



RURALISATION OF URBAN AREAS: REVERSING DEVELOPMENT IN ZIMBABWE

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Abstract: *Urbanisation is on an upward trend in Zimbabwe as evidenced by expansion of urban centres. Notwithstanding advances towards urbanisation, some urban centres are actually de-urbanising or ruralising as witnessed by deteriorating livelihoods, services and infrastructure. Using observation, interviews and content analysis, researchers explored this phenomenon and concludes that ruralisation has increased. This paints a gloomy picture urbanisation and researchers recommend a review of current urban models in Zimbabwe.*

Keywords: *Ruralisation, Urbanisation, Social Services, Development, Zimbabwe*

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1. Introduction to the Study

This paper seeks to give an insight into the deterioration of urban environments in Zimbabwe. The gross fall in the quantity and quality of tangible and non-tangible services in urban services is in this paper referred as ruralisation. To explore this phenomenon, researchers used the qualitative research paradigm focusing on observation in severely affected areas in three urban areas. These were the capital city Harare, Chitungwiza and Bindura. The research undertaking was successful, discovering even more glaring decay in Zimbabwe urban life.

This report begins with background information on urban and rural life before attempting to give light on ruralisation. It elaborates the aim of the study and explains the research methods employed. Following this appears a section presenting and analysing findings arranged on seven headings focusing on use of agriculture as a livelihood; adoption of traditional and spiritual therapy; ruralised sources of water; unhygienic toileting and sewage systems; unsustainable energy sources; inadequate houses and poor housing services; and poor roads and unreliable transport systems. The report finalises with two sections, one giving implications of findings and options for planners and the last one concluding and recommending.

1.2 Understanding Urbanisation

An urban area is in this report defined as an area which relies on modern forms of livelihoods and modern social amenities. Distinctive by its reliance on chlorinated and taped water, urban zones vary from rural areas where water comes from boreholes, wells and rivers. Urban areas have tarmac roads and pavements. They rely on cleaner energy sources: electricity generated at well engineered hydro or thermal power stations. Even affording to ignore the moonlight, urban areas have erected their own tower lights for roads, pavements, shops, markets and termini. They use fastest modes of transport. People are employed in a money economy. They live in not only big but beautiful houses. To go to school, pupils walk very minor distances, are driven or board buses. Everyone affords hospital care. Flashing toilets are a key characteristic of city life, with showering or tabbed bathrooms.



United Nations (UN) (2007) estimated that around mid 2007 (urban millennium tipping point), half the world population became urbanised. According to UN (2007), worldwide, 50.5% of the population is urbanised and the rate of urbanisation is 1.85%. This estimate is supported by the World Bank (2010) which further estimate that in 1900, only 5% of Africa South of the Sahara was urbanised. The figure rose to 14% and 37% by 1950 and 2000 respectively. It is further estimated that by 2015, Africa South of the Sahara shall have 45% of its population urbanised. In comparison, 62% of South Africa is urbanised and the rate of urbanisation is 1.2%. Hong Kong and Singapore are some of the countries that are 100% urbanised. In relation to Zimbabwe, the World Bank estimated that that by 2010, 38% of Zimbabwe was urban and that urbanisation in the country is happening at a rate of 3.4% per year.

Urbanisation is on an upward trend in Zimbabwe as seen by expansion and emergence of urban centres right across the country. New towns like Gokwe, emerging urban centres like Zimplats Mine, multi-storey structures like Joina City and true urban centres like Avenues Area confirm this trend. Zvimba rural now has urban suburbs cutting edges with Harare's Kuwadzana suburb. Similarly, Chitungwiza town has urbanised Seke communal lands. Growth points have expanded whilst mission centres now access most urban services.

Chirisa (2008), in a study of several African cities including Harare concluded that rapid urbanization in Africa is a threat to service delivery, confirming Patel (1988)'s prediction that rapid growth in Harare's population threatened urban life. Both authors indicated that this rapidity is motivated by 'urban centres as attraction centres for rural population'. This view is supported by Madaka (1995) who reiterated that the challenges of service delivery in urban areas is due to expanding populations as a result of rural urban migration.

1.3 Distinctive Features of Rural Areas

A rural area is defined as a community that relies on traditional livelihoods and communal life. Being rural means being aligned to the country's way of life.

