red Finger").

While Operation Murambatsvina was on an unprecedented scale, in 2005 it was at one level simply the latest in a long history of 'operations' in which people in Zimbabwe have been expelled, arrested, or even killed after being labelled as the *dangerous other*. It was the 'totemless',⁹⁴ Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)-supporting urban dweller that was identified as the *dangerous other*, and that OM sought to discipline, via arrest, destruction of livelihoods, and displacement.⁹⁵ To become acceptable citizens, those displaced were ordered to "go back where they came from".⁹⁶ The government's argument in the early weeks was that there was no need to replace the destroyed structures in urban areas

⁹¹ Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, *The Man in the Middle and Civil War in Rhodesia*, 1975.

⁹² Hammar, Amanda (2008), *In the name of sovereignty: Displacement and state Making in Post-Independence Zimbabwe*; Journal of Contemporary African Studies, Vol 26, no. 4 pp 417-434.

⁹³ Kamete, op cit, 2012, cites Feldman (2003) and Partridge (1989) in a discussion of being 'displaced in place'.

⁹⁴ Minister Mohachi used this derogatory term to indicate that urban dwellers have lost their rural Zimbabwean identity and culture, rendering them less than indigenous.

⁹⁵ While ZANU PF supporters also suffered from OM, Kamete, op cit, among others has pointed out that the failure of these supporters to deliver sufficient votes to ZANU PF made them also expendable in the short term.

⁹⁶ *The Chronicle*, 27 May 2005

because any 'real', indigenous Zimbabwean, would by definition also have a rural home that they should return to. This is in fact a fallacious argument:

...first, over half of Zimbabwe's current urban residents are urban born and thus their rural links are weakened. Second, by 2001 even many recent rural-urban migrants did not have the basic asset of rural land to fall back on, and it can be safely assumed that this would be even truer of the urban-born.⁹⁷

There are increasing numbers of Zimbabweans who have only remote, sentimental or ancestral ties to any rural district. There are also hundreds of thousands of people born in Zimbabwe but whose parents were migrant workers from Mozambique, Zambia, Malawi and elsewhere. They have no ties to their parents' ancestral lands, and also have no rural Zimbabwean home. These first generation black Zimbabweans were among the worst affected by OM, particularly as onerous citizenship laws passed in 2002 had effectively left them stateless.⁹⁸ Many of these were farm workers who had already been displaced during the farm invasions and had sought refuge in informal settlements in peri-urban areas. In any eventuality, no state has the right to define its urban citizens as less legitimate than rural ones, or to attempt to force a rural identity on those who have chosen to live in the urban context.

2. Retribution

Kamete and Raftopoulos among others have documented the process by which the urban voter in Zimbabwe shifted from a 'cosy' relationship with the ruling ZANU PF, towards increasing jadedness.⁹⁹ The economic slide in Zimbabwe began during the mid 1990s, leading into strikes and food riots. By 1999, increasing disgruntlement had led to the formation of a formidable, primarily urban, opposition party, the MDC. In early 2000, the MDC together with the civic-led National Constitutional Assembly, gave ZANU PF its first poll defeat since 1980 in a referendum on a new constitution. This was followed by near electoral defeat for ZANU PF in the parliamentary elections of 2000, which were marred by state-led violence.¹⁰⁰ Most notably, ZANU PF lost almost every urban seat countrywide, retaining support only in some rural provinces. The resulting crack down on the urban voter was already apparent by the Presidential election of 2002.

The run-up to the 2002 presidential poll witnessed the most intensive efforts at disenfranchising the urban electorate. The government put in place legal, physical

⁹⁷ Potts, Deborah, "Displacements and livelihoods: the longer term impacts of Operation Murambatsvina, published in Vambe, M. (ed) *Zimbabwe: The Hidden Dimensions of Operation Murambatsvina*, Weaver Press, Harare, 2008.

⁹⁸ Under the new constitution accepted in 2013, being born in Zimbabwe makes you undeniably a citizen, but this has not yet been adopted in accompanying legislation, which still rules that both your parents have to be Zimbabwean for you to claim full citizenship, including voting rights.

⁹⁹ Kamete, A Y, *In defence of National Sovereignty? Urban Governance and Democracy in Zimbabwe*, Journal of Contemporary African Studies, 2003, 21:2, 193-213, p 204.

¹⁰⁰ For details of this history, see Brian Raftopoulos (Ed), *The Hard Road to Reform*, Weaver Press and SPT, 2014.

and administrative obstacles that were strategically meant to frustrate the urban electorate.¹⁰¹

Legally, 2002 changes in citizenship laws disenfranchised tens of thousands, and draconian new legislation such as the Public Order and Security Act obstructed campaigning and undermined civil rights. New administrative rules meant that voters now had to provide proof of residence, difficult for those in informal urban housing. Physically, almost halving the numbers of urban polling stations, particularly in Harare, meant that more than 250,000 voters in Harare alone were obstructed from voting in 2002. Even after the opposition won an extra day of voting owing to queues thousands long at poll closing time, on the extra day polling officials obstructively took up to an hour to process every voter in Harare, leaving hundreds of thousands failing to vote.¹⁰² This election was a warning shot that ZANU PF's resentment towards the disloyal urban voter was growing.

In April 2005, for the third consecutive election, the opposition MDC won nearly all its parliamentary seats in urban areas, underlining ZANU PF's failure to make headway in urban centres.¹⁰³ Within a few weeks, OM began.

OM thus appears to have been primarily an act of retribution against urban voters, simultaneously punishing MDC-supporting urban centres and sending a message that it was irrelevant whether town councils and Members of Parliament (MPs) were MDC or not – the ruling party had ultimate control of what happened in the towns. Thousands of displaced urban citizens were also effectively disenfranchised at that time, ahead of senatorial elections later in 2005, as they no longer resided where they were registered to vote.¹⁰⁴

Confirming ZANU PF's determination to control the towns regardless of having been spurned at the polls, shortly after OM there was a constitutional amendment that declared Harare and Bulawayo to be provinces. This irrevocably shifted some of the balance of power away from MDC-run city councils to ZANU PF-appointed provincial Governors. The fact that the Ministry of Local Government has remained in ZANU PF hands has also meant that threats of disbandment and ZANU PF interference in urban councils have become routine. As recently as August 2015, the Gweru city council has been placed under the control of a commission after alleged corruption.¹⁰⁵

3. Fear of an uprising

Linked to ZANU PF's dislike of the ungrateful and disloyal urban voter, was their fear that these very voters, crowded onto the streets of the capital in their tens of thousands, might

¹⁰¹Kamete, 2003, op cit.

¹⁰² SPT video, *A Legitimate Election*, 2002; also video *One Man, One Vote; How the 2002 Presidential Election in Zimbabwe was won*. <http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/video-gallery/>.

¹⁰³ This election was once more condemned as being far from free and fair: SPT, *Out for the Count: democracy in Zimbabwe*, May 2005.

¹⁰⁴ This disenfranchisement became largely irrelevant as the MDC split over whether to take part in the Senatorial election: the larger faction boycotted the vote and effectively handed all the Harare Senatorial seats and most other urban Senatorial seats to ZANU PF. In Bulawayo, the smaller MDC won the senate seats.

¹⁰⁵ *The Chronicle*, "Commission to run Gweru", 19 August 2015.

rise up and throw out the government. Political discontent was obviously on the rise in the cities, with growing unemployment and a clear awareness that elections were not free and fair and could not displace the ruling party. This was not a unique situation – African cities with areas of activity no longer controlled by the state are often subjected to what Kamete refers to as “non-planning interventions”.¹⁰⁶

... as [those in informal urban settlements] go about their daily struggles, urban dwellers develop their own ‘governance rules’ beyond the purview of the authorities, rendering the informal sphere virtually opaque to state surveillance....

Baffour Ankomah, a ZANU PF apologist referred to:

...fears of an ‘internationally funded’ street revolution and the state wanted to ‘nip the danger in the bud’ by hitting the likely sites of any uprising, such as crowded residential areas and bustling city centre streets. Inadvertently supporting this suggestion, the government later claimed that such was ‘the risk to . . . national security . . . that the operation had to be undertaken without further delay’¹⁰⁷

The government rhetoric that OM was necessary for city planning purposes, was “no more than an attempt at rationalising repression for party political or state security reasons.”¹⁰⁸

4. Patronage

As the formal sector shrunk, with a resulting increased placement of the economy into the informal sector, destruction of aspects of the informal sector and rebuilding it with ZANU PF at the centre of patronage has been part of the outcome of OM.¹⁰⁹ As OM was ongoing, inter-ministerial committees were set up to reallocate land freed up by the demolitions, under the control of the Zimbabwe National Army and various other ministries. Ultimately, it was members of the police and army who mainly benefited from the paltry “Operation Live Well” rebuilding schemes that followed on from OM.¹¹⁰ However, the attempt to control the informal sector remains a work in progress – in 2015, many of the vendors and vendors’ associations remain politically supportive of the opposition, and MDC-T dominant town councils continue to attempt to protect them and their rights.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Kamete, op cit, 2010.

¹⁰⁷ Cited in Kamete, ibid p 898.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p 898.

¹⁰⁹ SPT, *Punishing Dissent, Silencing Citizens: The Zimbabwe elections 2008*, May 2008. It was not in fact necessary to destroy the sector in order to reclaim it, but the destruction of it gave ZANU PF the opportunity to favour its own structures during the rebuilding processes, both formal and informal.

¹¹⁰ SPT, op cit, 2006; SPT, op cit 2010.

¹¹¹ See section ahead.

D. Consequences of Operation Murambatsvina

Murambatsvina has not been forgotten, even as the ensuing decade has engulfed Zimbabwe's citizenry in one calamity after another, exacerbating the initial impact of OM. The total economic implosion and hyperinflation of 2008/9 resulted in months when schools and hospitals were entirely closed: the collapse of services resulted in a massive cholera epidemic in Harare, the largest in 15 years worldwide at that time.¹¹² Empty shelves caused by attempts to legislate prices as inflation climbed to 90 sextillion percent - the highest in modern history - caused queues for bank notes, bread, fuel and ultimately every commodity.¹¹³ Two changes of currency at almost no notice left millions holding worthless bank notes. Furthermore, the Presidential election run-off in 2008 is remembered for political violence on a scale not seen since the 1980s in Matabeleland.¹¹⁴

Yet, amidst all these calamities for ordinary citizens, OM still stands out as a turning point - the event that undermined the remnants of their belief that the state was a beneficent structure that cared about its citizens.¹¹⁵ OM is remembered as a massive, state orchestrated calamity that for hundreds of thousands of families began their irrevocable dive into poverty.¹¹⁶

1. Movement of people after OM: 2005-2010

Internal and external displacement

A slow-moving tidal wave of disasters that intensified with OM and continued with ensuing years of social and economic shocks internally displaced thousands of citizens, and sent hundreds of thousands more out into the diaspora. The authors previously observed that by 2010, the socio-economic and political disasters of 2008/9 had been more effective than OM in driving thousands of struggling Bulawayo urbanites into rural villages. In a context where urban government hospitals countrywide were entirely non-functioning, and shelves in urban centres were empty, and money was increasingly meaningless, retreating to a rural district meant at least the chance of getting food via World Food Programme outreach, or in receiving medical treatment from a rural, Church-funded mission hospital.¹¹⁷

¹¹² SPT, *Death of a nation*, DVD, <http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/video-gallery/>; SPT, *Walking a thin line: the political and humanitarian challenges facing Zimbabwe's GPA leadership – and ordinary citizens*, Johannesburg, June 2009. <http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/21/walking-a-thin-line/>

¹¹³ Wolfgang Fischer, *German Hyperinflation 1922/23" A Law and Economics Approach*, Josef Eul Verlag, Germany, 2010, p 98 cites this figure for Zimbabwe inflation. Also Andrew Gillespie, *Foundations of Economics*, Oxford University Press, 2011, p 469, refers to septillion percent inflation in Zimbabwe.

