

Strong Citizens: Informed and Apt to Build their Spaces in the Spirit of Resilience in Urban Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Despite homelessness, spiralled by the economic and political crises in urban areas of Zimbabwe, urban citizens engaged in resilience strategies in accessing affordable housing in urban areas. But, little has been theorised on the homeless poor strategies in accessing low-cost urban housing. It is against this backdrop that the article seeks to explore the resilience strategies that the urban poor have employed in accessing housing in urban areas. The article is premised on the resilience theory in the face of adversity during economic and political crises that Zimbabwe has gone through. It engaged in desktop research that involved reviewing secondary data on the topic. The resilience strategies employed include human capital, financial capital, social capital, agency, political currency and informality. Nonetheless, some of urban dwellers face vulnerabilities, including having their houses demolished and being defrauded by con artists. The resilience strategies show that urban dwellers are apt and resilient in accessing housing in the context of economic and social crises.

Keywords: *crises, capital, housing building, adaptation, management*

INTRODUCTION

This article discusses the possibility of the use of resilient approaches in the occupation of urban spaces intervention by citizens in Zimbabwe. This gels well with the fledgeling phenomenon of urban resilience. Urban

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resilience refers to the capacity of urban institutions, individuals, systems and communities to recover and maintain their function and thrive in the aftermath of stress or shock, regardless of its impact, magnitude or frequency (Frantzeskaki, 2016). This concept of urban resilience, which is interdisciplinary and has gained traction over recent decades, is relatable because we are living in an urban age where urban communities, individuals and systems are facing both greater opportunities and unprecedented challenges in human history. To cope with the challenges of urbanisation involving the influx of one million people to the cities, the world would need to build one city a week otherwise many people will continue to live in conditions with serious vulnerabilities (*ibid.*). Indeed, the concept of urban resilience arises from an observation that the population of those living in urban areas has increased exponentially, leaving many children vulnerable. These children suffer from multiple deprivations; their families do not have access to land, housing or basic services.

The phenomenon of urban homelessness in Zimbabwe has risen within a background of a series of socio-economic crises that have plagued the country in the past two decades. Tawodzera, Riley and Crush (2016) remark that for the past two decades, Zimbabwe has suffered profound political, economic and social malaise marked by a negative GDP growth rate, increasing unemployment, rising poverty, hyperinflation, mass out-migration and recurrent national food shortages. The crisis was possibly distinctly displayed by the stratospheric inflationary economic milieu reflected in the record, and yet conservative official record of an inflation rate that was at 231 million percent for September 2008 (Hanke, 2008). Hanke (2008) reports that the actual inflation rates breached 7,96 trillion percent by November 2008. The stratospheric inflation forced Zimbabwe to abandon the unstable local currency in preference for the more stable 'basket' of foreign currencies, such as the United States dollar and the South African rand (Mate, 2014; Mhizha, 2010). Before dollarisation in February 2009, hyperinflation meant that livelihoods were scrambled in unprecedented ways (Mate, 2014).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Resilience is difficult to define (Theron & Dunn, 2010). Resilience is the capability to regain the original shape or position after bending, stretching, compression, or other deformation (Korber *et al.*, 2017). This resilience is strengthened by boosted social networks and formation of professional networks of mentors, accepting that change is a part of life, and avoiding seeing crises as insurmountable (Van Breda, 2018). Individuals can navigate their way to psychological, social, cultural and physical resources that sustain their well-being and their capacity individually and collectively to negotiate for resources to be provided and experienced in culturally meaningful ways (Masten, 2012). The extent of resilience is not dependent only on internal or personal characteristics, but structural and external factors. Adaptive resilience involves a process of continuous transformation and learning in the aftermath of disruptions. Resilience is a process that leads to an outcome, and the central focus of resilience research is on mediating processes. Thus, a person or social system is 'resilient' because it evidences good outcomes in the face of adversity.

Measurement of resilience is measured based on whether the urban poor aware of their goals in the context of seeking to occupy and build spaces. Regarding organisational management, the focus is on the capability of urban dwellers, competent people providing overall direction, ability to face challenges, making feasible decisions (Chazovachii, 2019). The schemes' planning systems should be operative, a system with an effective administration in place. The body has adequate mechanisms in place to control internal affairs, monitoring and evaluating activities. The internal structures of the organisation should conform to administrative principles that have to do with the span of control, well spelt out authority and clear roles and responsibilities and existing structures running new projects (*ibid.*).

