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Squatter Settlements an Urban Menace in Zimbabwe? Examining Factors behind the Continued Resurfacing of Squatter Settlements in Epworth Suburb, Harare

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the factors behind the continued resurfacing of squatter settlements in Epworth, Harare. To achieve the study's objectives a qualitative methodological approach was adopted which included the use of Focus Group Discussions and key informant interviews. The study made use of the Socio-Spatial approach and of the Actor-Oriented approaches. Findings show that a number of factors ranging from escaping high rentals, increasing family sizes and escaping the impacts of Operation Murambatsvina were some of the factors that are behind the continued resurfacing of squatter settlements in Epworth. Furthermore a number of challenges are being faced by the squatter residents ranging from poor sanitation services to the challenge of social vices in the area. As a result, the squatter dwellers are calling upon their agency to find a way into the area and finding their way around the limitations they face by residing in the squatter settlements in Epworth.

1. INTRODUCTION

This study examines the factors behind the continued resurfacing of squatter settlements in Harare by focusing on Epworth suburb. Epworth is now well known for the resurfacing of squatter settlements in the aftermath of major localised and national clean-up campaigns. For example, even after the most recent Operation Murambatsvina/Operation Restore Order which was launched on the 25th of May 2005, squatter settlements have continued to resurface in Epworth in apparent open defiance to the "orderliness" sought in the clean-up campaigns. Clean up campaigns similar to Operation Murambatsvina/Operation Restore Order carried out in Zimbabwe are not new and unique to the country as similar campaigns were also carried out in other cities like in Nairobi, Kenya, where a "clean up" campaign of 1970 demolished around 10,000 squatter

dwellings leaving an estimated 50,000 people homeless.

In 1970, the Senegalese government undertook a systematic campaign to destroy squatter areas in the city of Dakar, culminating in the destruction of Nimzatt and Angle Mousse squatter settlements in 1975 [1].

By 2003, the global estimate of people living in squatter settlements was 924 million and, without major changes to the present policies and practices of urban management, the number is projected to increase to 2 billion by 2030 [2]. Currently, Sub-Saharan Africa houses the highest proportion of slums (including shanty and squatter settlements) [3].

This paper is borrowing the definitions of shanty town/squatter settlement as a slum settlement (sometimes illegal or unauthorized) of impoverished people who live in improvised dwellings made from scrap materials, often plywood, corrugated metal and

sheets of plastic [4]. Squatter settlements are also known as shanty towns, informal settlements, low income settlements and semi-permanent settlements or unplanned settlements [5]. As a result of the above observations in this paper, the term shanty settlement will be used interchangeably with squatter settlement. Because of their illegal or semi legal status, infrastructure and services are usually inadequate.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that not all scholars hold negative views about squatter settlements. Focusing on developing countries, squatter settlements are portrayed as highly successful solutions to housing problems in urban areas. The development of squatter settlements should therefore be seen in the overall perspective of urban growth in the third world and its inevitability (Turner, 1969, cited in [6]).

2. URBANISATION AND THE RISE OF SQUATTER SETTLEMENTS

Rapid rural-urban migration in search of better living conditions and work has been related to the rise of squatter settlements [7]. Here the problem of squatting is related to housing shortages caused by rapid urban growth which is not accompanied by equal growth in the provision of housing facilities.

This was the case of Zanzibar as in as much as a number of factors had contributed to the rise of squatter settlements, in Zanzibar urbanisation was singled out as having played a leading role due to the natural growth rate of urban population outpacing the availability of formal accommodation choices. This saw the population of Zanzibar rising from 27,000 in 1948 to 204,774 in 1988 and to 391,519 by 2002 [8].

In the case of Dehli, half or more of its population live in squatter settlements known as Jhiggi Jhampri clusters. These have been consequences of urbanisation as people move into urban areas. As a result, migrants into the city who cannot find employment have the potential of being squatter settlers [9].

However, though offering alternative accommodation, squatter settlements have their share of problems which includes pollution of the ground water source as in Zanzibar as a result of poor disposal of liquid and solid waste leading to frequent outbreaks of water borne diseases such as cholera and dysentery, particularly during high rainfall seasons [10].

2.1. Understanding the rise of informal settlements in Zimbabwe

In order to understand the emergence of squatter problems in Africa, it is important to understand that colonial administrators in Africa segregated African cities by demarcating and separating areas into “European” and “African” areas [11]. With

most countries in Africa gaining their independence during the 1960’s and the 1970’s, some African cities grew spectacularly due to rapid population movements into urban areas as the restrictive colonial laws such as the “pass laws” were removed. For example, between 1982 and 1992, Zimbabwe’s urban population grew twice as that of the rural areas as the urban population grew from just under 2 million to 3.2 million and by 2000 the number was at 4.8 million [12]. Just before Zimbabwe’s independence in 1980, the number of people living in the urban areas increased dramatically as the Smith regime failed to stem the influx of people during the latter years of the liberation war. Evidence of this was the unprecedented appearance of large squatter settlements in and around various towns (for example, Chirambahuyo settlement in Chitungwiza which had a population close to 30,000 in 1979).