¹¹⁴ SPT, *Desperately seeking sanity: what prospects for a new beginning in Zimbabwe?* Harare, July 2008. <http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/326/desperately-seeking-sanity/>

¹¹⁵ Bratton and Musunungure, op cit: Their survey found that OM resulted in 73% of people distrusting the police and state structures thereafter.

¹¹⁶ SPT, op cit, 2010, plus interviews in 2015 by current authors.

¹¹⁷ SPT, *A Fractured Nation: Operation Murambatsvina 5 years on*, Johannesburg, July 2010. <http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/787/a-fractured-nation-operation-murambatsvina-%E2%80%93-five-years-on/>;

For others, survival meant leaving the country. *One person per **hundred** families* was reported as having permanently migrated yearly in Matabeleland in 1991. In 2006, a year after OM, we documented 31 people migrating per hundred families, ***a thirty fold increase***.

By 2009, *one person per family* was migrating annually, meaning the rate of diasporisation had ***increased one-hundred-fold*** from that of the 1990s, in rural Matabeleland at least.¹¹⁸ This dramatic upward shift from 2006 also shows how the economic collapse of 2009 tripled the diasporization caused by OM. Nonetheless, in spite of the ensuing economic calamities affecting citizens post 2006, many interviewees in 2010 reported OM as the primary calamity that set them on a path of poverty and circular migration.¹¹⁹ More detailed comment on the movement of people since 2005 will be made in Part IV of this report.

2. Informal sector employment, post OM

OM failed dismally and inevitably to stop the growth of the informal sector in the towns across Zimbabwe. OM simply exacerbated pre-existing conditions for economic decline by further undermining investor confidence and driving potential consumers into abject poverty, shrinking both the purchasing base and the informal manufacturing sector.¹²⁰ Within a few months of OM, by October 2005, an extra 10% of those NOT in the informal sector previously, were now in the informal sector.¹²¹ By 2006, 88% of people were employed in the informal sector.¹²² By 2009, thousands of teachers, nurses, artisans and people in formal employment were driven to vending or part-time menial labour, in Zimbabwe and in the diaspora.¹²³ This decline was partially and very temporarily reversed during the unity government of 2009-2013, but since 2014, rapid economic decay has once more ensued: ***those either unemployed or employed in the informal sector in Zimbabwe currently stand at above 90%.***¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ Solidarity Peace Trust, *Gone to Egoli: economic survival strategies in Matabeleland*, Johannesburg, June 2009. <http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/127/gone-to-egoli/>

¹¹⁹ SPT, *Desperate lives, twilight worlds: how a million Zimbabweans live without official sanction or sanctuary in South Africa*, Johannesburg, March 2010. <http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/572/desperate-lives-twilight-worlds/>; SPT, op cit, 2010. Deborah Potts uses the term circular migration in her book of that name, to explore the movement of people from town to rural area and back again: Potts, D, *Circular Migration in Zimbabwe and Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa*, James Currey, 2010.

¹²⁰ The reasons for Zimbabwe's radical and still continuing economic decline are complex and are obviously not linked only to OM; economic decline was already marked by the 1990s. These issues have been dealt with in more depth in the introduction to this report.

¹²¹ Afro Barometer, *Popular Reactions to State Repression: Operation Murambatsvina in Zimbabwe*, Working Paper No 59, 2006, p 12.

¹²² Luebker, M., *Decent work and informal employment: a survey of workers in Glen View, Harare*. Issues Paper No.33. ILO Sub-Regional Office for Southern Africa, Harare, 2008.

¹²³ SPT, 2010, De Doorns case study.

¹²⁴ Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (Zimstat), *2014 Labour Force Survey*, Harare, March 2015.

PART 2: FOLLOW UP ON MURAMBATSVINA: 2015

A. The national economic context: spiraling poverty and unemployment

The socio-economic situation in 2015 in Zimbabwe is extremely grim. By the end of July, economic growth had been downwardly revised to 1,5%, down from the very hopeful 4,5% visualized in the ZimAsset document.¹²⁵ The revenue target for 2015 has been reduced from \$4 billion to \$3,6 billion.¹²⁶ With employment in the formal sector at record low levels and set to fall even further, 5,9 million out of the 6,3 million Zimbabweans who work are employed in the informal sector.¹²⁷ The majority of these are peasant farmers eking out a living on the land. In urban areas, the formally unemployed have resorted to street vending or running small enterprises – mostly on public footpaths, on pavements or from private residences. An estimated 1,5 million people are engaged in artisanal mining activities – of whom only 25,000 are registered.¹²⁸ In spite of the large numbers eking out a living in the informal sectors, the levels of genuine unemployment are high in the towns, with Bulawayo the highest: 31% of Bulawayo citizens aged over 15 years are active in neither the formal nor informal sectors. It is the urban young, those aged between 15 and 24 years, who are the worst affected, with 43% being not in education, not in skills training and not in employment.¹²⁹ With almost one in two of the generation that should be gaining either skills or work experience idly walking the streets, the economic future for Zimbabweans appears bleak.

On 31 July 2015, the policy statement by Finance Minister Patrick Chinamasa that civil service job cuts were looming in order to reduce the salary bill from 80% of the national budget to below 40%, indicates that soon thousands more Zimbabweans will be out of the formal sector and joining those vending on the streets.¹³⁰ This was reinforced with the decision in August to lay off 20,000 under-qualified teachers by the end of 2015.¹³¹

Vending numbers

It is notoriously difficult to arrive at figures for vendors in Zimbabwe, as the vast majority are now unlicensed and not paying fees to their city councils. In Harare in July, licensed vendors were given as 7,424, with an estimated further 20,000 unlicensed vendors, meaning that three quarters of vendors were unlicensed.¹³² In Bulawayo, by June 2015 licensed vendors were greater in number than in Harare, with more than 13,000 registered vendors, 9,000 of whom were operating from bays, and an unclear number of unregistered

¹²⁵ ZANU PF campaigned in 2013 on delivering a massive economic turn-around during this parliamentary period, including 2 million jobs. So far the job market has significantly shrunk, with another 20,000 jobs lost in July and August 2015 alone.

¹²⁶ *The Chronicle*, "Civil Service Job Cuts Loom", Bulawayo, 31 July 2015.

¹²⁷ Zimstat op cit, 2015.

¹²⁸ *The Chronicle*, "Rate of royalty on gold for artisanal miners reduced", 31 August 2015.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *The Chronicle*, "20,000 teachers to be laid off", 31 August 2015.

¹³² *The Herald*, "Kasukuwere vows to clean up Harare mess", 8 July 2015.

vendors.¹³³ Tens of thousands more vendors are to be found across the nation, in every large and small business centre, on the sides of roads, and trading from their homes, selling clothes or individual vegetables outside their gates or over their fences. The Vendors' Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation (VISET) reported that in the month of July some 173,462 vendors were displaced from the central business districts of the different cities countrywide and goods worth \$579,239 were confiscated by municipal police, giving perhaps a more accurate insight into the vast numbers of families dependent on vending.¹³⁴

B. Vendors and political parties: an ambivalent relationship

1. Vending and politics

Vending has become increasingly politicized over the years. Vendors make up a key voter base in all urban centres, which have been MDC-T strongholds since 2000. ZANU PF has therefore, since OM, moved to create patronage structures within the urban informal sectors. However, both ZANU PF and MDC-T have ambivalent relationships with the vendors: both parties want voters from within this unregularised and burgeoning sector, but both are nervous of the pace at which unlicensed vendors are overwhelming urban centres.

ZANU PF fears the possibility of a revolution, as the vendors are a large and dissatisfied group of increasingly desperate people. Leaving them on the streets is a risk, and moving them off the streets is a risk as it could provoke a violent backlash against the state. The Tunisian revolution, sparked by the death of a vendor, remains as a salutary warning in the background of ZANU PF's dilemma.

MDC-T is unwilling to clamp down on what it considers to be a significant part of their support base, but also faces the conundrum that if they do not enforce city by-laws, they give Saviour Kasukuwere, Minister of Local Government, Public Works and Urban Development, the excuse he is looking for to clamp down on the urban councils themselves. They are in the unfortunate position of running the cities, in this regard, as it will ultimately be the city council that has to act to regularize the sector, and this may cost them votes. The backlash may not be against the ZANU PF state, but against the MDC-T-run urban councils.

Both ZANU PF and MDC-T have also inherited a British colonial idea of what a city centre should look like, and how it should be regularized, as previously discussed in this report: both have made statements in 2015 that show their resistance to Zimbabwe's towns becoming 'dirty' and 'disordered' as a result of the influx of tens of thousands of vendors.¹³⁵ In short, both parties have to deal with the reality of being possibly damned if they remove

¹³³ City Council of Bulawayo, document entitled *Return to Sanity: Vendors*, September 2015, has full details of vending bays around the city as at 30 June 2015.

¹³⁴ "Over 170000 vendors lose goods worth \$580,000." *NewsDay*, 4th September 2015.

¹³⁵ Debby Potts, op cit, 2006, among others, has emphasized the outdatedness and anti-poor nature of current city bylaws in Zimbabwe, and the resistance to changing these laws, compared to by-laws in other post-colonial cities. MDC-T run city councils seem as concerned about applying these laws as ZANU PF has always been.

the vendors and possibly damned if they don't. It is also in reality a mission impossible to remove all vendors to designated sites only, as these are typically on the edges of the CBD, where there are fewer, or even close to no customers. It is inevitable that vendors will gravitate back to where they believe they may manage a few sales in a day, and to where they can avoid the council daily licensing fees, which now often exceed the daily take.