Various forms of agriculture make rural life distinctive. From peasant farming, animal husbandry to medium scale farming, rural dwellers scratch a living from the land. Their economy is largely commodity based. Water largely comes from wells, rivers, dams and boreholes. Services are remote with some children walking more than eight kilometres to get to the nearest school.



However, rural areas are modernising and developing into urban centres. Deep in villages you now find electrical power from national grid electricity, generators, solar and mini hydropower stations. It just does not stop there; shopping centres now play loud music from micro disks to revellers enjoying refrigerated beer whilst watching satellite television.

1.4 A Glimpse on Ruralisation

Despite all the advances towards urbanisation, some urban centres are actually de-urbanising. Bona fide urban life is now only a dream for majority of city dwellers. Things have changed. For many people in urban centres, adored towns have neither stagnated nor improved; they have gone backwards in a process authors of this paper choose to call ruralisation of urban life. This phenomenon, which is explored in this paper, paints a gloom future on the sustainability of current urban models. Authors of this paper define ruralisation as:

The wholesale decay in the quality of life of people in urban areas to a level that their quality of life will be more akin to rural areas and sometimes inferior that of their rural counterparts. Ruralisation is evidenced by very poor urban social services, inadequate infrastructure and unsustainable livelihoods.

Ruralisation, which has taken place in some urban centres in Zimbabwe, has increased the number of urban poor people, making them more vulnerable to death, disease, deprivation and unhappiness. There is therefore a demand for society to address this challenge, a process which, for scholars, starts with understanding the problem.

1.5 Aim of the Study

This investigation sought to reveal reverse development in urban areas with a focus on urban livelihoods, urban social services and urban social infrastructure. Urban livelihoods refer to the way urban dwellers get income. Urban social services mainly refer to intangible provisions provided by municipal authorities. Such services or amenities include treatment, fire response, emergency services, road maintenance, entertainment, billing services, welfare provision and many others. On the other hand, urban social infrastructure includes tangibles like sewer trucks, clinics, fire engines, sewer treatment plants, roads, street lights, community centres among others. There is a direct relationship between livelihoods, social services and social infrastructure. Urban infrastructure is the platform on which urban social services are delivered. Poor infrastructure translates to poor services. On one hand, most



social services are paid for. Residents should make money to pay for the services they need, in the process sustaining the infrastructure.

1.6 Statement of the Problem

In Zimbabwe, most rural areas are expected to modernise and change their livelihoods, social services and infrastructure to conform to those found in urban areas. This process is expected to happen through the growth point model where nodes of geographical areas spearhead this aspect of modernisation. Thus once urbanised, an area is expected to keep improving to meet demand and current modern standards. However, as shall be portrayed in this study, urbanised areas in Zimbabwe have been going through numerous difficulties resulting in some of them going backwards in terms of development. It is feared, if this trend continues, these urban zones shall be no better than rural areas. Human beings in rural areas will be living a far better quality of life compared to their counterparts in those de-urbanising areas. This metamorphosis in urban areas describes the process authors of this paper choose to call ruralisation.

Utilising a qualitative methodology summarised below, the researchers sought to understand the occurrence of this social problem.

2. STUDY METHODOLOGY

Data analysed in this paper was obtained through observation, examination of existing documents and interviews with key informants.

2.1 Observation

2.1.1 Areas Observed

Observation was done at eight urban sites in three different towns as follows:

<i>Town</i>	<i>Suburbs/Sites</i>
Chitungwiza	Seke, Zengeza and St Mary's
Harare	Mbare, Kuwadzana and City Centre
Bindura	Chipadze and City Centre

Data was collected over a period of five months from January 2012 to May 2012. The researchers entered each suburb taking notes for time ranging from one to three hours using an observation guide.



2.1.2 Demographic Profiles of Areas Observed

Harare (known as Salisbury until 1982) is the capital city of Zimbabwe with a population of 1 903 510 (Zimbabwe Statistics, 2002). Harare was founded as a fort on 12 September 1890 by a group of military volunteer settlers (known as the Pioneer Column) led by Cecil John Rhodes. Harare got municipal status in 1897 and became a city in 1935. Harare's oldest suburb is Mbare (originally named Harare) which was opened in 1907. Mbare was originally designed for male workers who stayed in hostels. Kuwadzana is a high density suburb in Harare sharing borders with Zvimba Rural District.

