

# Bringing the Human Dignity Thrust into the Housing Informality Debate in Zimbabwe: Lessons from Makokoba, Mbare, Sakubva Housing Habitats<sup>1</sup>

INNOCENT CHIRISA<sup>2</sup>, ZEBEDIAH MUNETA<sup>3</sup>, FUNNY MACHIPISA<sup>4</sup>, TAPIWA MUSASA<sup>5</sup> AND BEATRICE HICKONICKO<sup>6</sup>

---

## Abstract

Informal settlements present a challenge on human dignity by infringing on people's rights to basic services and exposing them to inhumane conditions. The article focuses on human indignity in informal settlements that have been caused by poor planning, implementation, and monitoring of the urbanisation trends in major cities in Zimbabwe. The study used secondary data, that is, desktop method of data collection. Thematic data analysis was used to analyse the data. Results illustrate that little research has been conducted on human dignity in housing schemes and the implications of personal responsibility for food, water and accommodation standards in informal settlements. Results also show that human dignity is affected by the lack of sanitation and provision of adequate facilities by local authorities, resulting in some unethical behaviour like crime and violence from the residents of the informal settlements. Based on the findings, housing principles provide both rights and personal responsibility and the role that human dignity

---

<sup>1</sup> Preparation of this article was supported through the Inclusive Urban Infrastructure research project funded by the UK Research and Innovations' (UKRI) Global Challenges Research Fund under the title 'Towards Trajectories of Inclusion: Making infrastructure work for the most marginalised' (Grant reference number ES/T008067/1)

<sup>2</sup> Administration, Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University

<sup>3</sup> Department of Architecture and Real Estate, University of Zimbabwe

<sup>4</sup> Department of Community Services and Housing, City of Harare

<sup>5</sup> Department of Social Sciences and Humanities, Catholic University of Zimbabwe

<sup>6</sup> Department of Urban and Rural Development, Great Zimbabwe University

plays in the provision of better living standards. The study recommends a model that should be implemented by local authorities that involves participation, responsibility and accountability of residents to provide better access to sanitation for the underprivileged people, hence promoting human dignity. Informal settlement upgrading should also be implemented to pursue human dignity.

**Keywords:** *human dignity, human right, governance, informality, principles rights and duties*

## INTRODUCTION

Urban housing provision is a big issue on a global and national scale. Even in industrialised countries, a rising number of individuals have become homeless in recent years (Maloney, 2004). While the causes of this problem differ by nation, there is evidence that the largest cities are failing to meet the demand for housing, particularly among the poor. Between 35% and 50% of urban residents in Africa, according to Tevera and Chimhowu (1998), are tenants or lodgers who live in privately-owned rented homes without electricity, or running water. The lack of adequate housing has led to the mushrooming of informal settlements in major cities especially among the poor.

One of the most important aspects of government social policy in Zimbabwe has been the supply of housing, particularly since the country's independence in 1980. There has been a severe housing scarcity in most major areas of Zimbabwe, and the backlog is growing. Low-income earners are the most impacted (Chitongo, 2017). The scope of the housing crisis in Zimbabwe has continued to grow during the country's more four decades of independence. Chirisa (2012) argues that despite greater attempts to ameliorate housing conditions made by both the government and the impoverished people, this is still the case. Housing is viewed as a fundamental necessity and human right according to the Habitat Agenda, a global framework on human settlements that was adopted by more than 250 national governments in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1996 (UNCHS, 2000). If the current situation of informal settlements persists, social stability and internal order are jeopardised because of

disgruntled citizens' protests and riots. Health problems are likely to arise as evidenced by the endemic cholera outbreaks that plagued Harare (Nyarota, 2018); disorder and chaos will reign, and citizens' social fabric will eventually deteriorate (Mbiba, 2019).

The concept of human dignity is often neglected but is of uttermost importance in housing provision. In Zimbabwe, most people are still living in the colony, while those who could afford to have moved out have done so. *Operation Murambatsvina* (Restore Order), first implemented in 2005 to reduce disorderly urbanisation, had a significant impact leaving many people vulnerable to poverty. According to accounts, the operation did not only occur in urban areas, but in rural areas as well. Police went into rural regions and destroyed homes that were illegally constructed on some properties that were taken from white owners and given to black Zimbabweans. It was necessary to seek court orders in several of the peri-urban regions. Hunger and illness, both with implications on human dignity were hazard to evictees. Many evictees and the homeless risked starving because of the economic crisis in Zimbabwe and *Operation Murambatsvina*. There were reports of severe overcrowding in Epworth, outside of Harare. This was due to displaced individuals relocating to Epworth to build new homes. Concern should be expressed over the rising population being housed in an 'eviction-free' area. As a result of the inadequate amenities for such a big population, there was an increased risk of violent riots every day which affect human dignity.