2. ZANU PF and the vendors

ZANU PF's quest to build a support base in the informal sector was most obviously successful in Mbare, a sprawling suburb with a large informal market close to central Harare. Already by 2008, the feared Chipangano gangs controlled by ZANU PF had wrested control of both vending and housing stand allocations in Mbare, and in 2013 this was one of the Harare constituencies 'won' by ZANU PF.¹³⁶ By 2015, interviews suggested that the Chipangano gangs have become side-lined, ostensibly because they have been linked to the Mujuru faction of the now heavily divided ZANU PF, but this has not loosened ZANU PF's stronghold on this area.¹³⁷

Space Barons

Making life even more difficult for vendors and city officials to navigate is the existence in Harare in particular, of space barons – ZANU PF affiliated individuals who control multiple vending sites and extort fees every day from those who use them. While only town councils are entitled to charge fees for vending, the shortage of bays in areas where sales are more likely allows for corruption in this regard. Attempts by Harare council officials to formally register all vendors operating in areas controlled by 'space barons' routinely meet with resistance. In Mbare in September, such a registration attempt ended when "council officials had to flee for their lives with ZANU PF youths hot in pursuit, and shouting obscenities at them." It is reported that "a handful of ZANU PF top officials, some of them former ministers and MPs had more than a dozen stalls each [in Mbare], which they subdivided and leased to vendors for at least \$350 a month." None of this money is being remitted to council.¹³⁸

Grace Mugabe

When travelling the country in her "Meet the People" rallies ahead of the 2014 ZANU PF congress, Grace Mugabe spoke in defence of vendors at rallies in Masvingo, Harare and Gweru:

"Women told me about their vendor marts, the challenges they are facing. They are being chased away like people who are mentally challenged. The police should engage women and talk this thing out. Women are being troubled by your actions of chasing them away whenever they want to sell their goods."¹³⁹

¹³⁶ SPT, *Punishing Dissent, Silencing Citizens: The Zimbabwe elections 2008*, May 2008. By 2015, the influence of Chipangano appears dissipated in Mbare, in favour of new forces within ZANU PF.

¹³⁷ Interview, vendors association, Bulawayo.

¹³⁸ Moses Matenga, "Zanu PF youths attack council officials", *NewsDay*, 3 September 2015.

¹³⁹ *New Zimbabwe*, "Grace Hammers Police, 6 October 2014.

Grace Mugabe empathised with how hard it was for vendors to put food on their tables – “It is not good to take people's goods when they are trying to fend for their families.”¹⁴⁰ She furthermore accused police of raiding vendors in order to steal their goods:

“They say police officers don't want to pay for anything, they just organise a raid if they want tomatoes and onions. That is what I heard. Stop doing that. This is not how it's done in business. We have never refused to sell to you. Pay for the goods because you are paid salaries.”¹⁴¹

Key informants noted that Grace Mugabe’s verbal support for the vendors in late 2014 marked the beginning of a rapid increase in numbers of vendors moving into the centre of many towns. As early as December 2014, vendors are reported in the media as having “invaded the city of Masvingo by occupying every corner and any open space they find virtually reducing the city into one huge flea market.”¹⁴² Vendors believed they now had the protection of the presidency.

By early 2015, Harare city centre in particular was inundated with vendors, such that legitimate, rate-paying businesses with large overheads complained at the unfair competition of pavement vendors selling up to their doorways, and the fact that customers almost literally could no longer access their shops, “yet they invested heavily into licence fees, taxes, employee and other costs in anticipation of a return on investment.”¹⁴³ By May 2015, the government-controlled media was expressing increasing unease at the growing vendor numbers.

“Imagine maize cobs being roasted for sale right on the pavements of leading commercial banks and upmarket shops.... A central business district of this magnitude cannot be allowed to drift into a hovel of mice peddling, roasted maize hustling and second-hand clothes trading”.¹⁴⁴

Harare is “drifting into a black hole of filth and decadence.” The manipulation of by-laws by “corrupt Harare City Council officials” is identified as the source of the chaos, rather than “people seeking economic redemption”.¹⁴⁵ President Mugabe himself joined the conversation in July, commenting that,

We do not want chaos; the sort of mayhem in other countries where you see goats in the city centre like in First Street. That’s what I once witnessed in West Africa. No; we want to ensure that those who have shops are able to sell their wares freely, then goats must go kuMbudzi.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² *New Zimbabwe*, “Grace Mugabe inspires vendor lawlessness”, 11 December 2014.

¹⁴³ voazimbabwe.com, “Zimbabwe’s vending reaching alarming levels”, 26 May 2015.

¹⁴⁴ *The Sunday Mail*, “Harare vendors: this madness must stop!” 24 May 2015.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ *New Zimbabwe*, “No goats in Harare city centre, this isn’t West Africa: Mugabe”, 30 July 2015.



Vendors in Bulawayo crowd what were once parking bays, and the centre of roads.

Fear of an uprising

Once more, as in 2005, the possibility of an uprising in Harare has been raised by ZANU PF. President Mugabe referred to this possibility, if only to accuse the British and American ambassadors of trying to foment such a revolution by funding the vendors to rise up against his government.

“The resistance by vendors, we see the British and American ambassadors coming to the vendors and giving them money wanting them to continue to resist... So we’ve said if they continue doing that we will kick them out of the country... What demons do [the British and Americans] have? When a person insists on wanting to do wrong things to undermine the peace and calm of a nation, to undermine the unity of a people, then they’re no good for us.”¹⁴⁷

3. Ultimatums to vendors: June to August 2015

This unveiling of the fear of an uprising was preceded by two months in which vendors faced increasing official attention. On 1 June, in spite of the cities being the concern primarily of local urban councils, there was an ultimatum from government and allegedly from the security chiefs that all vendors had to be removed from undesignated vending sites within seven days, failing which the army would be moved in to deal with the vendors. This drew an outcry from MDC-T dominant city councils and civics, who pointed out that the army had no role in policing civilians.

Their [the army’s] personnel are not trained as police officers; ultimately they are trained to kill people. They do not even have the legal power to arrest civilians.... If the government intends deploying the army to remove the street vendors, without

¹⁴⁷ *The Chronicle*, “Vendors: Mugabe warns UK, US”, Bulawayo, 30 July 2015.

first giving the police and local authorities an opportunity to do so, then it will be acting unconstitutionally.¹⁴⁸



*Vendors protest the lack of formal jobs in Harare.
[voazimbabwe.com, 7 July 2015]*

Government quickly backtracked and on 4 June, Minister for Defence Sekeramayi denied that the army would be deployed against vendors, saying that local government should deal with the issue.¹⁴⁹ Harare City Council organised a meeting to discuss the issue, at which it was blatantly clear that the vendors were “split into distinct camps”, that “almost came to blows”, some supporting the MDC-T and others ZANU PF.¹⁵⁰ Groups believing they had the support of Grace Mugabe, “our mother”, refused to consider moving out of the CBD to take up new vending stands being built on the urban peripheries. Those supporting MDC-T attacked the ZANU PF government for failing to create jobs.¹⁵¹

The ultimatum was shifted back to 26 June, by which time local authorities were supposed to have constructed new vending sites on the periphery of city centres. Only licensed vendors were to receive stands, and any vendor, licensed or unlicensed, would be arrested if caught not operating from a legal stand. This deadline was later moved back to early August, as the authorities failed to construct new sites, and a new registration process was undertaken to ensure that all vendors were registered. However, in Harare this became once more embroiled in partisan politics, with the ‘Queen of Grace, Zim Asset Trust’ Vendors’ Union undertaking its own registration process, insisting this was on behalf of the city, and allegedly ensuring that only those who supported ZANU PF would be registered with the city and receive stands.¹⁵² Ephraim Chizola, Secretary General of this association claimed, “... we were given an order by the ministry (local government) and JOC in particular that we do the vendor registration and clean-up campaign.” He also accused MDC-T of hijacking the

¹⁴⁸ Veritas, *The Constitution, the Army and Street Vendors*, 3 June 2015.

¹⁴⁹ nehandaradio.com, “Army will not remove vendors: Sekeramayi”, 5 June 2015.

¹⁵⁰ Moses Matenga, “Grace Mugabe drawn into vendors’ saga”, *News Day*, 4 June 2015.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Zimeye, “ZANU PF hijacks vendors registration process”, 29 June 2015.

vendors' cause because, "What they want to do is to cause riots so that their masters would say President Mugabe has failed to rule."¹⁵³

In July, a Cabinet reshuffle appointed Saviour Kasukuwere to the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and Urban Development, who immediately stated that, "if the city fathers, especially in Harare, do not clean up the mess brought about by vendors, I will clean up Town House."¹⁵⁴ MDC-T responded by saying their town councils across the country had been put on "high alert" and had been made aware of their constitutional rights to govern their towns as elected officials.¹⁵⁵ Within a few weeks, Kasukuwere had moved to suspend the MDC-T run Gweru Town Council and to appoint a commission of inquiry into corruption in this council.¹⁵⁶ This stands as a warning to other city councils, a reminder that councils can be suspended by government.¹⁵⁷ Accusations of corruption have also been leveled against the Bulawayo Deputy Mayor, Gift Banda, by the Affirmative Action Group (AAG), who have appealed to Kasukuwere to suspend Banda and set up a commission of inquiry.¹⁵⁸

Kasukuwere also immediately reinforced the deadline for vendors to be removed from Harare. On 9 July, Harare municipal police, who were said to be "engaged in a vicious war with vendors", burned clothing bales worth thousands of dollars.¹⁵⁹



Vendors in Harare [Financial Gazette, 21 May 2015]

¹⁵³ *New Zimbabwe*, "Queen of Grace vendors group says it has blessing from service chiefs". 9 July 2015.

¹⁵⁴ *The Herald*, "Kasukuwere vows to clean up Harare mess", 8 July 2015.

¹⁵⁵ *The Financial Gazette*, "Kasukuwere, Councils, head for collision", 23 July 2015.

¹⁵⁶ *The Chronicle*, "Commission to run Gweru", 19 August 2015.

¹⁵⁷ This was previously done and could happen again: in 2005, the Harare City Council was disbanded and the city was run by a ZANU PF appointed commission for several years.

¹⁵⁸ *Sunday News*, "Deputy Mayor accused of demanding \$22k bribe", 16-22 August 2015. Also *Leader* column, "Bulawayo City Council needs to protect its image", same edition. In October 2014, the High Court of Zimbabwe found Banda guilty of forging MDCT membership cards in an attempt to prove that he had been a member for 5 years, to justify his right to senior position in terms of the MDCT's constitution. The call for this commission of inquiry may be justified, but may also provide Kasukuwere the opportunity to target the whole council.

¹⁵⁹ *nehandaradio.com*, "Vendors clothing bales burnt in early morning raid", 10 July 2015.



Protesting vendors, Harare. [The Zimbabwe Daily, 10 July 2015]



Burnt clothing bales on the footbridge on Speke Ave, Harare, 10 July 2015. (nehandaradio.com)

4. Ban on second-hand clothes – and Grace Mugabe

In his July 2015 fiscal statement, Minister Chinamasa announced the banning of importing of cheap second-hand clothing bales, currently flooding the country from Mozambique. This ban came into effect on 1 September, after which clothing bales became liable for seizure and destruction at entry points.¹⁶⁰ The selling of second hand clothing has itself not been banned, however, and the 'bend-over bazaars', as they are locally known, continue in full swing. As the border entry points remain corrupt and open to bribery of officials, it could be predicted that only those with connections to customs officials and ZANU PF will be able to bring in bales in future. The ban is unlikely in and of itself to revive the textile sector: scores of factories and associated industries are closed and sunk into total disrepair, with an

¹⁶⁰ *The Chronicle*, "Ban on second hand clothes", Bulawayo 31 July 2015.



'Textile Mills' factory once employed hundreds in Bulawayo's once thriving clothing industry – now, where industry cannot offer hope, the church has stepped in....