2.2. Epworth - the study area

The high density suburb of Epworth is located 12 kilometres in the south-eastern part of Harare [13]. The suburb is populated by mainly poor residents of Harare and is divided into seven wards. The area witnessed a large influx of people during the late 1970’s and early 1980’s, with the population rising from twenty thousand in 1980 to thirty five thousand in 1987. Epworth had not been planned as an urban residential area and this rapid increase in population was occurring on land without any water supply and sanitation facilities. Therefore “Epworth’s close proximity to the major industrial area and its reasonable distance from the main informal market of Mbare made it an attractive place for new immigrants to the city as well as for the urban poor” [14].



Fig. 1. Map of Harare with Epworth (Bottom right corner: Map courtesy of Great Zimbabwe guide).

2.3. Objectives of the study

General Objective

To examine factors behind the continued resurfacing of squatter settlements in Epworth.

Specific objectives

a). To provide a characterisation or profile of the people living in Epworth.

b). To document the factors leading to the resurfacing of Epworth as a shanty settlement.

c). To investigate possible measures to curb the resurfacing of Shanty Settlements in Epworth.

Research questions

a). What are the reasons behind the continued resurfacing of squatter settlements in Epworth?

b). What is the characterisation or profile of people living in Epworth?

c). What are the reasons leading to the resurfacing of Epworth as a Shanty Settlement?

d). What are the impacts of shanty or squatter settlements on gender?

e). What are the possible measures that can be put in place to curb the resurgence of squatter or shanty settlements?

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This study uses the Socio-spatial Approach and the Actor-oriented Approaches. The Socio-spatial Approach was introduced in the 1990s in relation to urban studies. Here, the key issues which define the spatial organisation of society tend to be viewed in relation to specific cultural, political, social and economic features of the mode of societal organisation. The theory also shows the inequalities in the city in terms of setting up buildings and the reproduction of classes and how state interventionist policies are used. This approach seeks to draw parallels with the environment and condition drawing from the social, economic and political realm, in which shanty settlements are erected and resurfacing providing a lens to examine the factors leading to the resurfacing of shanty settlements. The Actor-oriented Approaches will also be called upon [15]. Emphasis here will be on getting people's perception as they are the ones who reside in the shanty settlements.

4. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This study was done between January and March 2013. So in order to be able to describe the people's experiences of living in Epworth as well as to get the opportunity to interact with respondents in their natural setting, the study adopted a qualitative approach influenced by the realization that qualitative research is a multi-method approach based on distinct methodological traditions grounded in the assumption that individuals construct their own social reality based on their understandings of their environment [16], [17], [18]. This approach proved useful to the study through its in depth nature in the data collection process in trying to identify the dynamics of people living in squatter settlements of Epworth as well as to document

the reasons behind the continued resurfacing of squatter settlements from both squatters and the responsible authorities. As a result, the qualitative approach proved useful as it enabled researchers to easily document the experiences and the reasons why people end up being squatters in Epworth. Probability sampling which adopted a stratified random sampling approach was used by dividing all the seven wards in Epworth into homogenous subgroups and then taking a random sample. The households were then divided into groups of ten per each ward to come up with a total of seventy households. However, reaching all the seventy households was a challenge as in some wards (e.g. in ward 5) there are no shanty settlements, in ward 2 the councillor was deceased, in ward 6 there was no reliable transport and in ward 3 the councillor was reluctant to cooperate with the researchers. Accessibility into the areas was granted by the councillor representing the ward to be visited.

The specific data gathering methods adopted included interviews as interviewing is the favourite methodological tool for qualitative research as it involves the art of asking questions and listening to the response [16]. As a result, the study included both structured and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews were useful in obtaining information from key informants who were members of the local Epworth Local Authority board (the Senior Assistant Housing Officer and the Board Secretary). Unstructured interviews were administered to the residents residing in the shanty settlements of Epworth in order to document the reasons why they were residing in the squatter settlements even after Operation Murambatsvina. Unstructured interviews are susceptible to interviewer effects as they depend on the conversational skills of the interviewer. However the use of unstructured interviews had its own strengths as it allowed the researchers to probe some of the responses by the participants and also provided the opportunity to seek clarifications where needed [19]. However, the major challenge of interview was that some of respondents in Epworth were not fluent enough in English, forcing the researchers to sometimes use a mixture of Shona and English to overcome this. Adoption of English was necessary as some of the respondents are foreigners who are not fluent in Shona. Therefore the English language proved to be a "common" language among the respondents in the area.