The major thrust of networks for resilient urban dwellers, is on alliance and connections, relations to donors and competitors and rivals. The legal and political framework is mandated to look at whether the resilient urban dwellers' scheme is legal and free to do whatsoever it deems necessary (*ibid.*). Entrepreneur schemes should be linked to official policy, political

support maintained and stability in local and national stakeholders for resilience to be realised (*ibid.*). The thrust of participation and legitimacy is on local ownership and participation, trust and legitimacy in the community (Oslo, 2000). The legal status of urban dwellers' scheme would be a helpful enhancement in governance, as it would allow it to engage in a full range of financial and market transactions on behalf of its members. Therefore, the capacity of the urbanites who are custodians of the housing scheme to follow the constitution, norms and values of the local community, would enhance resilience. But failure by scheme leaders to follow formal and informal rules and regulations would result in the abandonment of the project (Chazovachii, 2019).

Arguing about Zambia, Baldwin (2013:807) states that "...the political opinions of patrons do not cause voters to vote against their political interests but to alter their expectations about the performance of candidates in delivering local public goods and services". Thus, voters are usually not coerced but make their choices willingly. The major determinant of the relationship hinges on the notion of reciprocity. Scott (1972:93) has posited that "in the reciprocity demanded by the relationship, each partner provides a service that is valued by the other". The patron may wield authority that the client may seek to tap into to access what he or she perceives as desirable.

Stokes (2007:618) has argued that "poor people value a handout more highly than do wealthy people; hence, if one is going to hand out goodies, one will target the poor..." She further argues that "... poor people are risk-averse and hence value more highly a bag of goodies in hand today than the promise of a redistributive public policy tomorrow..." (*ibid.*). Politicians become 'innovative' in search of another chance in office. Land for housing has been used to present such favouritism. This is in keeping with Boone (2013:394)'s argument that,

When land and other assets are allocated via political hierarchies rather than through impersonal market relationships, voters, citizens, and business people lack the economic and political autonomy that is a sine qua non of liberal democracy. Those who do control access to livelihoods and assets have a source of political leverage over citizens that can be deployed to pressure or threaten voters in subtle ways.

The proportion of people worldwide living in urban areas passed the 50% mark for the first time in history in 2007 (UN-HABITAT, 2007). The pace of urbanisation in sub-Saharan Africa is twice the global average, making it the highest in the world. Urban populations in southern Africa are particularly rising rapidly, with South Africa and Botswana having urban populations of more than 60% (Crush & Frayne, 2010), and Zimbabwe at 33% (ZIMSTAT, 2013b). Unfortunately, rapid urbanisation in Southern Africa is not associated with increased incomes and better standards of living as it is in some other developing regions (Ravillon *et al.*, 2007). The urban poor often live in overcrowded and unhygienic conditions, without sanitary facilities, clean water, solid waste collection or proper drainage because of rapid and unplanned urbanisation (Tannerfeldt & Ljung, 2006). The high-density areas where the poor live, are usually prone to disease outbreaks and experience environmental hazards arising from density and exposure to multiple pollutants. For example, typhoid and cholera outbreaks have become predictable each rainy season in many of Harare's high-density suburbs in recent years (Joint Initiative, 2012).

Social fragmentation is another feature of urban communities due to the lack of community and inter-household mechanisms for social safety nets (Manjengwa *et al.*, 2016). Many inhabitants of poor urban areas are lodgers or squatters and tend to be transient, moving from area to area without putting down roots. Consequently, their social capital is low. Lack of strong community values and social disintegration exacerbates crime and violence including rape, robbery, drug and alcohol abuse and prostitution in urban areas. Another danger for urban dwellers is that of traffic accidents (*ibid.*). Understanding urban poverty presents a set of issues distinct from general poverty analysis and may require specific analysis (Tannerfeldt & Ljung, 2006). Urban poverty differs from rural poverty, not only in its occurrence and depth, but also in its nature, one of the most significant differences being that the urban poor depend on a cash income for survival. Urban economic contexts are cash-based and the social fabric is not as strong compared with rural contexts (Joint Initiative, 2011). Human capital has been attributed to helping urban citizens to build their spaces. It is perceived as 'the knowledge, skills, competencies and other attributes embodied in entrepreneurs or groups of individuals

acquired during their life and used to produce goods, services or ideas in market circumstances’ (Pettinger, 2017).