Chitungwiza, located about 30km from Harare, is a dormitory town (to Harare City which has industry and commerce) established in 1978 after three townships; St Marys, Seke and Zengeza were joined in 1981 to become an urban municipality. According to the 2002 National Population Census, the town had 323 260 inhabitants. Chitungwiza is the third largest and fastest growing urban centre in Zimbabwe.

Bindura, located 87km outside Harare, is a mining (nickel, cobalt and gold) and farming town which is the provincial capital of Mashonaland Central. The town was originally named Kimberly Reefs following a mine that operated there but changed to Bindura in 1913. In 2002, Bindura recorded a population of 38 001 during the national population census. Chipadze is one the oldest locations and most populated high density suburb in Bindura.

Like in most developing nations, urban areas in Zimbabwe have faced numerous challenges in their history. Rapid rural-urban migration after independence was witnessed. Industry failed to cope with more labour on the market. Reluctantly, after failing to get formal employment, most residents turned to the informal sector. Besides unemployment, the other challenge includes lack of houses that resulted in squatters and shanty houses. In Zimbabwe, all these challenges peaked in 2005 resulting in government embarking on an internationally condemned Operation *Murambatsvina* or Restore Order which destroyed shacks, other illegal structures and informal businesses. Coupled with the collapse of the Zimbabwe dollar, urban services kept deteriorating. The deterioration has been costly: the cholera outbreak of 2008 killed over 400 000 people whilst government was in 2012 still struggling with a typhoid outbreak mainly in Harare and Bindura (WHO, 2012).

The Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15 gives municipalities the power to provide all urban services (Government of Zimbabwe (1995)). However, from the capital Harare to the



smallest urban area in Zimbabwe, service delivery is inadequate. Inadequate clean water, insufficient housing, unemployment, pitiable livelihoods, poor sewer services, unreliable transport systems and management failures are some of the challenges urban people are facing today in Zimbabwe.

2.1.3 Sampling of Areas

Areas selected for the study were determined as follows:

- Areas that had received wide media coverage in relation to fall in urban services.

Chitungwiza was receiving attention for gross fall in urban services which was being attributed to mismanagement and corruption. The council was reported to be in a standstill. Harare and Bindura were fighting the typhoid outbreak, itself a consequence of poor urban health infrastructure and services.

- Areas that were judged convenient to the researchers.

The researchers worked in Bindura and stayed in Harare and Chitungwiza making all these towns expedient for undertaking the study.

- Selected suburbs were either recommended by key informants or were publicly known to have fallen short in terms of urban services.

There is undisputable social demand for authorities to intervene in suburbs like Mbare and parts of Chitungwiza whose urban services have become sub-human. It was because of this that these areas were included in this study.

2.2 Analysis of Existing Data

Existing data was collected by researchers from newspapers, municipal reports, residents advocacy papers, radio and television news clips. A guide based on thematic areas for data collection was developed and used to collect and record data collected from existing documents.

2.3 Interviews with Key Informants

Informal interviews were done with the City of Harare Director for Housing and Community Services, Bindura Town Housing and Community Services Manager and a Councillor from Chitungwiza Town. It was difficult at the time to get an officer responsible for social services from Chitungwiza Town since the Town was being run by a committee nominated by Government following the elected council's failure to run the town.



An interview guide was utilised for these interviews, although the interviews were largely informal.

2.4 Data Recording

Data was recorded in the form of notes which were later classified into major appropriate themes in preparation for analysis. A camera set aided recording. Data from observation, existing documents and interviews was all put into these themes.

3. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

3.1 Features of Ruralisation

The research discovered that ruralisation took several forms, but the main features from this study were:

- Urban areas going back to agriculture based livelihoods like crop farming and animal husbandry.
- Residents of urban areas using worse than rural sources of water.
- Unhygienic toileting and sewage systems embraced by urbanites.
- Unsustainable energy sources in urban zones.
- Inadequate houses and poor housing services in urban centres.
- Urban areas having poor roads and unreliable transport systems.
- Urban residents returning to traditional and spiritual therapy.

These features are discussed in detail in the proceeding section.