A total of 3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were also conducted. That is two FGDs with females alone; with males alone and a mixed gender FGD averaging six participants per FGD. FGDs are a semi structured data gathering method in which a purposively selected set of participants gathers to discuss issues based on key themes with a facilitator [20]. Furthermore, FGD make it possible for researchers to get an in-depth understanding of the

content and social fabric of the community [21]. Therefore FGDs were important in helping researchers understand the processes at play in the wards in Epworth. Separating respondents along gender lines was important in order to allow respondents to freely discuss issues they would otherwise not have been comfortable to discuss in the presence of the other gender. For example, in this study, married women were not comfortable to discuss about prostitution in the presence of their husbands whom they suspected of engaging the services of prostitutes. Respondents for the FGDs were randomly selected as gender and age. As a result of the qualitative nature of the research, data here was analysed and presented thematically. In this study, research ethics were upheld through informed consent and the guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity as the researchers used pseudo names to keep the respondents anonymous because respondents did not want their real names to appear in the study.

5. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

5.1. Socio-economic characteristics of the people living in Epworth

From the interviews it emerged that a number of the settlers in Epworth were not formally employed. Most of the respondents were engaged in menial jobs ranging from vending (selling fresh products from Mbare, prepaid mobile phone airtime or dried fish). Vending was described as predominantly the domain of women due to their limited mobility resulting from demanding household chores and responsibilities.

Table 1. Distribution of the households based on the number of years they have been living in the settlements.

Years	Number of households
Past 25 years	2
Past 20 years	5
Past 15 years	9
Past 10 years	14
Past 5 years	16

Some of the semi-skilled and skilled respondents bemoaned the lack of formal employment opportunities which had forced them to earn a living in the informal sector. This was echoed by some of the self-employed welders and carpenters in Ward 3 (Domboramwari) who made a living out of making wardrobes, room dividers, beds and related items. Some of the respondents were domestic workers and yard maintainers in the nearby suburbs of Chadcombe, Hatfield and Craneborne. However not all the residents of the squatter settlements were working in the informal sector. Some of the residents were formally employed like two of the respondents who were

working as teachers. One of them was a qualified primary school teacher who had settled in Epworth as he could not afford the high rentals charged in the nearby middle class suburb of Chadcombe when he was transferred to Harare from rural Mudzi district. Some of the respondents were also formally employed in the industrial areas in and around Harare. For example, one of the respondents interviewed in the Komboniyatsva was employed in the heavy industrial area of Granitesideas as a motor mechanic. Another respondent interviewed in Ward 7 was also working as a packaging machine operator for one of the companies situated in Lytton industrial area.

5.2. Ineffectiveness of operation Murambatsvina in the Epworth area

According to one of our key informants, the resurfacing of squatter or shanty settlements in Epworth could be attributed to the ineffectiveness of Operation Murambatsvina. In as much as the campaign was targeted at removing illegal structures including shanty settlements, the campaign did not take its full effect in Epworth. The Housing Officer also indicated that the clean up operation had not been effective as it only destroyed shanty settlements in two out of the seven wards in Epworth, namely Balancing rocks (Komboniyatsva) and Donoro areas.

The other areas were not affected due to political influence as it was alleged that some politicians used their influence to sway Operation Murambatsvina from taking its full effect in the area. The ward 3 councillor also indicated that the arrival of the United Nations Special Envoy on Human Rights and Settlements Ms Anna Tibajuka also affected the full implementation of Murambatsvina in the area as the government made steps towards influencing the outcome of her report. As a result, there was noticeable resurfacing of squatter settlements in Epworth as some outsiders moved into the area with hopes to settle in Epworth e.g. in Ward 7 and Ward 3 (Domboramwari).

5.3. Delayed allocation of stands (housing waiting list) and resurgence of squatter settlements

After Operation Murambatsvina, those in search of housing stands had to formally apply to the Epworth Local Board and subsequently have their names placed on the Housing Waiting List. In interviews with residents in the squatter settlement it emerged that the procedure to be allocated a stand was a lengthy process. One of the respondents, Mr. Sidzo (pseudo name), indicated that he applied for a stand in 2006 after being affected by Operation Murambatsvina which destroyed his five roomed house. Seven years down the line he is still on the Epworth housing waiting

list. Other squatter settlers indicated that they had also been on the City of Harare housing waiting list for a number of years. Another settler, Mr. Itso (pseudo name), also blamed the incompetence in allocation of housing on the Harare City Council as he had been on the housing waiting list since 1999. As a result, he continued to stay in Epworth as he had rebuilt his four room house which was destroyed during Operation Murambatsvina.

Another woman from ward 7 also indicated that she had been on the Epworth Local Board's housing waiting list for the past eight years prompting her to construct her house in the squatter settlement. As a result, the slow process through which the authorities allocate stands is contributing to the resurfacing of squatter settlements in Epworth.