In a sign of the times, another abandoned industrial-site-turned-church in Bulawayo.

estimated US\$5 million in investment needed to revive the sector. The Poverty Reduction Forum Trust commented, "You don't close the only channel without opening an alternative. Our reality is that those industries which we seek to promote are not there."¹⁶¹ Grace Mugabe has become controversially embroiled in the second-hand clothes issue, condemning such clothing as unhygienic - "The truth is these clothes have been worn somewhere and are not healthy to use"¹⁶² - and yet a few weeks later she dished out 150 bales of second-hand clothes at a ZANU PF rally in Zvimba.¹⁶³

"Don't buy second-hand clothes, don't import them because when they are confiscated by police and authorities, they are given to me as the mother so that I could distribute them to many people for free."¹⁶⁴

Incensed vendors, who have hired a solicitor to lay charges against the authorities, have challenged the mechanism by which officially confiscated goods end up without payment in the possession of Grace Mugabe, to distribute in a politically partisan manner.

We paid for those clothes. We don't want to sell on the streets. There are no jobs. It is hard and it is dirty and sometimes we have to sleep in the city at night because we can't afford to go home until the weekend.¹⁶⁵

5. MDC-T and the vendors: an ambivalent position

What to do about the vendors has become a major headache for MDC-T town authorities around Zimbabwe. Just as ZANU PF clearly faces the double edged problem of wanting to champion vendors as a large urban voter base, while simultaneously not wanting them to assemble in sufficient numbers to become a revolutionary threat, so MDC-T town councils have striven to keep their current support from vendors while moving to control the orderliness of the cities. Morgan Tsvangirai invoked MDC-T town councils to show a human face to differentiate themselves from the threats of ZANU PF.

Let me remove any doubt from your minds, any attempts by the regime to mount a second Murambatsvina will be strongly resisted and the MDC commits itself to the protection of all informal business persons, their inclusion in our economy and to making it possible for them to grow and prosper.

However, the threats from Kasukuwere combined with their own perception that the situation could in fact not be allowed to worsen in terms of congestion in the cities, MDC-T did capitulate on the need to move vendors out of the city centre and to build new,

¹⁶¹ *The Standard*, "Ban on second-hand clothes a disaster", 2 August 2015.

¹⁶² *The Chronicle*, "First Lady warns corrupt, factional elements", 28 August 2015.

¹⁶³ *NewsDay*, "Grace grabs vendors' goods", 28 August 2015.

¹⁶⁴ Peta Thornycroft, "Grace Mugabe accused of handing 'stolen' Harare vendors' clothes to political supporters", *The Telegraph*, London, 31 August 2015.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

designated sites on the periphery. This is not a satisfactory solution from the point of view of vendors, as there are fewer or no customers adjacent to the new sites, and there is so far marked resistance to remaining at these vending stands, which to date remain inadequately serviced in terms of toilets and water taps, as well as shaded areas. "You can't even make a sale of 25 cents. No sane customer can come to such a secluded place as this."¹⁶⁶ Those who have moved to remote new bays are agitated by the fact that the unlicensed vendors still crowding the town do better business than they do: "What we want is for other vendors to come here and we face the same situation together, not that we the law-abiding vendors are dumped here while others remain in town recording brisk business."¹⁶⁷

C. Bulawayo and the vendors

In Bulawayo, Executive Mayor Martin Moyo announced in June that there would be no move to cleanse the city centre of vendors until there were alternative sites, and that those already licensed and occupying designated sites in the city would not be harassed. "My hope is that good sense will prevail and we can be allowed enough time to organise ourselves in Bulawayo". In a statement that was a milder version of Mugabe's 'West African' comment, he nonetheless remarked that,

I do not support the idea of chasing vendors off the streets, let alone eradicating vending. I believe that *for the orderliness and cleanliness of our city* we must manage vending. This we can do in consultation with vendors' representative organisations.
168

The 26 June deadline was pushed back in Bulawayo to 13 August on the grounds that alternative sites would be ready by then. After this date, even though the new sites were in fact not completed and allocated, the Zimbabwe Republican Police (as opposed to municipal police) began a campaign of arrests in Bulawayo. Civic group 'Woza Moya' describes the police, "...stampeding vending sites, running in and causing commotion. They beat people and then 'illegally' take their goods blatantly looting from vendors."¹⁶⁹ Woza Moya challenged the Mayor Martin Moyo personally –

Are you not ashamed of your promise that you have not fulfilled? ... Why have you thrown the constitution in the dustbin along with our right to earn a living and trade? Should we now prepare for another Gukurahundi and Murambatsvina?

¹⁶⁶ Bulawayo24.com, "Harare vendors vow to invade CBD", 5 August 2015.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ *New Zimbabwe*, "Angry Bulawayo vendors demonstrate against council, petition mayor", 28 August 2015.

¹⁶⁹ Woza Moya means Come Holy spirit/Cleansing Wind: their flyer distributed in centre of Bulawayo on 27 August during street protests lists vendors' complaints against the Mayor, council and the police.



Vegetable vending, Bulawayo

Woza Moya also challenged the legality of the seizure of goods from vendors without a process of receipting them, or of vendors being given the option of paying a fine to have the goods returned. The confiscated produce, most of it perishable, simply gets divided up among the police, giving them a strong motive to harass the vendors. By the end of August, vendors in Bulawayo were playing a cat and mouse game with police, being chased away from undesignated vending sites in the morning and returning to them by the afternoon. The areas for the new designated sites, for example on the Victoria Falls road, had, by October not yet been developed in any way. A policing city council officer commented,

We have a confused mayor, one time he says remove vendors, but as you effect that order he back tracks and says wait, the new sites are not ready.¹⁷⁰

1. By-Laws and confiscated goods: clearly being flouted

The city council is theoretically entitled to enforce by-laws, but only the police can arrest and confiscate goods. The council has no real control over when and where the police decide to do this. In terms of *Harare (Vendors) By-laws, 2014*,

Any seized goods removed to a secure compound shall be released to the owner after the payment of (a) the prescribed penalty ... (b) any storage charges.... Council shall publish in any newspaper within the Council area, a list of unclaimed goods and advise the owners to claim the goods within 30 days.

If the goods are not claimed in 30 days, they may be auctioned, again after a published notice, and the proceeds of the sale of the goods are supposed to be paid to the owner as long as they are claimed via a written request within 30 days of the auction. Proceeds from unclaimed goods are forfeited to Council. This is a far cry from the reality on the ground,

¹⁷⁰ Interview, 26 August 2015.

where bales of clothing and mounds of fruits and vegetables are being confiscated without receipting the owners. The goods are auctioned without due notice, and it is reported that this is usually among the police themselves for minimal amounts. We had reports of police actually breaking open storage areas, and removing bales that were clearly not at that time on the streets being sold. These were confiscated without receipt and not returned.



The same street corner in Bulawayo, in July (above) and in September 2015 (below): council has decided to turn this area into legally designated sites, within the yellow cone area.



2. Vendors from Harare in Bulawayo

While the number of vendors in Bulawayo has notably increased in the wake of Grace Mugabe's 2014 rallies as it has elsewhere, the city centre has not become as inundated as Harare. However, one of the biggest shifts noted has been an influx of vendors from Harare into Bulawayo, which began during late 2014 and has escalated since the initial clashes

between vendors and police in Harare in June 2015.¹⁷¹ The influx is notable as these new vendors speak only Shona and not Ndebele. By August 2015, they had taken over illegal sites, predominantly between 5th and 6th Avenues, and were not paying fees to City Council. Attempts to remove them initially proved futile. It was the perception of the more established Bulawayo vendors and city council officials that they seemed to think they were above regulation and were protected by ZANU PF. Some of the established Bulawayo vendors reported that when the goods of these newcomers were first seized from undesignated sites, soon after their arrival, they put on ZANU PF T-shirts and went to the police station demanding their goods back, and they were duly returned.¹⁷²



Above: "Bulawayo Endorses Cde Mugabe For Life"
Below: illegal structures to house goods, and Dynamos Soccer Club flag



¹⁷¹ Several interviewees, including town council officials and vending association officials confirmed this. It was also our own observation.

¹⁷² We could not independently confirm this, but found even the persistent rumour of this incident informative, as it underlined the perception of the 'Bulawayo' vendors that the 'Harare invaders' had political protection and were untouchable, generating hostile feelings.

Posters displaying Robert Mugabe and others displaying Amai Grace went up alongside their illegal sites; they took over roadside public parking spaces and pavements that were clearly not vending areas. In July 2015, it was noted that these new arrivals were building structures in the centre of the city that were not council approved, to house their goods overnight. There was even a Dynamos Football Club flag flying on the street among these vendors – this is the flag of Harare’s leading football team, where Bulawayo is a die-hard Highlanders Football Club area! The interviewees claimed that these traders were boastful, and could be heard chanting, “*wuyai muzotenga, zwakachipa panapa, Harare yawuya*” meaning, “Come and buy, things are cheap here, Harare is here.” As they were not paying council fees, they could undercut the registered vendors.¹⁷³ They call their area “Tsogoro”.

A city housing official in Bulawayo stated in early August that he was aware of the influx of vendors from Harare, as well as other unlicensed vendors now increasingly operating outside of designated areas.

I know people came here and declared a no go area. That is nothing; we will move all of them. The same thing happened some time ago. People came and settled at our farms, including Mazwi and declared these so-called ‘no go areas’ but we evicted them.¹⁷⁴

In fact, by September this solid group of Harare vendors had been removed from the areas they had commandeered, and had been told to register and get designated stands allocated to them. Many have now done this, but are now complaining that they have been allocated stands in various different vending areas, effectively breaking up and dispersing their numbers. A council official said this was simply the product of their policy of registering vendors and assigning sites on an individual basis only. They are not prepared to entertain requests from vendors’ groupings or associations that they be given adjacent sites.¹⁷⁵ Several associations claim to be able to ‘book’ blocks of adjacent sites for their members, but BCC disputes this. They are already fielding complaints from vendors who were used to illegally selling from an undesignated area outside the Presbyterian church - now that this area has been officially designated as a vending area, ‘their’ bays have been awarded to others (see photos above). BCC is standing firm on this, and does not specific bays on demand.

The same official indicated that the vendors were a political football in Zimbabwe – he noted that the MDCs initially patronized the vendors, “which gave ZANU PF the idea: they are now doing it too and the situation is getting out of hand.” The Ministry of Local Government was forcing MDC-T- run city councils in Bulawayo and Harare to become the ‘bad guys’ who would have to be responsible for persecuting and removing the vendors. The situation was clearly seen as something of a Catch 22 – the vendors could not be allowed to continue to grow in numbers and to operate outside of designated sites, as this was making the city ‘dirty’ and was exposing the local authority as unable to enforce the law. On the other hand,

¹⁷³ Interview with BUTA officials, and vendors on the streets, plus personal observations.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with city council official, 28 July 2015.