The urban poor face challenges such as high food prices, accommodation rent, cost of building materials, user fees for water and electricity, and associated debt. A study found that the average debt per urban household in Zimbabwe ranged from US\$200 to 2500 (Joint Initiative, 2011). The situation is aggravated by high unemployment and under-employment and low economic activity rates (Manjengwa *et al.*, 2016). Inadequate housing has become one of the main global challenges as over one billion of the world population resides in poor housing (Takuva, 2017). The situation is rife in Sub Saharan Africa where 71% of the urban population resides in slums (UN-HABITAT, 2009). “The scenario puts national governments of the individual countries in these regions under immense pressure to provide housing, especially for the economically weaker sections of the urban community who are usually the majority” (Chikomwe, 2014:2).

Informality is a “development that does not conform to the laws and regulatory frameworks of the city” (Sivam, 2003: 136). The informal housing development is shaped by the social, economic and physical context (Takuva, 2017). In many countries, “... informal housing development exists due to the inability of low-income groups to purchase high quality, professionally designed and constructed housing produced through the conventional way” (Takuva, 2017; Keivan & Werma, 2001). In Kampong, Indonesia, it is not characterised only by “informality, irregularity, illegality but also by its flexibility and resilience (Tunas and Peresthu, 2010).

There is a housing backlog of over one million throughout Zimbabwe (Government of Zimbabwe, 2012) and this is attributable to a plethora of factors, such as the exclusionary colonial housing policies, economic challenges, rapid urbanisation and internationally promoted policies such as the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme that were adopted by the post-independence government, (UN-HABITAT, 2009). The Government of Zimbabwe also adopted a reactionary policy measure of *Operation Murambatsvina* in 2005 that heartlessly demolished backyard

buildings that rendered 700 000 people homeless (Huchzermeyer, 2011). The policy consequently worsened homelessness and increased housing demand in the country. To cater for this demand, the Government then adopted many policies, such as the “Pay Your Service Scheme” (Government of Zimbabwe, 2012:6). The policy prescribed that it was no longer the mandate of the state to provide services. Rather, it shifted to be the obligation of beneficiaries to contribute towards the provision of services in their new developing settlements through collective self-management (Takuva, 2017).

Political currency and clientelism have been deployed to explain the urban citizens’ resilience and capacity in building their spaces. As put across by Kitschelt and Kselman (2012:2) clientelism

“... involves an exchange in that politicians provide goods and services targeted to an individual or small groups of voters, contingent on the latter reciprocating by surrendering their vote and contributing other services to the politicians’ effort to win electoral office.”

An observation by GansMorse, Mazzuca and Nichter (2013:1) is that

“during elections in many countries, clientelist parties (or political machines) distribute benefits to citizens in direct exchange for political support. Such parties compete not only [because] of policy platforms but also with material inducements given to individuals. These inducements often include food, medicine, and other forms of sustenance. In contexts where citizens are highly dependent on such handouts, including countries where the state fails to provide a social safety net, this pattern of machine politics can have particularly important consequences for democratic accountability and responsiveness.”

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers reviewed academic manuscripts, newspaper articles and research reports, published in English from 1970 to 2021, that explained the link between resilience citizenship and occupying spaces in Zimbabwe and beyond. The researchers included research articles that ranged from quantitative designs, quasi-experimental designs, qualitative studies, longitudinal, case-control, descriptive and correlation studies and grey literature. Both controlled vocabulary and keywords were used in the

search strategy. The search terms used were resilience, citizens, building and Zimbabwe.

RESULTS

This section presents and analyses the results. The results are documented reports and analyses on the subject obtained from Zimbabwe. Social networks help in urban resilience as citizens use them to both appropriate income-generating livelihoods, earning incomes and facilitating business at all levels, especially in the informal sector (UNDP, 2019). Social networks speak to the presence of social capital and resilience in urban dwellers. Strong social networks and relationships play a role in nurturing relationships with clients, suppliers and competitors. They have enabled urban Zimbabweans, especially those involved in the informal economy, to improve efficiency, and rapidly identify and maintain opportunities for business in highly unstable and challenging conditions. Solidarity and social networks have also led to the development of organisations, sometimes informal, that enable vulnerable communities to voice their needs and concerns to the national and municipal governments or to share resources. Examples include the *'kufushamari'*, an informal scheme created to provide financial resources and social security in the absence of micro-credit, or resource-sharing schemes based on donations that help members who cannot afford their treatment (LEDRIZ, 2015).