5.3. Expensive residential stands and rise in squatter settlements

Some of the respondents indicated that in instances where the Epworth local board put stands up for sale they would be way beyond their buying power as some of them were either not employed or employed in the informal sector which had limited returns. For example, the stands were sold at US\$ 650 per 150 square metres. As a result, the high prices of stands were an obstacle to squatter settlers to legally acquire stands, thereby accounting for the resurgence of squatter settlements in Epworth. For instance, one respondent said: *'Mushure mekunge imba yangu yapazwa pa Operation Murambatsvina, ndaive ndine shungu ne tarisiro yekuti ndingakwanise kutengawo stand yangu kuti ndigowanawo pekugara pakanaka asi mari yandinotambira haienderane ne mutengo wema stands acho nekuti ari kudhura, izvi zvatoita kuti ndirambe ndichigara hangu kuno kuMagada asi chido ndaiva nacho hangu'* meaning, "I really wanted to purchase a stand after my house in Ward 1 (Komboniyatsva) was destroyed during Operation Murambatsvina, however my hopes were shattered when I found that I could not afford to buy the stand since I survive on part time gardening jobs in the nearby suburbs of Hatfield and Chadcombe; as a result I continue to stay here in Epworth".

5.4. Epworth as a haven for operation Murambatsvina victims

Operation Murambatsvina did not only affect Epworth, but it also took its toll in some areas in Harare. In the study it emerged that some of the victims of the 'clean-up campaign' who were affected in other areas came to find refuge in Epworth.

One of the respondents indicated that they were originally not from Epworth, but had come there as some areas with shanty settlements in Epworth were

left untouched during the 'clean-up campaign'. As a result, a number of people came to seek residence as squatters in Epworth.

One female respondent indicated that she had come to stay in Epworth moving from Chitungwiza's unit D where she was renting a cottage which was destroyed during Operation Murambatsvina.

5.5. Family expansion and settling in Epworth

Some families interviewed attributed their decision to settle in Epworth because of their growing family sizes. Most of these families were renting in areas around Harare such as Budiriro, Mufakose, Glen View, Queensdale and Braeside. However, because of increasing family size, they often found themselves at loggerheads with their landlords who would often complain about the sanity of their yards, usage of water and electricity. For instance, one respondent – a commuter omnibus driver – had moved from Glen View to Epworth as his landlord started complaining about the usage of water and electricity soon after his wife had given birth to their third child.

The respondent relocated to Epworth to squat citing the ease of finding accommodation here free from the stringent demands of landlords. Mr. Vine (pseudo name), working as a soldier, indicated that he had also relocated from Mabvuku to Epworth, as the house he used to stay with his family was no longer suitable for his now grown up children.

5.6. High rentals and the search for cheap accommodation

In some of the interviews carried out, it emerged that some of the residents of the shanty settlements came from surrounding areas of Harare, such as Glen Norah, Glen View, Budiriro, Southerton and Kuwadzana as well as out of Harare areas such as Chitungwiza, running away from the high rentals charged by landlords and the high utility bills (electricity and water). As a result, the high rentals demanded by landlords forced some to move away from certain suburbs to Epworth's shanty settlements where accommodation is relatively cheap. One of the respondents, Sylvia (pseudo name), a 34 year old woman and a tailor by profession, came to Epworth in 2008, running away from high rentals which were being charged in Southerton, where she was renting a cottage. She relocated to Epworth's (Domboramwari) ward 4 where she bought an illegal stand from some politicians for US\$ 700, far less the price of renting a cottage. Another respondent, a 55 year old woman working as a general hand at Harare General Hospital, also indicated that she moved away from the high density suburb of Glen Norah where she was renting a room at US\$85 compared to Epworth where she is paying US\$25

dollars for a three roomed informal house in the squatter settlement in Ward 7. Another respondent, working as a part time domestic worker in the nearby low density area, indicated that she moved from Chitungwiza to Epworth because of the high rentals which were taking almost all of her earning.

5.7. Foreigners with nowhere to go

When Operation Murambatsvina took place, it affected people regardless of their nationality, race or class. In our interviews, it emerged that some residents of Epworth had come to Zimbabwe from neighbouring countries over the years. One of the respondents, Mai Sandi, a Zambian national, indicated that she came to Zimbabwe in 1985 with her father who was looking for employment. When her father passed away, she could not relocate to her country of origin as she was now married. After her marriage had collapsed, she moved to Mbare high density suburb, but was however affected by Operation Murambatsvina before she decided to relocate to Epworth. She indicated that she could no longer go back to Zambia as some of her relatives were deceased and it had been quite some time since she last communicated with her surviving relatives. Furthermore she was unemployed and survived on limited returns from her vending activities. As a result, she had been forced by circumstances to stay in the Epworth squatter settlement in ward 7.

Another respondent indicated that his mother was a Mozambican who had married a Zimbabwean. His citizenship was however revoked during the 2008 national elections as he was using his maternal surname. As a result, he is now considered an alien, a situation which has presented him with problems in his attempts to acquire a residential stand and a job as he cannot produce any documents to authenticate his citizenship status. He was therefore left with no option other than to be a squatter in Ward 7 where he erected an illegal structure.

Another respondent had also migrated from Malawi during the “*Mtandizi*” time (the time people were running away from Malawi to search for jobs in Zimbabwe). He found himself with no accommodation as he was affected by the Land Resettlement Programme because the white farmer he was working for as a livestock attendant in Ruwa was evicted from his farm leaving him with no option but to look for space as a squatter in Epworth Ward 7.