Like most African countries, Zimbabwe has experienced a surge in urbanisation. This has made it difficult for urban local authorities to keep up with the sharp rise in demand for services like housing and water. As a result, Zimbabwe has started to see a growth of informal settlements in all urban areas for over 15 years due to high urbanisation trends in towns and cities. Given the catastrophic economic condition Zimbabwe has been in over the past 20 years, the growth of informal settlements and new settlements has led to a massive demand for water, that most cities and towns are unable to supply. Consequently, cholera, typhoid and other water-borne diseases have been a problem in Zimbabwean towns in recent years. Natural calamities like floods and cyclones have also been common in Zimbabwean cities. Since the office opened in Zimbabwe in 2006,

UN-HABITAT has focused on supporting urban governance, housing laws and policies, urban planning capabilities, water and sanitation in peri-urban communities, and city resilience measures (Muderere, 2011). The need to uphold human dignity even in informal settlements has necessitated this study.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The conceptual framework that is directing our research framework emphasizes two scenarios: first, the government may conduct urban planning activities in informal settlements, or there may be circumstances when there is no urban planning since several unethical activities are being carried out in informal settlements. Uncoordinated growth assures that informal settlements occur in the latter situation. On the other side, urban planning may be effective, or local governments may plan to fail (Saidi, 2019). If the planning is strong and successful, the legislation and policies directing human settlement growth are typically long-term and support coordinated development, which may result in the creation of a sustainable city (Chirisa and Matamanda, 2019). Alternatively, failing to prepare may result in the formation of legislation and regulations that merely wreak chaos and generate disorganised growth, ultimately leading to informal settlements. As a result, the formation and existence of informal settlements appear to be the result of a variety of circumstances that must be analysed through the lenses of a sustainable city framework.

## **HUMAN DIGNITY AND HOUSING INFORMALITY: A LITERATURE REVIEW**

In cities and towns across the Global South, there has been an alarming rise in the number of informal settlements due to high urbanisation trends recorded in recent years (UN-HABITAT, 2016). About 61.7% of Africa's urban population lives in slums, and this number is rising daily (UN-HABITAT, 2014). By 2025, 1.4 billion people are projected to be residing in slums (Todes, 2011: 116). It seems utopian for the region to attempt to create the attractive cities envisioned in the New Urban Agenda, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11, and Africa Agenda 2063 (Parnell, 2016). Human settlement development issues remain a political priority in this environment despite the rise of informal settlements (UN-HABITAT, 2016: 47). Furthermore, in African cities, inappropriate urban

planning conceptions and paradigms are commonly used, resulting in the formation of informal communities (Matamanda *et al.*, 2020). The informal habitats go hand in glove with shortages of resources such as water which is a human right and has an implication on human dignity.

In Zimbabwe, informal settlements are mostly residential areas where housing units are built on land by people, and they have no legal claim of occupation on that land which results in unplanned settlement areas where housing does not comply with statutory plans and building regulations. This is frequently located in peri-urban areas of major towns and cities (UN-HABITAT 2003). Furthermore, informal settlements arise because of real estate speculation for urban residents, especially the low-income earners where they try to find cheap and affordable accommodation and the desire to own properties. Natural disasters such as floods and cyclones mostly affect such unplanned settlements since they have no adequate services to contain other damages associated with channelling water into drains. Since the office's inception in 2006, UN-focus Habitat in Zimbabwe has been on supporting urban governance, housing legislation and policies, capacity in urban planning, water and sanitation in peri-urban communities, and city resilience solutions to enhance human dignity.

Human dignity has an intrinsic value that ensures the equitable distribution of possibilities for all to have adequate access to water and sanitation services in the water management industry and other domains (Mbiba, 2019). In this context, the UN Human Rights Council has acknowledged the human right to access clean water to drink and adequate sanitation, which remains a fundamental human right for all societies (Nyarota, 2018). Thus, society has a special duty to uphold these rights and should refrain from infringing them. Since everyone has a right to access to basic water and sanitation, even if it is disregarded, society should evaluate how well people are exercising this right.