Urban dwellers seeking to build their houses seem to rely more on social capital. The resilient citizens get help from civic groups. These civic groups are private actors in housing provision in urban areas (Chazovachii, 2019). They act as mediating structures and facilitate access to affordable residential stands. These structures established relationships on behalf of the resilient citizens that made incremental development accepted by council, a concession to provide shared toilets and deferment of road construction and an agreement that families could move onto the site as soon as water connections are done. They facilitated lowering the ladder for the resilient citizens to have their housing in urban areas. The resilience among the resilient citizens is accountability. They have upward, downward and multiple accountabilities. Their level of transparency has attracted donors'. Urban dwellers had more social cohesion than dissonance. This has influenced networks of reciprocity and integration

among members in the scheme. The resilient citizens in Chimanimani have pursued social rather than the individual utility that has enhanced a cooperative spirit among the groups (*ibid.*).

The community-based savings, exchanges, innovation and participation have influenced local authorities in Chimanimani to revisit their policies and laws by lowering the ladder to accommodate the resilient citizens (*ibid.*). Lowering the ladder is an approach to urban housing developed outside officially sanctioned processes. With the background that developing nations, such as Zimbabwe in particular, had inherited or imported their planning regulations, standards and administrative procedures from outside, the need is there to consider the vulnerability backdrop of the Chimanimani resilient citizens in post-disaster situations (Payne, 2001). Planning regulations, standards and administrative procedures were made to suit the cyclone-affected entrepreneur and are established to enhance household stability, security and wellbeing. Councillors are allowing the deprived entrepreneurs to pay rates and services in line with their earnings. Others would pay using conditions that conform to the taste and preferences of the locals.

The use of Dialogue on Shelter to access stands for the resilient citizens was under the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET) of 2013-18, as beneficiary involvement in the homeownership matrix would instil a sense of ownership of housing delivery systems (Chazovachii, 2019). The policy was pro-poor as for every stand allocated, a certain percentage of stands would be set aside for the resilient citizens. Resilient citizens engage in community-based savings. The resilient citizens into informal trading for self-sustenance. They are into cross-border trading, sale of *magogoya*, sugarcane to mention but a few. They work together with civil partners, complementing them with financial support and mediation processes on services required by the urban council (*ibid.*). They deposit their monthly savings into a common account that is used for costs associated with the stand and other services. This has made them financially resilient as they had a starting point when it comes to financial support (*ibid.*).

Related to social capital is financial capital. Financial capital involves a resilient strategy utilisation among the resilient citizens who then establish their entrepreneurial endeavours involving establishing networks of community-based saving schemes constituted by members from urban and peri-urban settlements of Chimanimani (*ibid.*). The saving schemes save regularly for housing and other poverty issues (*ibid.*). These Rotating Savings and Credit Associated schemes have rituals for self-reliance and sustainability. They practice community-based savings, community-based exchanges, innovation, community participation and women-led development. Due to shocks and levels of homelessness by communities, the resilient citizens developed various forms of resilience in the form of human, social, financial and natural capital. This entails one taking advantage of the resilient citizens, dynamism and innovativeness to influence policies, laws and civic organisations to establish programmes and projects that would bring household stability and end the adverse impact of Cyclone Idai.

For resilient urban dwellers to be able to occupy and build their places, they need human or mental capital. The capacity and capability of resilient citizens provide overall direction and ability to face challenges and make feasible decisions (*ibid.*). The thrust of participation and legitimacy is on local ownership and participation, trust and legitimacy in the community. The level of alignment of the resilient citizens with their housing scheme constitution, norms and values can influence the resilience of the programme. Manpower for the building can be at the disposal as beneficiaries offer their labour to fulfil the required regulations and standards (*ibid.*).

Among the beneficiaries of urban housing, schemes are builders, bookkeepers, carpenters, blacksmiths, general labourers, to mention but a few. The urban citizens can have their bricks, windows, doors and labour for water and sewer projects. What determines human capital are the skills and qualifications, education level, work experience, social skills – communication, intelligence, emotional intelligence, judgement, personality – hard work, harmony in an office, creativity, habits and personality traits (*ibid.*). The ability to innovate new working practices/products and brand images of an individual also determines

human capital. Harnessing all this potential can help citizens reduce their vulnerability. The dynamism, innovation and propulsive nature of the resilient citizens through partnerships with civic groups (such as Dialogue on Shelter), as a registered institution under local government, has attracted the attention of the resilient citizens to transform their initiatives beneficially (*ibid.*).