5.8. Political patronage and the continued existence of Epworth squatter settlements

Even though the Epworth Local Board has the mandate to stop the emergence of squatter settlements this is being affected by the politics at play in the area. During interviews with the Senior Housing Officer it

was noted that the local board’s authority is being undermined by politics in the area. For example, it was mainly during election times that politicians would come and give people land to settle without liaising with the council.

Thus, the Epworth Local Board’s powers were undermined because of fear of being at loggerheads with politicians. Therefore, the Senior Housing Officer noted that some people even from outside Epworth were taking advantage of this and came to settle with the supposed backing of certain political parties and politicians. This was also one of the reasons why some squatter settlements such as Ward 7 were not affected.

5.9. In search of “my own space” and the solution to resurfacing of squatter settlements

Some of the respondents in the study indicated that the need to have their own space or house had pushed them to buy illegal stands and build their own houses in Epworth.

This desire to have their own roofs had been driven by factors such as being fed up with renting other peoples’ properties; being governed by the owner’s rules and constantly moving from one place to the other in search of cheaper accommodation. Furthermore, the status of being a home owner in Harare had also driven some to stay in Epworth. One respondent said that he had been advised that housing stands in Epworth were very cheap compared with other areas. As a result, he had moved into the area. During the interviews and the FGDs, it emerged that the squatter settlers who had their names on the Epworth Local Board Housing Waiting List indicated that if the processing of applications speeded up it would help in curbing the rise of squatting in the area.

This would provide residents with the opportunity to rehabilitate their existing structures to conform to the housing standards. One respondent indicated that he was prepared to construct his house following legal requirements, however his only obstacle was the lack of regularisation of squatter settlements by the Local Board as he was afraid they might not formalise their structures and thereby risking losing their investments if the houses were affected once more by what happened during Operation Murambatsvina.

The Housing Officer indicated that the delay in allocating stands to people on the housing waiting list was beyond them because of the need to engage the services of a Land Surveyor – who was expensive to hire – to peg the land set aside for allocation to the people. It was also noted that the late and or non-payment of subscriptions on the housing waiting list was a major set back to the Local Board’s operations in providing suitable housing for the people.

Influence of politics was also blamed as leading to the resurfacing of the squatter settlements in

Epworth as some influential politicians were selling unregistered land to desperate people and pocketing the money without approaching and notifying the Local Board, leading to land allocation based on political affiliation. This indicated the need to curb political excesses in order to curb the emergence of squatter settlements.

5.10. Challenge of service delivery in the shanty settlers

One of the most acute problems people faced in the squatter settlements in Epworth was lack of service delivery. FGD participants indicated that in as much as they were labeled as illegal squatter settlers they were still paying monthly rates to the Local Board of US\$ 12 a year and US\$ 15 a month if one was on the housing waiting list. However, despite paying money to the Local Board, they were not getting anything in terms of service delivery. Therefore, they were arguing that their current places of residence should be regularised.

The major challenge identified by some participants was the slow pace the Local Board was taking in regularising them and hence residents were hesitant to develop their informal houses into formal ones as they were afraid that these might be destroyed at any time.

The lack of a replacement of the deceased councillor for ward 2 was also affecting service delivery as there was no representation for residents with genuine issues that needed to be attended to.

5.11. Health hazards and inadequate access to health facilities in Epworth

From the FGDs, it emerged that the health of the shanty dwellers in Epworth was very precarious because of the poor sanitation services. As a result, residents were exposed to water borne diseases such as cholera and typhoid. In one of the FGDs, a woman residing in the Komboniyatsva area indicated that there was only one borehole serving more than 150 households. Pressure on this borehole was forcing residents to dig up unprotected open wells in their compounds posing a potential health risk. One participant from Domboramwari area indicated that his family had suffered from stomach problems soon after moving in to settle in Epworth as they were exposed to water borne diseases as they were fetching water from an open well near their house.

For residents of Komboniyatsva/ward 1 access to health care facilities was cited as a major challenge. In as much as residents in the squatter settlements indicated that they had access to local health care centres such as the Epworth Local Clinic and The Medicines Sans Frontiers Clinic, they were sometimes

denied access and treatment when they were referred to the major referral hospitals in Harare (Pariirenyatwa and Harare Hospital) as they were usually turned away as being of no fixed abode. One of the participants indicated that she was turned away from Pariirenyatwa hospital when she had Tuberculosis (TB). She had this to say: *'Ini ndakamboenda kuPariirenyatwa ndichida kurapwa nokuti kuno kuclinic vanga vanditi, zvirikuwedzera saka zvanga zvakutoda kuti ndiende kuGeneral hospital. Ndakasvika kuPariirenyatwa vakandipa form rekunyora panoti address. Pandakavati ndinogara kumagada ekuEpworth, vakabva vanditi hazviiita kuti ndirapwe, ndokunditi ndimbonoedza kuChitungwiza'*. Meaning to say: 'When I suffered from TB I was later referred to Pariirenyatwa from the local clinic where I was getting treatment. However, upon arrival at Pariirenyatwa, while completing my details, I indicated that I was from Komboniyatsva area, I was told that I was of no fixed abode hence I could not be attended to at Pariirenyatwa. I was then referred to Chitungwiza General Hospital'.