¹⁷⁵ Interview, council official, September 7, 2015.

the vendors were potential voters who should not be alienated, and who were in an impossible situation in terms of trying to earn a living in the current climate.¹⁷⁶

3. Vendors and vendors associations, Bulawayo

Until recently, the politicization of vendors in Bulawayo had remained more oblique than in Harare, although there were claims that certain vendors associations had stronger affiliations with one or another party. For example, the Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Associations (ZCIEA), which is a nationwide structure, is considered to be MDC-T aligned, as it was originally set up by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) during the 1990s, when retrenchments became widespread. The Bulawayo Traders Association (BUTA) is considered to be more ZANU PF aligned, working closely with Sithembiso Nyoni, the Minister for Small and Medium Enterprises.¹⁷⁷ Bulawayo People's Trading Association, or BUPTA, is another body: Bulawayo Amalgamated Traders' Association (BATA) and Bulawayo Vendors and Traders Association (BVTA) are two more. Vendors often do not see the point in belonging to a national vending structure, such as ZCIEA, as vendors are subject more to city councils than to a national policy: it is the policy of each particular town council and each town's particular attitude to enforcing by-laws, which vary from town to town, that affect vendors' daily lives. Other very localised, small vendors associations seem to simply represent their members at a given vending site, such as at the bus terminus, for example. The majority of vendors remain unaffiliated to any of the many associations in Bulawayo, feeling that there is no real benefit to themselves, or alternatively are affiliated to several, being unclear of what any can offer and looking for whatever help they can get. One vendor, who had recently paid \$20 to join BUTA, commented,

You see I attend meetings called by all these associations because I just do not know where this whole thing is taking us. I am also a member of the ZANU-PF group because I registered my name with them.... We were then encouraged to regularly attend meetings so that we would be told what to do as women or youth at given times.... All they promise is their ability to handle authorities when it matters most. That is when one's wares have been confiscated or one has been arrested.¹⁷⁸

This means that most vendors are not really in a position to lobby for improved conditions. It is unwieldy trying to persuade a dozen associations, all representing a few hundred members each, to develop a united position with which to lobby city council.¹⁷⁹ Nonetheless, the bigger associations do hold regular meetings with council, and are lobbying them around various issues, including: persuading them not to implement household water meters, which will remove access to water for poor families; providing some facilities for the children of vendors, who are at risk on the streets every day; making changes to the very outdated and basically racist 1976 Hawkers and Vendors By-Laws, which is the legislation that dictates vending policy in Zimbabwe.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Perceptions of vendors in interviews.

¹⁷⁸ Vendor interview, September 2015.

¹⁷⁹ Interview, Thabang Nare, Bulawayo Vendors and Traders Association, August 2015, also vendors, August 2015.

4. Vending: Hope without Hope

Several vendors and key informants reported that, “people are tired of politics and are simply in survival mode”.¹⁸⁰ Most vendors reported to us that they are making a profit of \$2 a day, if they are lucky. They have to buy their goods and cover transport, rent, school fees – it is impossible to make ends meet on what is generated from sales. It is unsurprising that 75% of households now report they will not be able to pay school fees in the future.¹⁸¹

There is desperation. It's hope without hope. You appear to have a job when in real terms you don't have a job. You get up and dress every day and go to town and see people passing your stand, hoping maybe you will sell something.¹⁸²

Vendors have sizeable overheads considering the paltry likelihood of sales. Annual fees for a vending bay in Bulawayo were reported as being \$23, plus \$15 a month. This works out to less than a dollar a day. However, temporary vendors at the eGodini site, pay \$2.40 per day, a significant amount in Zimbabwean terms, considering the sales returns. For example, a vendor can sell an orange for R2, which amounts to selling 7 oranges to earn back \$1 on the original purchasing price of \$3 a pocket. There may be 30 oranges in a pocket, meaning you need to sell all 30 oranges to raise \$4 – which does not cover the cost of the oranges and the temporary stand for the day. Transport to your vending site, food for the day – these are all costs yet to be met. You need to sell two pockets to begin to make any profit, which is unlikely considering the competition and poverty in the city.

The situation with everyone I see here is the same. People have spoken of not having had a meal for up to three days. When they get a dollar from making sales, they buy small quantities of rice. Some also end up eating potatoes that go bad from their wares. There is no longer enough money around as everyone is now selling. This is worsened by the fact that industries are no longer there. Before, men used to be employed in the factories but these have since closed and as such, men are now competing with women to sell items in the streets.¹⁸³

5. The ‘ZANU PF’ vendors

The post June influx of Harare vendors that are clearly ZANU PF aligned has introduced new political tensions and manoeuvrings in Bulawayo. At the beginning of September, vendors reported that ‘ZANU PF’ vendors were holding separate meetings to strategise a way forward for themselves, and that there had been a big push to sell ZANU PF cards among the Bulawayo vendors.¹⁸⁴ Those selling these cards claimed that only those aligned to ZANU PF would be allowed to flout the vending regulations in future. We interviewed vendors who

¹⁸⁰ Nare, *ibid*.

¹⁸¹ Phyllis Mbanje, “75% likely to be unable to pay school fees”, *NewsDay*, 3 September 2015. Basic Needs Basket survey conducted by Poverty Reduction Forum.

¹⁸² Interview, Thabang Nare, BVT, August 2015.

¹⁸³ Interview, MaNyoni, July 2015.

¹⁸⁴ Interviews with vendors, September 5, 2015.

reported that they had personally bought ZANU PF cards, even though they did not consider themselves supporters of ZANU PF, and had gone to their offices to complain about having goods confiscated during police raids. They were given a long lecture saying that they needed to become ‘proper’ members of ZANU PF, and needed to be seen often at the offices if they were to get ‘proper’ help from ZANU PF. In some instances, ZANU PF card holders reported that by going to the ZANU PF offices and appealing for help, they in fact had some of their goods returned to them later, suggesting that there is a connection between this office and Drill Hall, where confiscated goods are taken.

6. Vending bays

With remarkable efficiency the Bulawayo City Council has tracked what is happening with the vendors in this city, and has produced an eight page document revealingly called, *Return to Sanity: Vending*, that shows that at 30 June 2015, there are already 116 designated vending sites, each with varying numbers of bays, as follows:

High density suburbs:	89	sites
Low density suburbs:	20	sites
City Centre:	7	sites
New sites:	19 proposed and more being investigated, across the city.	

In terms of vending bays, on 30 June there were:

4,199 registered vendors who *did not yet* have bays to operate from

9,082 bays from which registered vendors are operating

6,240 vacant bays

14,497 new bays planned, citywide.

This means there are currently over 15,000 bays in Bulawayo, almost half of which are officially recognised as being unused, and plans for almost 15,000 more. The unused bays are indicative of the fact that some markets are seen as having no customers, and have been abandoned or under utilized by vendors.

In Bulawayo, it has not been possible to establish any corruption around the allocation of vending bays, although rumours of such corruption persist. One key informant suggested that it is the long delays between applying for licenses and receiving them that leads to frustration and charges of corruption – it has been taking up to six months from applying to receiving a legitimate license for the first time. However, during the recent big push to regulate the informal sector in Bulawayo, 2,000 vending licenses have been issued in the space of a few weeks, which indicates that the previous delays were avoidable.¹⁸⁵ Although there were unsubstantiated claims that some of those close to city councillors have more than one bay allocated to them, meaning they can rent out the extra bay/s, the Harare “space

¹⁸⁵ Nare, interview, August 2015.

baron” phenomenon does not seem to exist on any recognizable scale in Bulawayo at this stage.

7. The informal sectors and the vote

The informal sector, in particular urban vending, is obviously a ‘problem’ that is not going anywhere in Zimbabwe, except to become ever more dominant as the economy continues on its downward trajectory. The battle to control the sector on the one hand, while not overstepping an unclear mark that has the potential to turn angry and desperate crowds of vendors into a revolutionary mob, may increasingly preoccupy ZANU PF. Similarly, MDC-T-run city councils will continue to seek to balance their need not to alienate this voter base with the need to be seen to enforce city by-laws.

While both ZANU PF and the MDCs are aware that the vendors represent a large urban voting base countrywide, one that appears to have supported mainly the MDC-T in elections to date, the informal sector has remained notoriously hard to organise in any comprehensive fashion. This has been commented on before by Raftopoulos:¹⁸⁶ The demise of industry and formal employment has also meant the demise of the ZCTU, whose membership base now numbers scarcely 100,000 countrywide. The urban vote in 2000 and 2002 elections was driven by the support of the ZCTU and their affiliated workers, who had an obvious link to Morgan Tsvangirai, their ex-President. However, the dismantling of industry means that the vote will now be decided in the cities through the outcome of the battle to control the hearts and minds of the thousands of vendors. Currently, the vendors do not speak with one voice, and cannot be mobilized to mass action in the way that the ZCTU mobilized workers in strikes and stay-aways during the 1990s. The aforementioned, obvious attempts by ZANU PF to court or bully sections of the informal sector into supporting them notwithstanding, the vendors remain fragmented and represented by scores or even hundreds of vending associations nationwide.

Countrywide, only 3,6% of workers belonged to an employees’ association at the end of 2014,¹⁸⁷ meaning that one can assume that the majority of vendors do not belong to any vendors’ association. Vendors report making barely one or two dollars a day – in such a context, paying weekly or even monthly fees to an association with limited capacity to represent your interests, does not seem like a worthwhile expenditure. Some of these associations are clearly strongly politically aligned, but others appear to simply represent the interests of vendors at a particular vending market. Vendors continue to be facing individual, daily struggles for existence, where each vendor sits surrounded by competing individuals selling identical products, or moves through the streets and alleys, canvassing for sales and keeping one step ahead of harassment by the police. This is not an ideal context for unified action. When broached on the topic of politics, Bulawayo vendors often responded that they were too busy surviving to worry about politics, and they had not voted in the last election as standing in a queue to vote meant a loss of potential sales.¹⁸⁸ Some vendors expressed clearly their loss of faith in any particular party to get them out of their

¹⁸⁶ Raftopoulos, op cit.

¹⁸⁷ ZIMStat, op cit.

¹⁸⁸ Interviews, August 2015.

difficulties, or to create proper jobs. Insecure lives, including insecure places of residence because of problems paying rent, means that many vendors are not registered in any particular constituency and therefore are not active players in elections.

The task of organising this group within the towns and cities will remain a formidable challenge to all political parties and civic groupings in the future. How they finally internalize and respond to the ambivalent desires of either ZANU PF or any opposition parties to accommodate them may be decisive. ZANU PF's capacity for patronage may become increasingly a factor as greater poverty takes hold. Already, in Bulawayo there are indications of people signing up at ZANU PF offices in the hope that ZANU PF's assumed 'clout' with the police provides a form of protection. Whether this translates into votes in this city where it has proved notoriously difficult, since 1980, for ZANU PF to win a seat, remains to be seen.

Furthermore, an enormous constituency that will not be dealt with in this report is that of the informal miners and their dependents in peri-urban and rural areas. By some estimates, they now number as many as 1,5 million.¹⁸⁹ They, too, will play a key role in determining the political future of Zimbabwe, and currently remain largely outside of any organised structures apart from those provided by both legal and illegal gold buyers.



Second hand shoes and clothes displayed in the road, Bulawayo, September 2015.