Political capital and political currency are other resilience pathways that are employed by urban dwellers who seek to build their houses. Chirisa, Bandaoko and Mutsindikwa (2015) argue that clientelism fits within different contexts. Hicken (2011:289) argues that "... in the face of economic development it often adapts and endures". Clientelism has different outcomes, including undermining economic development and democracy, making it difficult for citizens to hold their elected leaders accountable, hence, tending to reinforce corruption in society. In light of this, Keefer (2007:813) characterises younger democracies as more fractionalised, presidential and conflictual. Such political systems tend to have higher rent-seeking and less government provision of goods and services of all kinds. The politicians use goods, like food, housing and medicines to buy votes from the poor urban dwellers, while urban dwellers take that as an opportunity to get housing.

Roots of the economic crisis in Zimbabwe, though contested, have been credited to the adoption of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1991, the unbudgeted cash payouts to liberation warfighters in 1997, the fast-track land reform programme (FTLRP) in 2000, political violence during many elections from 2000, contested elections, participation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) war in 1997/8, imposition of sanctions by some western countries and the cutting of funding by international financiers (Chitando, 2009; Bratton & Masunungure, 2011; Mate, 2014; Tawodzera *et al.*, 2016).

Kanyenze *et al.* (2017) aver that the Zimbabwean crisis involved structural regression characterised by increasing dependence on natural resources, de-industrialisation and informalisation, as many economically active adults who were out of formal employment engaged in informal work. The share of the manufacturing sector in the Gross Domestic Product

(GDP) peaked at 26.9% in 1992 before collapsing to 7.2% by 2002 and averaging 11.7% between 2009 and 2014 (*ibid.*). There is consensus that the crisis reached its nadir in 2008 (Chitando, 2009; Mhizha, 2010; United Nations Country Team (UNCT), 2014; Tawodzera *et al.*, 2016). The challenges persist leading to Masunungure (2018: 12) observing that Zimbabwe is “a broken nation with a broken economy, broken social services, a broken infrastructure and broken external relations”.

Resilience was shown in a context of an economic crisis in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwean crisis was marked by many hardships. Bratton and Masunungure (2011) observe that there were shortages of staple foods, luxury goods, fuel, foreign currency and local banknotes. These two scholars further maintained that basic social services crumbled in 2008 as schools were closed countrywide and cholera infected about 100 000 people, killing 4 000 of them. For Chitando (2009), children and youths bore the brunt of the crisis and faced not a physical war, but battled numerous economic and psychological wars. Gaidzanwa and Manyeruke (2011) plausibly observe that Zimbabwe’s economy deteriorated to levels comparable to a country at war. The economic crisis in Zimbabwe was also punctuated by record unemployment levels.

Chiumia (2014) observes that estimates of Zimbabwe’s unemployment rate ranged wildly from 4% to 95%. Government and government agencies, however, gave very low unemployment rates. The Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMStat), a government agency, reported that the unemployment rates eased from a very low rate of 11.4% to an even lower rate of 10.7% in 2014 (Chiumia, 2014). For ZIMSTATS, these figures include the 5.4 million people, or 84% of economically active people who have resorted to the informal sector and are classified as being employed. However, only 11% were engaged in formal employment.

Opposition politicians in the country put unemployment rates at 85% while the ruling party, ZANU-PF put it at 60% in 2013. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) put it at between 80% and 90% in 2012 while the National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO) put it at 95% (*ibid.*). Dodo and Dodo (2014) express the view that the unemployment rate stood at over 85%, while Bratton and

Masunungure (2011) contend that it surpassed 80%. Though these authorities question the ZIMSTATS figures, they, unlike ZIMSTATS, do not reveal how they arrive at their figures. Despite the contentions, unemployment was so high, rendering families unable to provide for their children to the extent that some of the children left for the streets (Rurevo & Bourdillon, 2003; Mhizha, 2010).