5.12. Limited access to education at government schools

For children living in Epworth squatter settlement, access to education is a real nightmare. In the FGDs, it was revealed that most of the children from the illegal settlements were being refused enrolment at the local schools as they were said to be of no fixed abode. Some of the participants also complained that the schools were expensive as well as being distant. In the FGD in Komboniyatsva, participants bemoaned how of late their children had been denied access at a nearby school as the authorities pointed out that their children could not get places as they could not produce proof of residence. As a result, one of the participants said he had to bribe one of the teachers at the local school to facilitate one place for her daughter.

In the FGD in ward 7, it also emerged that failure to get places for children was related to the long distance the kids had to travel to get to school. For example, one of the participants said her child was walking almost three km to attend Makomo Secondary school as the hot seating practiced at the school meant that the child would sometimes come back home very late when attending school in the afternoons.

Furthermore, some participants indicated that the local schools were expensive for them. Thus, there had been a noticeable surge in illegal private schools run by unqualified teachers catering for those pupils in need of an education because of the distance to schools, unaffordable school fees and of the proof of residence required to get a place at a local school. Even though these illegal schools gave some kind of hope to children in need of access to education, they had negative impact on their performance. One of the participants, Mai

Matemba (pseudo name), expressed her doubts about her daughter's and son's future, as she had no option but to send them to one of the illegal schools. Furthermore she expressed doubts about whether her children were able to write the Grade Seven public examinations as the illegal school was not a registered examination centre. To overcome this she would have to look for a centre for her children to write their exams. Similar feelings were echoed by Mr. Timba (pseudo name) who bemoaned the quality of education children were getting in the unregistered/illegal schools. Another participant, Mrs. Smoko (pseudo name) indicated that she was sending her children to an unregistered school called Open Tribe Foundation in ward 7 as she did not have money to send them to the formal schools. At that school, she was paying US\$6 fees a month compared to the US\$85 demanded by the formal local schools. Some of the illegal schools pointed out in the FGDs included Fanta, Maulana and Open Tribe Foundation.

5.13. Challenge of crime and immoral behaviour in Epworth

Criminal activities appear to be a cancer in Epworth squatter settlements. FGD participants agreed that some of the most wanted criminals were coming to lie low in Epworth.

Prevalent criminal activities in the area included theft, burglary and rape. In the ward 7 FGD, participants said that in the past few months people had been robbed whilst coming from work as the tall grasses which were supposed to be taken care of by the Local Board provided cover for thieves during the day and night to pounce on victims. One of the participants had been mugged twice whilst coming from work. In Komboniyatsva FGD, the participants complained that house breaking was on the rise in the area.

One of the participants, Mr. Marazz, said that burglars had broken into his house one night and managed to get away with a television set, a solar lamp and a solar panel. Another woman said that thieves had stolen her chicken from her fowl run one night, while young girls coming back from school during the early hours of the evening had also been raped. For example, in Ward 7, an 11 year old girl was raped by a former school teacher whilst returning from school.

The perpetrator was arrested after the girl narrated her ordeal to her mother who then reported the matter to the police. However, some participants complained that the less than enthusiastic response from the police gave criminals room to manoeuvre away from the long arm of the law. Furthermore, some participants noted that some residents from the squatter settlements were reluctant to report to the police as they were already living outside the law by virtue of being residents in the illegal squatter settlements. Commercial sex workers were also cited as

a menace in the area, together with brewing of *kachasu* (illicit beer) which was sold in the shebeens dotted around the squatter settlements. These illegal activities were bringing young children's early exposure to sex and alcohol. For women in the FGDs, prostitution was a menace in the area as they alleged it was a leading contributor to the breakdown of marriages.

The rise in prostitution was attributed to unemployment and the limited educational opportunities for children in the area.

5.14. The squatter settlement as a gendered experience

In the FGDs, some women considered that there were a number of factors negatively affecting their stay in the shanty settlements. For example there was no electricity in their settlements and as a result those who could not afford to buy gas stoves or paraffin were forced to search for firewood in areas such as Donoro and Kutsaga farms, more than 4 kilometres away. Thus, the girl child was affected as she was the one sent on the long errands to look for firewood in the process compromising her school attendance.

Another participant also indicated that, in some families, due to lack of funds, the girl child's chances of going to school were affected as the boy child was given preferential treatment due to the patriarchal nature of the Zimbabwean society. Thus, in the squatter settlement, there was entrenchment of gender inequalities obtaining in patriarchal Zimbabwean society as young girls suffered discrimination and marginalisation, failing to enjoy the same/equal life chances as men did.