¹⁸⁹ *The Chronicle*, "Rate of royalty on gold for artisanal miners reduced", 31 August 2015. This very reduction in the royalty rate on gold can be seen as ZANU PF continuing its efforts to woo this large sector of the informal economy.

PART 3:

INFORMAL AND FORMAL HOUSING: UPDATE 2015

A. Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle/Live Well (OGHK)

In May 2005, the government initially claimed that there was no need to provide housing for the 560,000 displaced by their demolitions, as people should simply go back to their rural homes. However, with UN Habitat and Anna Tibiajuka's visit looming and mounting international pressure, they suddenly mentioned a massive scheme to build 300,000 houses by the end of 2005, with a further 250,000 each year until 2008, totaling a million houses!¹⁹⁰ Needless to say, these houses have not materialized.

1. Inter Ministerial Committees headed by the army

Inter Ministerial Committees (IMCs) were set up in all the towns and provinces, all headed by high-ranking army officers, and including representatives from the Ministries of Housing and Small and Medium Enterprises, among others. The IMC was supposed to be in charge of all the mechanics and overheads of building – sourcing materials and labour, and deciding on who got the houses. They were also supposed to provide services, including water and sewerage infrastructure to benefit the new houses. None of this was supposed to be the domain of the city councils when the IMCs were initially set up.

Less than 5% of the promised funds ever materialized for the programme. By the end of 2006, **fewer than 2,000 new units** had been partially built in the four western provinces, where 4 million people live. These were of a shocking standard and lacked basic services. Not one of them was considered habitable by the local councils. Nationwide, the scheme was mired in scandals, poor workmanship, corruption and inefficiencies.¹⁹¹ In Chinoyi, twenty OGHK houses collapsed with the first rains in November 2005. Contractors were removing personnel from building sites by early 2006, because of lack of payment.¹⁹²

Ironically, considering the government's rationale that structures had to be destroyed during OM because they flouted city by-laws, the OGHK houses flouted dozens of by-laws, in particular by being built without services having been taken into account. It became apparent that in Bulawayo the OGHK houses had been built on rocky terrain, meaning that blasting would be necessary to provide services, and that same blasting would effectively knock down the houses.¹⁹³ Nor were pit latrines a prospect in this area, being above the Nyamandlovu Aquifer and ground water contamination being a real risk!¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ *Zimbabwe Independent*, "Govt slips on Garikai targets", 9 December 2005.

¹⁹¹ SPT, 2006 for more details.

¹⁹² *Zimbabwe Independent*, "Operation Garikai hits a snag", 6 January 2006

¹⁹³ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ Interview, BCC officials May 2006.

From January 2006, government began allocating the incomplete houses, and announced that from then on, those who received houses would have to finance their completion. They also announced that in the future, ***OGHK would consist in government providing a few thousand un-serviced stands around the country, and that the total cost of building a house would revert to those who got the stands.*** This was the end of the grand scheme to build a million houses!

In 2010, we noted that close to none of the 560,000 displaced had been housed at government expense, and that international agencies had also failed to house more than a few thousand people countrywide. Under the Government of National Unity, the MDC-run Ministry of Housing failed to change housing policy in Zimbabwe in any perceivable way, and demolitions have continued countrywide for various law-enforcing reasons. The inability of either the Ministries of Housing or Local Government, or of the local authorities, to expedite the housing crisis in Harare in particular, has opened the door to unscrupulous schemes that, as always happens, have preyed on vulnerable, struggling families desperate for housing security.

2. Land barons – Harare

In Harare, “land barons” have become a prominent and destructive phenomenon linked to the desperate housing shortages in the capital, which has waiting lists of up to 500,000. While illegal deals around land use and abuse have been ongoing in Harare for the last decade,¹⁹⁵ the land barons became more obvious ahead of the 2013 elections: by allowing ZANU PF-connected housing co-operatives and individuals to fraudulently sell council land in and around the city, those selected for patronage by powerful ZANU PF individuals corruptly accumulated money. Many of the stands allocated and subsequently built on, were actually zoned for schools, clinics and recreational facilities.¹⁹⁶ Since Kasukuwere has been appointed Minister of Local Government, he has moved against the land barons: this has meant, in the first instance, the demolishment of all structures on illegally sold land, which has been devastating for thousands of families that have invested in buying and building on these stands. Controversially, the Harare City Council has been overseeing the demolitions. Acting town clerk Josephine Ncube told a press conference that,

As council we sympathize with residents who chose to listen to land barons instead of the council which controls development in its area of jurisdiction. But while we commiserate with them, we are determined to bring order in Harare and to restore the invaded land to its planned use.¹⁹⁷

This serves to once more underline the invidious position that ZANU PF has placed the MDC-T dominated council in: by demolishing structures that ZANU PF land barons have facilitated and benefited from, the council is enforcing the by-laws, but is simultaneously generating bad will towards itself as a party, as these structures belong to ordinary citizens of Harare.

¹⁹⁵ Examples include allowing the building of a Chinese shopping centre in a wetland, and building a road bypass through another wetland, among others.

¹⁹⁶ Harare City Council, statement, 12 August 2015.

¹⁹⁷ *The Source*, “Harare city council bids to recover land from barons”, 13 August 2015.

The blitz by Kasukuwere has also led to the arrest of more than 50 land barons.¹⁹⁸ Over 8,000 people filed cases against land barons in the space of a few weeks in 2015.¹⁹⁹ It has been strongly suggested that the previous Minister, Ignatius Chombo, is behind the Harare land barons, as he allowed them to flourish under his jurisdiction. Elected Councillors Association of Zimbabwe (ECAZ) president, Warship Dumba stated:

I strongly believe that Chombo is the leader of all these land barons. There was no way any piece of land could be legally or illegally sold out without his (Chombo's) knowledge unless he is very daft and stupid.²⁰⁰

The exposing of the barons and their arrests at Kasukuwere's instigation are perceived as driven by the current rivalry and factionalism within ZANU PF, rather than by any new regard for the law.²⁰¹

B. Formal housing in Bulawayo: 2015

During OM in May 2005, Bulawayo had 10,873 'unregularised' structures demolished in the high-density suburbs. Thousands of families and their dependents were made homeless overnight. In addition, the informal settlements of Killarney and Ngozi Mine were also entirely demolished, displacing hundreds of families. In this section of the report, we reassess the accessibility of housing in the Bulawayo urban area, and also revisit Ngozi Mine and Killarney, as well as Mazwi, a new settlement on the opposite side of Bulawayo, where many of the original Killarney families displaced during OM have now been given permanent housing through a building scheme supported by the Bulawayo City Council and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

1. High density housing, 2005-2010

In 2006, we acquired a list provided by the BCC of properties affected by demolitions, and used a random number system to select 89 properties for a survey. This was aimed at identifying the levels of congestion on these properties in the wake of the demolitions, as well as the movements in and out of the properties since May 2005. We followed up on 30% of these 89 properties in 2010, five years on. In 2015, we have visited 10% of these 89 properties to gain an indication of congestion levels in the high density suburbs, as well as assessing this via other indicators, such as demand for purchasing stands and availability of rental accommodation.

¹⁹⁸ *The Herald*, "Blitz against land barons intensifies: police quiz 38 suspects in one day, over 50 already in court", 5 September 2015.

¹⁹⁹ *The Herald*, "8,000 report land barons to the police", 25 August, 2015.

²⁰⁰ *NewZimbabwe*, "Premature to give 'mess clearing' Kasukuwere credit, say opposition parties", 9 September 2015.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.* More will not be said about the housing context nationwide, as this is covered in the Harare media regularly and also by Harare-based NGOs and scholars. The rest of this report will focus on Bulawayo.

Congestion in Bulawayo: 2006

In 2006, we observed that one year after the demolitions, “people live in a state of permanent existential crisis, with no way out.”²⁰² Our 2006 survey in two high density suburbs of Bulawayo showed that those displaced from demolished back yard shelters had crowded into the remaining structures, meaning that people were in some instances living with around 1 square meter per person of floor space! Children were being exposed to sex for money activities, breadwinners had diasporised; husbands and wives were sleeping in separate rooms, as men crowded into one room and women into another. Ironically, considering that the government’s stated motive was to decongest cities and send people ‘back where they came from”, very few of those displaced made their ways back to rural districts. And of the hundreds *forcibly* transported and dumped in rural areas, most had made their way back into the cities one year on²⁰³. It was amply illustrated that you cannot change a person’s urban identity simply by knocking down his dwelling.

Decongestion in Bulawayo: 2010

In 2010, we returned to 30% of the 89 Bulawayo properties randomly chosen in 2006, where backyard structures had been demolished during OM. In 2006 we had recorded an average of 3,2 square meters of floor space per person, with as little as barely 1 square meter each of floor space in some of these properties.²⁰⁴ By 2010, we found these same properties had been ***radically decongested***, with a reduction by 48% in numbers of residents living there (from 269 to 141 people in these exact properties over those five years).²⁰⁵ We found 30% of the same individuals on these properties as in 2006, meaning that 70% of people had moved out, and only 22% of those were replaced by new residents. Of the 70% who had moved out and whose movements we could trace, 24% had gone to rural areas, 19% had moved to another urban property, 16% were in the diaspora and 11% were dead. We have already discussed in this report the fact that the total economic collapse of 2008/9 succeeded in driving urban families back to rural areas and out into the diaspora in a way that OM, intended to do this, had failed to achieve.

The decongestion meant that **living space per person had almost doubled** to 6,2 square meters. Nonetheless, congestion remained relatively high, with grannies sharing rooms with teenage boys, women of three generations sleeping in the living room each night, and much daily and nightly manoeuvring of furniture to accommodate people. The very emptying of the stands was attributed to inability of tenants to pay rents and other bills. Families had sent children to rural schools to save money on fees. There were many tales of deaths of breadwinners, and of family in the diaspora who did not remit anything substantial back to Bulawayo.

²⁰² Solidarity Peace Trust (SPT), *Meltdown: Murambatsvina one year on*, Johannesburg, Aug 2006.

<http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/166/meltdown-murambatsvina-one-year-on/>

²⁰³ SPT, 2006 and 2010.

²⁰⁴ SPT, op cit, 2006.

²⁰⁵ SPT, op cit, July 2010.

2. Bulawayo: status quo maintained in 2015

In 2010, ten sites were revisited in a small resampling of previously documented sites. Key informant interviews were also conducted, with the Bulawayo Mayor and the City's Chief Engineer, local estate agents and others, for their perceptions of the state of availability of housing in Bulawayo currently.

- The sites revisited showed that there has been little shift in numbers living in these particular houses. Where tenants have died, or grown up and moved away, close to equal numbers of tenants have moved in to replace them.
- Owners of properties continued to strongly lament the loss of backyard structures as these had been a source of rental income that is increasingly sorely missed as people struggle to survive in a depressed job market.