About unemployment, the general view is that the decline in formal employment is linked to the rise in informal employment. The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee ZimVac, (2016) attributes the growth in the rates of informal employment to the closure of companies and the laying off of workers, mainly by the private sector. Between the first quarter of 2015 and the third quarter of 2016, about 6 800 workers were retrenched (Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, 2016, cited in ZIMVAC, 2016). It is revealed by Kanyenze *et al.* (2017) that in 2012, 85% of the 3.5 million micro, small-and-medium enterprises (MSMEs) were unregistered and were mainly motivated by subsistence and are, hence, not sustainable. Indeed, of the 5.7 million people who were working in MSMEs in 2012, 2.8 million were business owners, while 2.9 million were employees. Most informal economy workers laboured under precarious conditions and lacked decent work, with their work being casual, unprotected, excluded, unregistered and unrepresented (*ibid.*).

Studies show that poverty is prevalent in urban areas. Poverty, however, is concentrated in Zimbabwe's rural areas with only 30.4 % of urban households deemed poor (ZimStat, 2017). The recently released Urban Livelihoods Assessment by ZimVAC indicates that the declining poverty rate may have reversed, at least in urban areas, as food expenditure increased from 33.8 % in 2016 to 48.6 % in 2019 (ZimVAC, 2019). Zimbabwe is a middle-income country that was one of the most advanced economies in the region but experienced an extreme economic decline from 2000 to 2009 that led to the deepest peacetime contraction in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with a fall of 50%. Urban areas have historically been associated with economic development and relatively greater prosperity. Urban residents are consistently exhibited in national statistics to be better off compared with their rural counterparts. In

Zimbabwe, 76% of rural households lived below the Total Consumption Poverty Line, compared with 38% of urban households (ZimStat, 2013a).

In addition, 23% of rural households live in extreme poverty, compared with 4% of urban households (ZimStat, 2013a). However, inequality among urban residents in Zimbabwe is higher than those in rural areas. The Gini coefficient measures inequality in society and ranges from zero, perfect equality, to one, perfect inequality. In Zimbabwe, urban areas had a Gini Index of 0.39, compared with 0.37 for the rural areas. The heterogeneity in urban communities probably makes averages mask inequities and severe deprivations among poor and rich urban communities. In addition, while the depth of rural poverty is deep, with a poverty gap index of 0.36, the poverty gap index for urban areas is lower at 0.12 and many urban households live on the margins of the poverty line (*ibid.*).

Urban and rural residents experience different forms of poverty and deprivation. There are specific problems that occur in urban areas that predispose vulnerable households to poverty (Manjengwa, Matema & Tirivanhu, 2016). For example, while rural households rely on their supply for consumption, food security for urban dwellers is about access rather than availability (*ibid.*). Poor families often cannot afford to purchase adequate nutritious food, even when it is available in shops. This directly impacts the development of children within the household, resulting in stunting, wasting and other forms of malnutrition.

Poor settlements are often on the periphery of the city. Travel to work or facilities also incurs high costs (*ibid.*). There are variations and significant inequalities between the better off and the poor within urban areas. The poverty incidence and indices in Highfield and Epworth are presented per overall sample and per suburb and household, individual, child and gender of the household head (*ibid.*). Overall, 64% of households in the sample were below the Total Consumption Poverty Line; 55% were living in poverty and classified as 'poor', and almost 10% as 'very poor' or extremely poor (*ibid.*). This indicates that nearly one in every 10 households in the sample were very poor and unable to meet their

minimum food and non-food requirements. Although not directly comparable due to methodological differences, poverty levels in Epworth and Highfield were relatively higher than indicated in national surveys.

The Poverty Income Consumption and Expenditure Survey of 2011/12 found that the household poverty level for Harare was 35.7%; with extreme poverty at 3.3% (Zim Stat, 2013a). The study results revealed that there was a high percentage (68%) of poor individuals, with 12% of them being extremely poor (Manjengwa *et al.*, 2016). Generally, the sampled households and individuals in Epworth experienced more poverty and extreme poverty than those in Highfield: 62% of households in Epworth were classified as 'poor' and 16% as 'very poor'; whilst households in Highfield were comparatively better off, with 48% classified as 'poor' and only 3% as 'very poor'. Nearly 82% of individuals in Epworth and 56% of individuals in Highfield were living in poverty (*ibid.*).

Specifically, in Zimbabwe, land has been used as an incentive to subvert the landless voters to vote for ZANU-PF Boone (2013:b382) explains,:

"In the electoral campaigns of 1990, 1996, and 2000, and 2002, 2004, and 2008, Mugabe used promises and plans of land acquisitions and state-sponsored resettlement to rev up political support and energize the party's rural supporters, and to secure the loyalty of ZANU-PF hardliners, the military, and rural constituencies through the manipulation of land grants."