6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1. Agency around the housing waiting list

Although the Epworth Local Board had come up with a remedy to ease the resurfacing of shanty settlements in the area through the provision of housing stands to people on the housing waiting list, evidence showed that the process was very slow for prospective home owners. As a result, the impatient applicants on the housing waiting list, who were discontent with the lack of action and the incapacity of the board to deliver its promise of alleviating their housing crisis, were showing agency by finding a solution to their housing problem reflected in the resurfacing of the squatter settlements.

Borrowing from the Socio-spatial Approach, one could argue that because subscription to the housing waiting list was low in comparison with access to stands in low density areas of the city (where if one had the money it was possible to easily get a housing stand), sometimes relevant authorities took for granted the low income earners' need for housing. This was the

same scenario in other countries like Tanzania, where the never ending bureaucratic and time consuming land registration process forced a high percentage of the urban population to reside in informal settlements [3], [6]. However it was also important to realise that in as much as the slow pace in the allocation of stands might be blamed on the local board and the city council, the informal settlers also contributed to the slow pace. This view was backed by the interviews carried out with the Officials who stated that sometimes people did not pay their monthly subscriptions of US\$ 15 on time while others did not pay at all thereby affecting the capacity of the local authority to carry out servicing of the stands.

Marxist sentiments of the Socio-spatial Approach highlighted that the city was a site for the production of inequality. This could be explained using the concept of "Conspicuous Consumption" which referred to an outward display of consumption that demonstrated power and wealth through the wasting of resources and the symbols of upper class membership (for example huge houses with over 5,000 square metres and with some of the land lying idle) [22].

This concept reinforced the Socio-spatial Approach on the issue of inequality in the city. For example, the middle class suburbs of Hatfield and Queensdale surrounding Epworth had huge stands averaging 3,000 square metres, whereas in Epworth the stands to be offered were not more than 200 square metres. This therefore showed how urban areas or the city became a space of inequality as the upper class took the vast lands whilst the low income earners were pushed to the peripheral areas of the city where land was inadequate. Focusing on Epworth one was further drawn to the view that the city represented a great contrast of the rich and the poor living almost side by side as illegal residents of Epworth were living side by side with the middle class in Hatfield and Queensdale [23].

6.2. Escaping high rentals and the search for cheap accommodation

The search for cheap accommodation appeared to have been one of the driving factors forcing people to seek accommodation in squatter settlements in Epworth. Using the Socio-spatial Approach with its emphasis on how the form of settlement space was related to the mode of the economy, it could be noted that during the height of the economic crises in Zimbabwe most home owners tended to increase rentals in a bid to cushion themselves from the prevailing harsh economic environment. As a result, most tenants who were low income earners were affected.

Adopting the Actor-oriented Approach with its emphasis on the actor having capability to command skills and to engage in organising practices it could be

noted that the affected lodgers organised practices by building their own shelters in the shanty areas of Epworth as proved in our study.

Moreover, unlike the human ecologists who argue that urban life was due to the natural order of things [23], the Socio-spatial Approach mirrored how urban life was not an adaptation by species to an environment, but the production of forces of structure and agency on individuals belonging to distinct social classes. Therefore inequality was reproduced through the high and unaffordable rentals as the low income earners were pushed away from the areas inhabited by the Upper class to peripheral areas. For example, some participants indicated that they were forced to move from areas such as Hatfield, Chadcombe, Braeside and Queensdale to Epworth resembling observation that in many places squatter settlers were forced to move out and build on the outskirts of the city as was happening here [24].

6.3. Epworth as a haven for operation Murambatsvina victims

In as much as the government embarked on a clean-up (Operation Murambatsvina) it could be argued that the government might have miscalculated the move as it did not have an alternative plan to accommodate those affected by the clean-up campaign. Noticing the lack of alternative measures by the government to take care of them in the aftermath of the cleanup campaign victims were not passive and showed agency. This was evident in this study as residents tried to circumvent their circumstances by going to those areas less affected by Operation Murambatsvina such as Epworth which only had two wards affected. As witnessed in the findings, some victims affected came from areas such as Mbare, Mabvuku and Glen-Norah. As a result seven years down the line squatter settlements were resurfacing in Epworth as affected people called upon their agency to find their own space.

From a Socio-spatial Approach it could be observed that spatial organisation was associated with specific aspects of the cultural, political, social and economic features. In this context, one could take into account the political aspect in order to analyse the reasons behind the resurfacing of squatter settlements in Epworth. The general sentiment towards Operation Murambatsvina was that it was a reaction by ZANU (PF) to people living in urban areas for having voted overwhelmingly for the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) [25]. ZANU (PF) reacted harshly by launching Operation Murambatsvina allegedly as a direct hit against the urban poor to try to prevent unrest in towns by driving them to the countryside [26]. However, other scholars refuted this view pointing out that the victims of Murambatsvina were from all political divides [27]. As a result, individuals and

families were affected by the harsh evictions which brought major challenges to the provision of basic needs such as housing for the victims resulting in some of them settling in less affected shanty settlements such as Epworth. The effect of Murambatsvina was also not spread evenly across as people who could not trace their roots from rural Zimbabwe but were migrants from neighbouring countries such as Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique were most affected. This category of people had nowhere to go compared to those who flocked back to the rural areas where they were originally from.