3. 2015: Depressed rental and housing sales in Bulawayo

Generally, the city remains decongested, as observed in 2010. Everyone consulted referred to the rental situation in Bulawayo as depressed; rentals are falling and houses and offices stand empty in all parts of the city, both high and low density, as well as in the CBD. Interviews with city council, estate agents and informal exchanges with ordinary citizens all reinforced this opinion. It appears that depending on where one is prepared to live, renting is currently inexpensive. There is an expansive area of Cowdray Park that is referred to as the "Dark City" as there is no electricity, water or sewerage. This is one of Bulawayo's newer high density suburbs, and incorporates the OGHK-allocated stands, which explains the lack of services! However, there are reasonably capacious, owner built houses here, and it was reported that it is possible to rent a room for as little as \$15 a month. However, it was also pointed out that the low rentals and ease of finding places to rent pointed to a quick turnover and a lack of tenants able to pay rent: evictions of non-paying tenants is routine by landlords, while others, out of sympathy for the situation and realizing that they will not get paying tenants anyway, may allow families to stay for some time, even if they cannot pay the rent.

The property for sale market is depressed across the city. Houses that have been seized by the courts in cases of bankruptcy are often withdrawn from auction when the very minimal reserve selling prices are not met.²⁰⁶ This includes properties across the income range – low density, high density and business properties. There is a tangible lack of cash flow in the city, with few able to sink capital into purchasing property. Both city council and the estate agents noted in August that, whereas in Bulawayo those in the Diaspora used to be their biggest source of housing purchasers, sales to this group have sunk to around 40% of what they were a few years ago. This is attributed to the falling Rand in South Africa, which makes local houses priced in US\$ unaffordable, particularly combined with the generally worsening job market across the border. Sales are now mainly to people from Harare, and to senior employees of parastatals. City council reported that for those already in the system paying off stands or houses on a monthly basis, defaulting rates are very high.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Knight and Frank Estate Agents, interview, August 2015.

²⁰⁷ Interviews, estate agents and BCC, August 2015.

On paper, the BCC housing waiting list is around 100,000 names. In actuality, if you have money to purchase, you can register today on the BCC list and purchase almost immediately: prospective buyers wait at most six months for a council stand in the high density suburbs, and often purchase the same week. The long waiting lists are theoretical: if you have money, you can buy a council stand in Bulawayo.

4. OGHK in Bulawayo

*In Bulawayo, by the end of 2006, only 464 chicken-hock-sized houses had been completed, with another 236 houses at various levels – some at foundation level, some at window level. This was a total of 700 un-serviced houses built in the first year of OGHK.*²⁰⁸

In addition, in 2006 BCC reported that 4,000 stands had been allocated by the IMC, on the basis that people had to build themselves. Out of these, only 2 houses had been built to roof level, with another 280 at foundation level. No house was fit for occupation, and 94% of stands were completely undeveloped. This was hardly surprising in the context of an already collapsed economy. The allocation of the stands was also a scandal, with army, prison and police personnel receiving the vast majority of the stands. The BCC's housing list was almost entirely ignored, which had prioritized those who lost accommodation through OM. A large number of rate-payers – who already owned houses in the city – were given stands, which was clearly not the intention of OGHK. By 2015, the large, fancy houses that have been built on some of the OGHK stands serves to underline that these stands did not go to the urban poor, for whom they were allegedly intended.

5. OGHK in 2015

The army-controlled IMCs remained nominally in charge of the remnants of OGHK until the end of 2011. However, they effectively achieved nothing further during this time, apart from double and treble allocating the same 4,000 stands in Cowdray Park that they had already allocated by the end of 2006! They failed to service any of the stands, and it is unclear where the money paid to them for the double and treble stand allocations has gone. It is hard to see where there were any government inputs into this scheme, as people were told by the IMCs that they had to pay them for the stands, had to build the houses themselves, and do not have basic services such as electricity, sewerage and water!

At the end of 2011, BCC received a directive that OGHK was now the BCC's problem to sort out, and that the IMCs were being disbanded. They were told to take over and deal with the double and treble stand allocations, and since then, they have been demarcating thousands of stands in Cowdray Park to ensure that all those who lost out through the multiple fraudulent allocations will be given an alternative stand. There are more than 4,000 individuals affected by the fraud. To date, another 4,000 stands have already been demarcated and allocated, which has rectified a large proportion of the fraudulent

²⁰⁸ SPT, 2006.

allocations. There are plans to establish a further 4,000 stands, meaning that OGHK will have 12,000 stands to its name in Bulawayo. This will see the end of OGHK in Bulawayo.



*An impressive residence on an OGHK stand, Cowdray Park
- meant for those displaced during OM*

The BCC has ingeniously adopted a latrine that they call the 'sky lure latrine' to deal with the lack of services in the 'Dark City' of Cowdray Park, and the problems of being unable now to blast through the rocky landscape without knocking down homes. Unlike the usual pit latrine - which is banned in this area because of the proximity of underground water -this is designed with an area above ground to hold the human waste.



Sky lure latrine: solution to no sewerage system in Cowdray Park.



Firewood collection – no electricity in the “Dark City”.

This requires walking up a few steps to reach the toilet seat. There are two adjacent toilet seats, which are used in six-monthly rotation. A spade of ash is placed through the latrine

hole onto the human waste each time it is used. After six months of being dormant, the unused side of the latrine dries out, and the human waste can be removed as manure. To date, there are not many of these, but there are plans to encourage their use. They seem sensible, as they do not need precious water to operate, and recycle all the waste in due course.

Some of the stands allocated under OGHK have been very well developed at this stage, and Cowdray Park is a flourishing suburb – but there are almost no grounds on which government can claim any of the positive outcomes that are emerging. People have themselves paid for the developments, and the BCC is now stepping in to try and provide the lacking services, without budgetary support from central government. The corruption around double and treble stand allocations is not yet entirely resolved, and will take possibly some years to iron out.

In other parts of Bulawayo, the BCC has moved away from outsourcing the development of services generally. They have noted that they have been allocating stands at a low cost to private companies to develop, who have then provided minimal services and sold the stands on at a big mark-up. BCC has decided to rather provide services themselves and sell at a higher price, but one below that currently being charged by private companies providing services. New excavating equipment has since arrived in Bulawayo to facilitate this plan.

C. Informal housing in Bulawayo, 2015

In 2005, there were two major informal settlements in Bulawayo - Killarney, on the outskirts of the town along the Harare road, and Ngozi Mine, close to the municipal rubbish dump on the west of the city. Both of these were entirely demolished by OM, displacing hundreds of families. We have maintained our connections with scores of these individuals and have followed their life trajectories since then. In June 2005, we were involved in relocating the displaced to the churches in Bulawayo, and in tracking families when they were kidnapped out of church premises by the army, and were trucked and dumped in remote rural business centres.²⁰⁹ The majority of families trucked and dumped in fact had no family claims in the rural districts they suddenly found themselves in. Most had been living in informal settlements in the first place, some for several generations, precisely because they had no other claims to land in Zimbabwe. Many were descended from at least one foreign-born parent - Malawian, Zambian or Mozambican - meaning that they also had no claims to Zimbabwean citizenship in terms of the citizenship amendments made in 2002. This meant they could not obtain identity documents, making ownership of urban property, and even renting, impossible, as landlords require IDs. Between 2005 and 2010, we kept in touch with these dumped families, tracking how they were faring, delivering food and other support to them when possible. In 2015, we have relocated several of these families and recount their current situations in the following sections.

²⁰⁹ SPT, op cit, 2005b, for more on these events.

1. Ngozi Mine- 2015

Ngozi Mine is an informal settlement adjacent to the city dump, which has existed for twenty years. There is an array of astonishingly inventive and talented craftspeople living here, eking out an existence by foraging for materials from the garbage, and refashioning them into crafts for sale. Others sort through the waste, extracting paper, plastics, glass, metal etc for recycling companies, to whom they then sell. It is hard and filthy work, with few returns. The community here is established, with recognised local leadership. Their lives were entirely disrupted by OM, when the police came through setting fire to all properties, destroying all belongings, including the informal homes themselves. Many lost ID cards and birth certificates as well. These families were among those taken in by the churches in Bulawayo, and who were then kidnapped and dumped back in rural areas. Already, by 2010 we established that most of those forcibly removed had returned to Ngozi Mine, and had attempted to recover their disturbed lives. Currently, around 800 people live there. This is **double the number** prior to OM, which is indicative of an increasing number of people falling out of formal housing in the tougher economic situation.

Mr M Moyo remains there as a community leader, making a living by extracting wire from waste, and painstakingly reforming this into diamond mesh fencing using his hands, which he then sells. He has lived at Ngozi Mine for 18 years. He also makes soap when he can get the ingredients. He has been unable to replace his ID card, destroyed in the fire. He would have to go back to Hwange, where he was born, and get local leadership to vouch for who he is in order to replace the card, and he cannot afford the travel costs.

He reports that the police no longer harass people there, or destroy property. There is a register of who is living in the area, and he and the police have duplicate registers for this. This enables them to identify interlopers, particularly if there is crime in the area. There are problems with accessing health care, and with finding money to bury if somebody in the community should die – they rely on churches to help out with burials. He manages to grow a bag of maize most years.

Poor quality of garbage in 2015

MaDlamini is another familiar face at Ngozi Mine. She moved to Ngozi Mine years back, when she and her husband were evicted from a house in Magwegwe for not paying rent, after the company he worked for closed. Her nephew, already at Ngozi Mine, told her that, “Ngozi Mine is a place that takes care of its orphans”, and indeed, she found that she could survive by finding scraps of cloth and making them into items for sale. In 2015, she complained about the falling quality of rubbish as a result of the hard economic times generally:

It is now tough at the dump site. There are no scrap items. We complain that the firms are closed, that is caused by politics. That gets into our lives so that it becomes difficult. The bad politics causes those with money to go and open firms elsewhere. When this happens, it causes hunger....

Women are now only allowed to scavenge on the dumps after 4 pm and before 8 am, as a person was crushed by one of the big caterpillars that crush the rubbish during working hours.



Bulawayo rubbish dump – Ngozi Mine

Children at Ngozi Mine

Children can have problems attending the local schools in Cowdray Park, as many do not have birth certificates – the parents' certificates were destroyed during OM, those that had them, and it is almost impossible to get the children certificates. It was also reported that children drop out of school very young, and smoke and drink. They also often 'marry' very early, as "girls fall in love with people as old as their own fathers". Domestic violence and excessive drinking were reported as a problem in the community.²¹⁰ Women have turned to brewing illicit beer as it has become harder to find rubbish worth recycling on the dump.

Dumping of vagrants at Ngozi Mine

Several residents at Ngozi Mine stated that BCC officials from time to time pick up vagrants in the alleys of the Bulawayo city centre, and dump them at Ngozi Mine. When challenged on whether the City Council was indeed dumping people on the rubbish dump, council officials said that this was not a policy, but did not deny that for "administrative reasons", it might have happened on occasion! They work with Bulawayo Shelter and various other shelters to try and house people found on the streets, but people often leave these shelters and are back on the streets soon after. These denials notwithstanding, we located two people who claimed to have been collected from the city centre by BCC in trucks, and left at Ngozi Mine. Both were ex-inmates of Ingutsheni Hospital for Mental Disorders:

²¹⁰ Mentioned in interviews, August 2015.