3.2 Urban Agriculture

3.2.1. Crop Farming

The fall of urban employment, a disgrace to modernisation theorists, has meant no income for the majority of urban dwellers. This has resulted in more poverty, and adoption of crop farming as a livelihood strategy. This strategy is the easiest one to be adopted by urban dwellers because traditionally they arose from farmlands and also because pieces of idle land are available at their homes or open urban spaces.

Urban farming has increased rapidly filling all unused land near buildings, roads, sewer areas and urban outskirts. Several times, city fathers slashed maize fields to deter would be urban farmers but they could not contain them.



Popular crops grown include maize, sweet potatoes, vegetables, cassava, madhumbe and sugarcane. Of these, only maize is largely grown for household consumption, the rest are for the market as families try to enhance their cash to pay municipal bills.

Farming has been a very positive attribute of urban ruralisation which has brought food and money for struggling households. Besides benefitting from the crops grown, some households acquire several pieces of land ranging from 5m² to several square metres and let them out for cash. Acquisition is mainly through colonising unused land including sports fields or inheriting from relatives or friends who are relocating. In some cases, residents travel long distances to other locations to farm land they acquired before they migrated. In case of inherited land, some of it is becoming too small as several beneficiaries parcel it out amongst themselves.

Whilst urban farming has contradicted urban bye laws, it remains a viable option which should be perfected and promoted whilst owners of land are given some form of tenure to protect them.

3.2.2 Animal Husbandry

Who would have thought that despite existence of strict urban bye laws, backyards could be turned into thriving dog breeding pens; poultry runs for chickens, turkeys, ducks and doves; and pens for cattle, goats or sheep? Scenes like these are no longer surprising. Our visits came across a disused pig pen and three operating poultry runs. It looked impossible to come across big animals at first except for four breeding sites for dogs. As we kept observing, we came across donkeys between Bindura Centre and Chipadze suburb. The reason for the disappearance of goats and cattle may be due to the effects of Operation *Murambatsvina* of 2005. Also because of limited spaces in the centres researched, it could have been difficult for dwellers to keep big animals. Such animals were reported in larger plots like Waterfalls during the clean-up campaign.

Goats and sheep are a common site in places like KuMbuzi near Boka Tobacco Auction Floors in Harare, PaMbuzi along Dzivarasekwa road in Harare and PaNyoka Hideout along Seke road. Goats are on demand for most urban dwellers that still engage in ritual activities and their meat is quite cheap as compared from that available from butcheries.



3.3 Sources of Water

Water is a precious liquid and is colourless. This definition always made sense for urban dwellers because they indeed always possessed a colourless precious liquid. Now they possibly have a colourful but still very precious liquid. In the rural areas, water could be considered as milky (from wells) or brownish (from rivers). Maybe at other points in rural areas you could come across a colourless liquid: water raining directly from the skies or water from very deep wells and boreholes.

Urban water comes from tapes but this has since shifted for urbanites in Zimbabwe. The tapes are dry, or at least always dry. Water now comes from unprotected shallow wells, dams and unprotected deep wells. Thanks to donor agencies, the areas visited can now tape water from deep boreholes or rain water harvested into corrugated tanks. This strategy was adopted in reaction to the cholera outbreak in 2009 and also the typhoid outbreak currently (June 2012) wrecking havoc in Harare and Bindura. But these sources are not enough for everyone. Queues to get water at these sources stretch for several metres and because of continuous use during the day and night, the borehole equipment rarely lasts longer leaving residents in a quagmire again. In some parts of Harare these boreholes are said to be contaminated with typhoid and WHO (2012) reported that some of these boreholes should be closed as a measure to contain the epidemic.

In Unit O of Chitungwiza, residents have dug wells, some less than one metre deep. The wells are dug in areas that are reserved by council for the flow of sewage or storm water. These areas look swampy but they are not naturally swampy: they are wet because of water running off from blocked sewage pipes. Some of the water is salty or rusty owing to various elements of sewage and decomposing material from dump sites. Soaps, detergents, rotten food, excretion and metals form part of these harmful elements. Yet people are surviving on this water. As one resident said:

We just do not have an option. The tapes are dry weeks on ends. We need drinking, washing and toilet flushing water.

Asked why they do not improve the water before use, another resident answered:

We are limited. We can't boil the water because we do not have electricity. Neither do we have money for paraffin, wood nor water treatment chemicals like Waterguard. We just trust God with our lives.