The Socio-spatial Approach recognised that social life was comprised of classes and other important social divisions like race, origin and gender [28]. Thus, one could argue that the implementation of the clean-up campaign disregarded people's place of origin as those of foreign origin trickled to Epworth as they did not have anywhere to go unlike those who could trace their origin from Zimbabwe's rural areas.

6.4. Family expansion and the need for more space

The need to provide space for growing families appeared to be a push factor forcing people to settle in Epworth. A number of the study participants were forced by their increasing family sizes to come and reside in the Epworth as their growing families increasingly made it uncomfortable for them to continue renting as they could no longer afford to pay for lodgings which were commensurate with their increasing family size. For example, one respondent relocated from his former lodgings in Mabvuku to settle in the shanty areas of Epworth as his children were growing older and the family increasing in size.

This demonstrated how the actors' own experiences became the push factors which induced their agency to be innovative and ended up living in the shanty settlements. This movement was also motivated by the need to have one's own living space. For example, some of the respondents indicated that they had grown weary of their landlords' constantly nagging them and therefore had opted to find their own accommodation as well as desired to bask in the glory and status that came with owning a house in the capital city Harare.

This also brought in a sense of comfort as most urban dwellers living in informal settlements were comfortable due to the sense of experiencing living together and sharing in an urban set up [8].

6.5. Lack of government intervention and the search for living space

Inability of government intervention had been cited as one of the causal factors behind the resurfacing

of shanty settlements. In Epworth, intervention from the central government seemed to be very limited as evidence showed that the government housing programmes were taking long to be a reality because some of the respondents had been on the housing waiting list for more than five years now. On a promising note, the government through the Harare City Council had an understanding with Central African Building Society (CABS) to provide houses in Budiro. The government had also partnered with The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to build low income houses in Dzivarasekwa.

Therefore, the slow pace of government interventions could also be blamed for the resurfacing of shanty settlements like Epworth in Zimbabwe. Here it was also important to reflect on the idea that in Africa the rise of informal settlements was generally linked to challenges of the bureaucratic and time consuming land registration processes which forced a high percentage of the urban population to reside in informal settlements as it was happening in Epworth because low income families were left with no option but to construct unauthorised housing often on marginal lands [6], [3].

6.6. Living in a squatter settlement and limited access to social services

Some of the major problems cited by residents of the squatter settlements in Epworth were related to limited access to social services. Instances of Epworth residents failing to access health and educational services in and around the city of Harare were prevalent in the area. This was so because residents noted that access to health services was predicated on the production of proof of residence thereby militating against the shanty dwellers' capacity to use health facilities. As a result, as long as their places of residence were not legally recognised they would not get formal residential addresses.

This challenge appeared gendered as women appeared to be the ones most affected in times when they needed critical health care services. Women were showing their agency by giving birth under the instructions of traditional birth attendants or simply being helped out by relatives at home. This further complicated the chances of the new born babies to get birth certificates as they did not have birth records. This therefore became a continuous cycle as inability to get a birth certificate meant that the child could not easily get a formal school place hence turning out to be an impediment to those children living in the squatter settlements. This therefore flared in the face of such observations that education was a basic need that every citizen was entitled to as the educational opportunities for these children were compromised because of the inability to acquire a birth certificate [29]. As a result, the proliferation of unregistered schools in the area

which lacked regulations became an easy option that was pursued by these parents living in the squatter settlements. This was also working to compromise the type of education that children received in a very poor environment. On a promising note, one of the schools which started off as an illegal school (Maulana) had been regulated and registered with the Ministry of Education.

6.7. In search of a solution to the resurfacing of squatter settlements in Epworth

In interviews with participants, it emerged that some of the settlers preferred the Government through the local Board to regularise their present illegal spaces of residence as a matter of priority as they felt that it would take them a while to be allocated a housing stand even though they were on the housing waiting list. They said this was necessary as regularising the illegal settlements was not workable due to the small stand sizes they had informally allocated to themselves as well as the area being distant from social services such as clinics and schools.

7. CONCLUSION

This study examined the factors that were leading to the resurfacing of shanty settlements in Epworth. Evidence presented in the study showed that squatter settlers living in Epworth had found their way into the area as a result of a number of factors ranging from limited opportunities for getting housing stands from the housing waiting list to escaping the impact of the Operation Murambatsvina clean-up campaign. It appeared that the local authorities were also to blame for the continued resurfacing of shanty settlements in Epworth as they were not providing residential stands on time for those on the housing waiting list.

The challenges that were faced by shanty dwellers in Epworth also included poor access to sanitation services and social services. As a result, the residents in the squatter settlement were showing their agency by improvising within their daily routines to overcome these challenges they were facing in the area.

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