Water provision is amongst the rights that an individual should exercise. It draws attention to water management, where its mismanagement may lead to infringement of the right to access to water. Water management has received much attention in international conferences over the last

several decades to provide suggestions and measures to safeguard the environment. The Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) concept and the Global Water Partnership (GWP) were emphasized as a roadmap to water management in the 21st century in Brazil. The IWRM and GWP implementation were viewed as critical features for water provision and natural environment conservation as it has a bearing on human dignity. Water management was built on technical knowledge in these viewpoints to enhance water supplies for integrated and prioritised needs in living environments (Mbiba, 2019). Human equity has evolved rapidly in recent times based on two schools of thought: subjective human wellbeing theory, which measures the level of personal disposal to access material resources such as water, and human capabilities theory, which measures access to necessities that control human development (Nyarota, 2018). Alkire (2002) has established the idea of human dignity as a description of the lack of prejudice, humiliation, and feelings of shame when individuals do not have enough access to fundamental resources, based on human welfare and capacities theories. Any unalienable and inviolable human right is supported by human dignity (Gauri, 2004).

In addition, the materiality of informal housing and surrounding neighbourhoods shapes their defensive capability and is discussed in connection to three major concepts: criminalisation, crime and violence, and hyper-permeability. Informal settlements are not neutral areas; rather, they nurture certain sets of political and legal processes that impact how crime evolves and is resolved, therefore affecting security. Informal settlements are frequently criminalised locations, and their inhabitants are frequently criminalised by association. Most are or were unlawful in terms of land occupancy and the construction of non-standard buildings. They are symbolically formed as areas of crime, spaces of aberrant, contaminating, and harmful traits since they are excluded from the proper cosmos (Chirisa, Dumba and Mukura, 2012). They continue claiming that "predictably, residents of such areas are likewise regarded as marginal. It is generally argued that an anti-establishment, or oppositional, culture prevails in slum communities, that is broadly supportive of all types of unlawful activity.' There is no visible law and order; wandering juvenile gangs, muggers, drug dealers, prostitutes, and the poor are visible, and marginal activities are tolerated (Clough Marinaro, 2021).

This criminalisation influences the perception of informal settlements as crime hotspots that affect people's dignity: It is frequently argued that an anti-establishment, or oppositional, culture exists in slum regions, that is broadly supportive of all types of unlawful activity. (Saidi, 2019). However, Cook (2015) points out that the criminalisation and crimes committed in informal settlements are more complicated. He cites the ubiquity of criminal cartels bribing authorities to pose as property developers of informal dwellings on state-owned land (Davis 2006: 41), and the presence of severely vulnerable inhabitants in such settlements, including those escaping wars and strife. These populations, especially the kids, are particularly prone to recruitment into street gangs and other violent groups as paramilitaries (Davis 2006: 49). The UN agrees but claims that such settlements have structured social control (Cook, 2015). Residents in Zimbabwe use vigilantism and religion to regulate crime in the lack of adequate official judicial processes (Meth, 2009; 2013). Understanding crime in informal settlements demands taking into consideration a wide range of variables. The places are criminalised in and of themselves, and crime and violence are frequently the results of local discontent and grievance over their terrible living conditions. Maloney (2004) noted that "violence risks related to the characteristics of unplanned and undeveloped urban places inside African states.

Informal housing is frequently badly built because of poverty, the possibility of eviction, temporality, and a lack of resources, although the materiality of informal housing varies across settings and time. According to the UN (2003), impermanence is one characteristic of "slum housing", and "nearly half of the housing in the least developed cities is composed of non-permanent materials of various sorts likely to endure for less than 10 years". Most of the informal housing in Zimbabwe (and the rest of Africa and Asia) are typically one-storey and made of very simple, temporary, not weather-proof materials (such as cardboard, mud, plastic, wooden boards, and metal). This housing type differs significantly from the "end-point" types of informal housing one might see in Latin America, where housing, despite being informal, illegal, irregular, or slum, frequently undergoes a process of consolidation, constructed from brick or concrete (using relatively formal materials), and may lack the dignity of people's habitability. The UN claims that the continent-wide data illustrate how

ubiquitous impermanent and non-complying housing is, especially in Africa and Asia in support of evidence of worldwide variation in the material features of informal housing (UN 2003). To conceptualise the various ways in that properties might be penetrated and accessible by criminals, frequently because of the property's materiality, the term hyper-permeability is presented here with an emphasis on these more transient housing forms. Extreme indefensible housing is characterised by hyper-permeability. It covers housing that exhibits numerous types of permeability, openings without glazing, construction materials that are not strong enough to handle pressure, walls, and roofs that are permeable to water, and fundamental building materials including joists, beams, and insulation.

Informal settlements have become common in the urban areas of most developing countries. Despite the abundance, many people still lack access to basic amenities like water and toilets and go hungry in highly urbanised areas. They also grow up without receiving an education, a general problem in slum developments due to the lack of schools. This is due to carelessness and bigotry in addition to a lack of resources. Simply put, governments are hesitant to act. This is a horrific human rights crisis, not just a sad fact of life (Muchadenyika, *et al.*, 2018). Amnesty International works with communities all around the world, giving locals the information and resources, they need to interact with government representatives to assert their rights and better their lives. People who live in poverty are frequently stuck because they are disenfranchised, without a voice, and at risk of violence and instability. People must exercise their rights to escape the cycle of poverty as it affects their dignity. Respect for human rights necessitates that everyone is included, has a voice, and is protected from security risks by those in positions of authority.