The views of residents were supported by Mbetsa, Acting Town Clerk for Chitungwiza in an up date report when he said:

The resultant effect (of failing to get water from City of Harare which supplies them with bulky water) is that Zengeza and St Mary's get a fair distribution whilst Seke North and South receive water for a day only in a week, thus residents still resort to shallow unprotected wells for water supply (Mbetsa, 2012).

To rescue residents, non-governmental organisations have initiated water supply facilities. In Chitungwiza the USAID working with the International Relief and Development agency provided mega steel tanks and boreholes to selected households. They also provided such tanks to schools, clinics and community centres.

3.4 Toileting and Sewerage

Linked to the water situation is how urban dwellers have ruralised toileting. Residents have resorted to using the bush to relieve themselves. Some have dug their own shallow septic tanks. For example, a tour of new stands area of Unit O extension showed that each of the new stands measuring on average 100m² has a septic tank, soak away and a deep well. Half the houses have a latrine. Council bye laws prescribe that a water source cannot be within 30m from a sewer tank or any other potential water contaminator. In these observed cases, some sewer tanks were situated less than 6m from deep wells.

Children relieve themselves in storm water drains during the day, and adults join them during the night enjoying the cover of darkness. Yet some use buckets in their homes and drain the collection in storm water drains, nearby bushes or maize fields. Maize fields are actually a community resource during the rain season. This makes the rain season important for two reasons; it brings food and creates bushy areas to use as toilets. In Seke, churches with large pieces of land dug latrine toilets but they quickly filled up because they instantly became community toilets. Only a few churches who hired security teams were able to ensure their toilets remained functional.

The situation is just chaotic because there is no water to run the sewer system. It is not surprising to trample upon faeces along small paths and to find faeces in rubbish bins collected by council trucks once in a blue moon. It cannot be surprising given that the committee set up to revive Chitungwiza town was 'happy' to report a fall of sewer blockages from 400 to 200 in February 2012.



As one looks at this phenomenon one concludes this has gone far, further than ruralisation. Rural areas rely on the bush and their Blair toilets but because the bush is broad, you rarely trample upon faecal matter. There is a strong ecosystem to take care of the bush system in rural areas unlike in urban zones.

3.5 Energy Sources

Similar to rural areas, urban zones in Zimbabwe now rely on firewood for their household energy needs. This has resulted in rapid elimination of trees in areas surrounding urban areas. Selling firewood has become part of the informal sector, with thriving enterprises. Main reasons urban dwellers use firewood include the fact that electricity is erratic and has become unaffordable for many households. Lorries of firewood were met in Mbare where firewood selling was brisk business. Heaps of wood were available in all the suburbs visited.

3.6 Roads and Transport Services

Roads in urban communities have been affected severely by lack of maintenance. Highways are blighted with potholes and smaller roads at household level have either been eroded of tarmac to become dusty or they never received a tarmac surface. The road connecting Shamva road to the main road in Bindura Town was littered with potholes whilst all suburban roads were infested with potholes. Road signs were either old or not available at all.

A scene of a sick people being ferried to hospital in a man drawn cart was witnessed in Mbare. It is expected that sick people will use ambulances but such a service is not affordable. In other cases, people walk very long distances to get to work and home.

Bus termini was overcrowded and heavily littered. Scenes of police running battles with commuter omnibuses were witnessed in all sites visited.

3.7 Inadequate Housing and Poor Housing Services

Borrowing from Bulawayo Department of Housing and Community Services, departments of housing have a mandate to provide adequate, decent, qualitative houses with affordable social support infrastructure but this was just on paper. Squalid housing conditions were witnessed in Mbare suburb of Harare where residential flats have become health hazards. In the Nenyere and Shawasha flats, a flat (room measuring approximately three metres by five metres) meant for three residents was occupied by three families. At other sites, squalor was witnessed at KuMaOne in Bindura and Makoni Unit G flats in Chitungwiza. In areas like



St Marys and Kuwadzana, residents were erecting cottages at their stands without municipal approval.