Community leader, Mr Moyo, Ngozi Mine



MaDlamini - makes cloth items for sale



Ngozi Mine church



Baskets made from waste



Figures made from plastic bags melted on to moulded mattress springs: Ngozi Mine



Mr Moyo, aged 61.



Ms Ncube, aged 69.

I have been here (Ngozi mine) for two years. The rangers caught me near United College of Education. They destroyed my shack and forced me in a car, where there were three other victims. They dumped us here.... It is very difficult to survive at this place. There is hardly anything to eat at the dump site. Items to sell are hard to come by and competition is stiff as the city council workers bringing rubbish here, collect valuable rubbish first and sell to us. Most of us fail to buy as we do not have money.²¹¹

Ms Ncube had a similar story – in addition, she was currently living in a shack with no roof, as local boys had stolen the asbestos sheets off the structure. They had been a donation, and she now simply lives in a structure with ‘walls’ and no roof (see photo).

IOM scheme and Ngozi Mine

There was resentment about the fact that a large number of families from Killarney had been resettled at Mazwi under the BCC-IOM programme, but only ten families from Ngozi Mine had benefited, although all were equally affected by OM, and all had been registered through the churches for the scheme. It is not clear why this was the case. Everyone considers life at Ngozi Mine to be tougher than it used to be, with fewer items of value on the dumps. However, many families have lived here for years and have no alternatives that are likely to yield better livings.

2. Killarney, 2015: where are people now?

Killarney, the informal settlement off the Harare road, was completely demolished in 2005. We have previously noted how families from this area had probably the hardest time of all OM affected families. One woman and her two children rebuilt their shack, only to have it knocked down again sixteen times in the ensuing two years, to give one example.²¹² Other families resorted to building shelters that were less than a meter off the ground – a sheet of asbestos supported on a few concrete blocks, for example, a ledge into which they could crawl at night and could keep a few possessions safe under – in order to avoid detection by police and soldiers driving past on the nearby roads. Killarney families were taken in by some of the Bulawayo churches in the first weeks after the demolitions, only to be literally kidnapped out of the churches in the middle of the night, on the eve of the release of the UN Habitat report. Families were forced on to an ARDA farm and kept away from everyone, including the pastors. Two babies died of cold during this time. The families were then forced back on to trucks and were distributed around rural districts, whether they were from those districts or not. Within a few months, the vast majority of these families had made their way back to Killarney, impoverished down to the bone. Few managed to keep more than a handful of possessions and building materials through these multiple, state-orchestrated movements.

Families resettled to rural areas

Five families were allocated land in Umguza district, in an area known as Glen Gulf, in order to establish rural homes even though they had no ancestral links to this area. However,

²¹¹ Mr. Moyo, interview, August 2015.

²¹² SPT, op cit, 2006, 2010.

having only lived a peri-urban lifestyle previously, most could not adapt to the routine of having to build, plough, plant and raise livestock. Furthermore, these families did not have draught power or appropriate tools to survive. While they have retained some claim to their rural plots, most of those resettled in Glen Gulf have moved away, either gold panning in other areas, or having moved permanently back into town. In 2015, we tracked down the elderly Mrs Nkomo, who still lives out there and has found life an arduous battle against poverty. She has no draught power and the family has been ostracized by the local community, which has tried on various occasions, most recently ahead of the 2013 election, to evict them. She was accused of being an MDC supporter, but was able to enlist the help of the Lands Department to cling on to her homestead here. She lives in dire circumstances, with an almost collapsed homestead that she does not have the strength to mend. She says life was better in Killarney, and finds it very hard to live being disliked by her neighbours.



Mrs. Nkomo at her collapsed homestead in Glen Gulf

Mrs Tshakanaka Dube was resettled from Killarney to Mazibisa in Tsholotsho, in the wake of OM. She has lived a life of poverty and desperation ever since, looking after grandchildren and a mentally ill daughter, with no support from anyone. Her adult children in South Africa have not supported her with remittances at all. The grandchildren are all out of school because of lack of resources. These women are poorer than their rural neighbours, and being forced into a rural setting as a result of OM has sealed their fate as destitute families.



Battling poverty: Mrs Tshakanaka Dube in Mazabisa, Tsholotsho, 2015

“Mazwi Two”

At the site of the old, demolished Killarney, there remains a sizeable informally settled community. This is in spite of, or maybe because in 2011, 200 families were moved from Killarney and given proper houses at Mazwi, 30 km away on the other side of Bulawayo.²¹³

The unfortunate thing is that the number of families ballooned when people heard about housing in Mazwi. Those that had managed to settle elsewhere came back for that reason. Some people were never affected by Murambatswina, but came in to settle here so that they could get decent housing easily.²¹⁴

Those now settled in Killarney refer to themselves as “Mazwi Two”, and all indicated that they were of the belief that if they remained in Killarney long enough, they too would be resettled in proper homes in Mazwi. There are as many families living here now as in the original Killarney settlement. However, when we inquired of City Council, they said there were no longer any plans for a second resettling of people at Mazwi: IOM, who helped finance and organise the first movement of families to Mazwi, do not even have an office in Bulawayo any longer. Those now in Killarney will hope in vain for proper homes.

We reconnected with some individuals whom we have known since the 2005 demolitions, and who were not resettled to Mazwi. Mr. Ndlovu has lived in Killarney since he was born there, in 1988, to Malawian immigrant parents. He was one of those given land in Tsholotsho, but who opted instead to return to Killarney. While he claims to be happy in Killarney, the only home he has ever known, he is battling to school his children and

²¹³ See next section on Mazwi

²¹⁴ Killarney resident, July 2015.

complains of the poor quality of his homestead and the small size of land to grow crops on. He survives by gold panning nearby.



Panning near Killarney, Sept 2015



Water from a burst pipe, Killarney 2015

Tapiwa was born in Killarney in 1991, and now lives in a tiny plastic-walled shack, raising her two children and her sister's two children, while her sister looks unsuccessfully for work in South Africa. She was 'married' at 15 years, and 'divorced' at 17 years old, by which time she had the two children. None of the children are in school as there is no money to send them. Her life story is typical of families at Killarney.



Killarney home, 2015

In general, life in Killarney remains as tough as it was before the demolitions. It is notable that people's homes remain less substantial than those demolished, owing now more to poverty than to fear of another demolition. Here, women brew illicit beer, or work as domestic labourers in nearby homes. Men do gold panning, or find piece jobs in the nearby

middle income suburb. Most families try to harvest something in the rainy season, but last year was a bad year for crops.

3. Mazwi, 2015: beautiful homes, no services

In the years following OM, and as a response to OM, the IOM and the BCC agreed to fund proper accommodation for most of the families in Bulawayo's informal settlements of Killarney and Ngozi Mine. In the end, Killarney families have made up most of the new settlement at Mazwi, near St Peters on the western side of the city. The beneficiaries contributed their labour to the buildings, with IOM providing materials and skills training. The homes are very robust structures, with decent land around them to grow back yard crops. Every family that has a home is so relieved to have a council approved, secure roof over their heads. However, the move has not been without its problems for these families. Basic services remain an issue. There is no electricity, and as the settlement is adjacent to a nature reserve, collecting of firewood is prohibited. The families nonetheless collect firewood, running the risk of being arrested and fined every day, as they see no other option. There is also almost no potable water: several boreholes were sunk for the scheme, but most have run dry, and the water, when available, is brackish. It can take hours to fill a few buckets from the one remaining borehole.



Beautiful, permanent homes built in Mazwi for informal settlement families from Killarney: 2015.

Most families also do not seem to have taken over deeds for their homes, and this is linked to the need for ID documents. Many lost their documents during OM, and have not managed to replace them, while others have never in their lives had any documents, including birth certificates, and to acquire them is a bureaucratic nightmare given that most of them cannot easily prove when and where they were born. ***There is a need for a civic organisation with legal capacity to step in and help resolve the ID issue for these families.***

The worst problem with the new Mazwi settlement is that it is miles out of the city. The nearest suburb, Pumula, is a \$1 taxi ride away, or a 10 km walk through the bush, where mugging is a possibility. People in Mazwi are unable to afford the taxi fare. From Pumula, it is another taxi ride to get into the city centre. This has made looking for occasional work almost impossible for those now in Mazwi. Getting to any hospital is now also a major dilemma, although there are two clinics within long walking distance, at Pumula and at Khami prison.



Beer advert-turned-shed, in Mazwi, Bulawayo

No source of income

Everyone to a person lamented how hard it was to generate income at Mazwi, compared to Killarney, and when we were in Killarney, we actually met several individuals who have been resettled in Mazwi, but who return for weeks on end to Killarney - over a 30 km walk away - where they can pan for gold, brew beer, or find piece work nearby. They maintain their Mazwi homes, leaving wives/husbands and children there, but breadwinners are unable to make a living in Mazwi.

Chicken scheme

A few years back, the Mazwi community had chicken runs built for them, and were provided training as well as stocks of layers and broilers and deep freezers for storing frozen chickens for the market. However, the scheme is now barely in existence: the first generation of layers stopped laying after only a few weeks, many of the chickens died of disease, and the chicken runs now accommodate 300 odd chickens, instead of the 3,000 they were designed to accommodate. The scheme is thus running at 10% of capacity, and the income being generated is slightly more than zero. The manageress of the scheme reports that those giving their labour to the scheme are getting a return of no more than \$20 every three months, or considerably less than \$10 a month! One of the problems seems to be around marketing and finding a good price. Nobody in the vicinity can afford to buy chickens, and the supermarkets that they are trying to sell to are offering only \$3 a bird. It is almost impossible to make a

profit on such a low return, especially considering the small number of birds being produced. ***There is a drastic need for the original donors to send in experts to do an analysis of what has gone wrong here, and to inject some more capital into resuscitating this chicken project before it dies entirely.*** The people involved are still contributing their labour, and still hoping for the odd return from it, but in another year, the chicken runs will be a relic of another failed development project....



*Mazwi poultry project – running at 10% of capacity in 2015:
needing an evaluation and new round of support*

Conclusion

Operation Murambatsvina was a devastating event in the lives of nearly 3 million people in Zimbabwe. It was followed by several more catastrophic events, including the years of hyperinflation, collapse of state services, and the violence of 2008. Families that were living on the edge before OM, have very often been tipped over that edge, into dire poverty. As the economy continues its decline with no turn around in sight, informal settlements are once more expanding, and numbers of vendors are increasing in the context of fewer and fewer returns on sales. There are limited, if any lifelines for families in poverty, and those that are there, have to come from within the families themselves, the state having abdicated its responsibility to its citizens years back. The depressed housing market in Bulawayo is a strong indicator of the lack of liquidity in this city. Industry has shrunk to a handful of factories in Bulawayo, which was once the production hub of the nation: churches now flourish in the shells of factories, as people look to God as their only possible source of deliverance.

There has been no reparation from the state for the demolitions. Operation Live Well and its promise of a million houses by 2008, has dwindled into a handful of badly made, corruptly allocated homes, and a few thousand unserviced, double- and treble-allocated stands. The Bulawayo council has been made to step into the breach to sort out the wreckage of OGHK. In short, the future leaves citizens hoping without hope, with no apparent relief ahead.



Dismantling of Hatcliff crèche and clinic, under state orders, June 2015