The rural land agenda later found its way into urban areas given the rising demand for housing land. The same land could be offered not merely to a few individuals, but to those groups that could organise themselves into housing cooperatives.

Cooperatives have been a platform for resilience among urban dwellers seeking to build houses in Zimbabwe (Chirisa *et al.*, 2015). They allow a platform for negotiating with local government officials for housing and without a patron that identifies with the party that identifies with equity in the distribution of land is very difficult. Councillors and mayors in Harare are Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) (save for

Epworth), do not have 'legitimacy' (at least from the ZANU-PF perspective) to speak about land (Chirisa *et al.*, 2015). The MDC argues that it has the people; ZANU-PF argues that it has the land because it has advocated strongly for equitable land distribution hence the land seizures and subsequent nationalisation in 2000 (*ibid.*).

Pressured by the woes of inadequate housing, homeless urban residents have been cowed to identify with the ZANU-PF land agenda. Because the local authorities can attend only to cooperatives and not individuals, the residents also form cooperatives. ZANU-PF has encouraged those who want land to build to get into the cooperatives (*ibid.*). Once in the cooperatives, members must adhere to the requirements of the *musangano* (the party, is popularly referred to) and pledge their allegiance to vote for it. Without that, cooperatives risk losing their land. Such is the housing and the political landscape that has characterised Harare, especially in the run-up to July 31, 2013 harmonised elections in which Zanu-PF won (*ibid.*).

Although ZANU-PF did not garner sufficient votes to get all the urban constituencies, it strongly believes that its membership base in urban centres has significantly increased, better than in the previous elections of 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2008 (*ibid.*). The party has used land for the enticement of the urban homeless and housing cooperatives as a vehicle of achieving its goal of control of urban citizens. It is generally noted that more than 2,600 housing cooperatives have been registered countrywide, with more than 1,200 being allocated housing stands (Kachere, 2014). In Harare, there has been massive development of housing cooperatives, many of them regarded as illegal (*Herald*, 2005). To demonstrate how distributive politics in urban Harare is, data was collected from the City of Harare's Housing and Community Services Department on the name of the cooperative, number of stands allocated, state of development and membership. To demonstrate by a few housing cooperatives in Harare, as indicated, those housing cooperatives connected to ZANU-PF were allocated more sites to develop housing stands than those without political connectedness. This indicates that patronage and clientelism play a pivotal role in the allocation of land to housing cooperatives. In addition, the level of development and servicing among those housing cooperatives

connected to ZANU-PF is advanced as compared to those that are not (Chirisa *et al.*, 2015).

Parallel Housing Development refers to an alternative configuration in the development of human settlements that allows for the construction of housing to be carried out simultaneously with the provision of services (Government of Zimbabwe, 2012). This is a formal housing development approach as it was implemented by the state. However, it is trying to be unconventional although it is formal and partly incremental. Similar approaches intended under 'parallel development' in Zimbabwe were implemented in other countries, although their terminology differs. Many of these approaches were implemented in South Africa. South Africa has a housing backlog owing to apartheid policies, rapid urbanisation and urban poverty (Eglin, 2009). This has denied 23% of households in South Africa to have access to adequate housing and formal shelter (*ibid.*). In a bid to address this situation, the post-apartheid government adopted a policy to provide subsidised houses under the National Housing Subsidy Scheme (Takuva, 2017).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The article has shown that despite homelessness spiralled by the economic and political crises in urban areas of Zimbabwe, urban citizens engaged in resilience strategies in accessing affordable housing in urban areas. The poor urban dwellers exploit resilience to occupy and build urban spaces. The forms of resilience employed include human capital, social capital, agency, informality, financial capital and political currency. The study is premised on the resilience theory in the face of adversity during the economic and political crises that Zimbabwe has gone through. Nonetheless, some of urban dwellers faced vulnerabilities that included having their houses demolished and being defrauded by con artists. The resilience strategies showed that urban dwellers were apt and resilient in accessing housing in the context of economic and social crises.

The article recommends that the Zimbabwe government establish a framework for building resilient cities and structures in urban areas in Zimbabwe. The structures must withstand environmental hazards. It is

also important that resilience among citizens is promoted. The habit of destroying urban structures after they are built over time may need to be avoided. The government and local authorities may also need to ensure that dwellers in urban areas get the basic amenities, such as roads, water sources, electricity supply and sanitation.

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