Housing managers interviewed indicated that towns had huge backlogs of people who applied for residential stands confirming other reports that indicated the same. Harare and Bulawayo the largest and second largest cities in Zimbabwe reported official housing backlogs of over 600 000 and 100 000 applicants on the waiting list. These findings confirm assertions by Madhaka (1995) and UN (2005) that the housing backlog in Zimbabwe is well over one million people. Madhaka estimated that by the year 2000, the backlog would be one million and ninety five, a view supported by the UN which estimated the backlog to be well over one million in 2005.

Maybe due to a shortage of land for residential development, residents were now encroaching into rural areas for residential stands. This situation was prevalent in Chitungwiza's boarder with Seke rural area.

Whilst housing services were very poor, it was also witnessed that residents had huge municipal invoices they were failing to settle. In Mbare one resident had outstanding bills amounting to US\$400-00 shared as follows: water and sewer US\$230-00, electricity US\$170-00 whilst the phone was already disconnected. The total amount charged for services in the preceding month was US\$130-00, being US\$90-00 for water and sewer services and US\$90-00 electricity. Newspaper reports indicated residents had outstanding bills averaging US\$500-00, with some as high as US\$2000-00. With no income, some residents were having their service lines cut.

It can be said that the quality and quantity of housing is a challenge for most councils.

3.8 Ignoring Clinics for Traditional and Spiritual Therapies

One would expect urban dwellers to visit surgeries and pharmacies when they are afflicted, alas, this has changed. It looks like people look forward to treatment from traditional methods. These include visits to the over and ever popular apostolic faith healers, called *madzibabas* (fathers) and *madzimaais* (mothers). Night vigils at shrines, mountains and other places within suburbs are just but on the increase. This has not spared modern apostolic churches. Priests and self proclaimed prophets claim to heal every condition and they are found on every corner. *N'angas* (traditional healers), some of them expatriates from Tanzania, DRC, Zambia or Kenya, have invaded urban areas. Despite the availability of



scientific evidence to the contrary, these faith and traditional healers claim to treat every ailment. They treat impairments, HIV, boost businesses, provide good lucky, catch thieves, boost immunity and increase sexual performance among other wild promises.

At Chitungwiza Central Hospital, the concrete fence (durawall) and surrounding environments had advertisements as follows:

- *Ceragem is finally here for the treatment of all ailments.* Ceragem is a bed like machine emanating from Asia which is assumed to treat all ailments.
- *Chiremba wechivanhu/traditional doctor: Tinopedza marwadzo ose nezvononetsa mudzimba nekumabasa. We treat all ailments and remove all bad luck at work or home.*
- *Tiens products are here. Quality herbal products for the treatment of all ailments.* Tiens represents a group of Chinese herbal products.
- Poster of popular prophet shouted *Judgement day for spiritual healing and prosperity.*
- Flagged holy crosses in red, green and white signifying the presence of apostolic prophets in nearby bushes and open spaces.

Whilst there are benefits to traditional therapies (Chavunduka, 1994), there are demerits (WHO, 2012) and Ministry of Health and Child Welfare (2012). The benefits may include affordable or contextually appropriate treatment yet the dangers include poisoning, delay in seeking pharmacotherapy, fake products and being conned.

4. IMPLICATIONS OF RURALISATION AND OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO URBAN PLANNERS AND SOCIAL SERVICES PROVIDERS

Whilst there are several options to reverse ruralisation, environment based solutions look like the most sustainable. Ruralisation has laid bare the fact that urban life envisaged in agriculture based economies may not be similar to the one available in industrialised economies. With 75% of Zimbabwe's population relying on agriculture, it is difficult to imagine how they can just forget about agricultural life when they are in urban areas.

Zimbabwe being an agriculture based economy and the people of Zimbabwe being farmers by birth, agriculture promotion in urban areas is an option to think about. Currently, Zimbabwe is redistributing land with a rural focus, but an urban focus might help solve the problem. Some land being distributed is very close to urban areas. Such land may be



parcelled out to urban dwellers that can farm from their urban homes. Alternatively, urban dwellers may be resettled where they can dedicate their life to farming thereby also contributing to the economy.

Instead of giving small pieces of land for residential purposes, land may be increased for each household so that they not only build a habitat, but they can also farm on the same plot. With a large plot, they can also be able to drill boreholes for irrigation water necessitating them to maximise land use throughout the year. Large plots may result in residents using household based sewer systems without relying on city health services which only exist on bye laws. Septic tanks and soak-aways may be approved. This has made the situation in low density suburbs better because they can afford to drill boreholes and put septic tanks. However, urban agriculture has various critics. Muderere (2011) pointed out that urban agriculture is against various pieces of legislation in Zimbabwe, including the Regional, Urban and Country Planning Act, the Environmental Management Act and the Public Health Act. Despite these shortfalls, the Government of Zimbabwe has been supporting urban agriculture.

Provision of wood, as an alternative source of energy is not only an income making venture but also an environment support mechanism. Instead of chopping trees from the existing wood lots to sell to urban dwellers, farmers must be licensed to grow and sell wood. They may be trained to grow tree varieties that grow fast and produce lots of energy when dry.

On one hand, households should also rely on solar power which is readily available to reduce their expenses and to release pressure on the national grid.

On the other hand, community toilets and community boreholes and wells must be considered when planning for urban areas.

Another solution is to curb rural urban migration. This can be done through developing rural areas and decentralisation of some services to the rural areas. As more and more people visit urban centres to stay there permanently, they burden already strained services. Urban dwellers with rural homes have a tendency to farm there during the rainy season and also maintain a stock of livestock. This reduces their chances of getting into dire poverty.

The human factor in ruralisation should not be ignored. Chief among such factors is corruption and mismanagement. Administrators of urban areas are very rich people whilst on the one hand their residents are very poor. By the time of this study, the government



was investigating eight urban councils for various malpractices. The Town Clerk for Chitungwiza and other senior staff had been suspended for mismanagement of funds, misappropriation of land and awarding faulty tenders at a time residents had no services. A commission was running the affairs of the town. The government had also suspended various mayors and councillors across the country with urban areas affected including Gwanda, Kwekwe, Harare, Kariba and Mutare. The major reasons for the suspensions were corrupt tendencies. At the same time Bindura Town Council, Harare, Bulawayo and Chitungwiza were all reported to be broke, failing to pay employees and had applied for borrowing powers.

Tibaujuka (2005) recommended that the government should revise the outdated Regional and Town Planning Act. She noted there was an immediate need for the government of Zimbabwe to revise the act and other relevant laws, to align the substance and the procedures of these acts with the social, economic and cultural realities facing the majority of the population. Tibaujuka also recommended Zimbabwe to work with the international community to improve housing and urban services. She urged the country to adopt minimum standards in housing provision as stipulated by the Habitat Agenda.

With housing being one of the biggest challenges facing urban centres not only in Zimbabwe but in Africa as a whole, scholars have advocated for low cost housing. Ramsamya (1995), in his analysis of the socialist drive towards housing in urban areas in post colonial Africa, advocated for low cost housing schemes. UN Habitat also supports low cost housing initiatives. This recommendation is adopted by authors of this paper. Low cost housing comes from low cost materials used and friendly housing standards adopted.

The informal sector should be uplifted to ensure that unemployment is reduced and also that social security systems are strengthened. Those in the informal sector should be considered for mortgage and other loans to improve their operations. Informal sector housing schemes and cooperatives should also be promoted.

Urban planners should think beyond tomorrow and in line with Chirisa (2008)'s argument, they should ensure that the urban economy is not only able to provide amenities, but provides a harmonious and sustainable future. Planners and social service workers should now begin to understand the process of ruralisation and come up with a model befitting the socio-economic dynamics in Zimbabwe.



5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has highlighted challenges urban life is facing based on findings from observation of eight sites in Harare, Bindura and Chitungwiza as well as existing reports on the deterioration of urban services throughout Zimbabwe. Researchers have proposed solutions including providing agricultural services to urban centres, curbing rural urban migration, corruption and mismanagement. The findings alluded to above paint a gloomy picture on the present and future of urbanisation in Zimbabwe. The current urban models adopted in Zimbabwe are not sustainable largely due to unavailability of employment which should generate income for residents to buy urban services from local authorities in the process enabling the local authorities to sustain provision of services. This situation, reminiscent of most third world urban centres, has resulted in sub standard provision of housing, energy, transport, health, education, social security and welfare. Urban leadership has failed to read this indicator and they have resorted to firing and hiring personnel with the situation not changing but rather worsening. It is therefore time to think broadly of strategies suitable in the Zimbabwean economy.

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