On another note, overcrowding, poor or no access to clean water, sanitation, or healthcare are common poor living circumstances that affect the general dignity of a person (Chirisa and Matamanda, 2019). Because their right to live there is not recognised by the law, many residents of slums or informal settlements are not protected against harassment like forced evictions. When individuals are evicted from their homes and property without warning, consent, or payment, this is referred to as a



forced eviction. They are against the law and infringe on the right to dwelling (Muderere, 2011). Forced evictions frequently result in violence, the loss of livelihoods, and homelessness. People who live in poverty frequently lack or have limited access to the things that keep us healthy, such as clean water, wholesome food, shelter, and knowledge, including sex education. Additionally, people seldom have access to quality medical treatment when they become ill. Everybody has the right to the best physical and mental health that is attainable (Saidi, 2019). No one can always be in perfect health; thus, this does not imply that we have a right to be healthy. It implies that everyone should have access to health care and information, irrespective of who they are, where they reside, or how wealthy they are. Furthermore, it means that each of us has the freedom to decide what is best for our own body and health. Everywhere should have free, universal access to primary education. Children must be able to go to school without having to cross dangerous terrain or walk for hours. Saidi (2019) noted that several economic, social, and cultural rights should be protected by governments without restriction, and these are:

- Better prioritising of their spending, starting with the most vulnerable.
- Giving priority to necessary rights, like free elementary education.
- Ceasing evicting residents without providing them with adequate notice, compensation, or consultation.
- Ratifying the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights Optional Protocol by signing it.
- Ensuring that economic development initiatives (such as infrastructure or mining) benefit the most vulnerable people and do not result in violations of human rights.

One of the situations that may have had implications on human dignity is the *Operation Murambatsvina*. The Zimbabwean government claims that the operation was required to purge the nation of its criminal underbelly. The goal was to eliminate unsafe and unlawful housing (Benyera and Nyere, 2005); putting an end to the sale of limited goods on the illicit markets such as mealie-meal and a stop to the illicit exchange of foreign currencies. However, it has been argued that despite its legality, it left a lot of people homeless and without livelihoods which could have been avoided.

In addition, *Operation Murambatsvina* was characterised by forceful evictions which posed a threat to human dignity. Humiliation and loss of dignity as a direct result of the operation was reported in Harare (ActionAid, 2005). Kothari (2006), a special Rapporteur of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, argued that to reduce the use of force, states must first guarantee that all practical options are examined in collaboration with the affected parties before carrying out any eviction. Second, persons impacted by eviction orders must be given legal recourse or processes for fair recompense for any lost personal property. Third, evictions must be carried out strictly in conformity with the international human rights laws and the basic principles of reasonableness and proportionality, in those instances when they are deemed justifiable. Furthermore, people must never be made homeless or exposed to other human rights breaches because of evictions. Therefore, before enforcing an eviction order, governments must verify that sufficient alternative housing or relocation is available for all persons impacted (Tibaijuka, 2005) as the practice of "forced eviction constitutes a flagrant violation of human rights," as indicated in decisions of the UN Commission on Human Rights.

Slums or informal settlements constitute a growing issue for health promotion globally. Health disparities are shaped by how individuals navigate through their everyday lives and governmental institutions, and the living circumstances in complicated informal settlements. According to Zerbo *et al.* (2020), informal settlers in sub-Saharan Africa face health risks arising from lack of clean water, adequate sanitation and life in overcrowded houses. These health risks reduce people's dignity. There are serious implications of informal housing and health as well as human dignity. An improvement in adequate and decent housing leads to reduced health risks and an improvement of people's well-being and ultimately upholding human dignity. In this sense, the housing need is increasingly seen as a fundamental necessity and human right. Access to adequate and secure housing must thus be given national priority. According to Owen (2000), governments must focus on ensuring that this privilege is upheld by establishing institutions that make housing affordable and accessible to all citizens so as to uphold human dignity.

The 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe demands, although it does not expressly guarantee, that the state and all institutions and agencies of government at every level take reasonable legislative and other measures within the limits of the resources available to them, to enable every person to have access to adequate shelter (Mavedzenge, 2018). The same constitution declares that every person has inherent dignity in their private and public life and to have that dignity respected and protected (Zimbabwe Constitution, 2013). Although the Constitution provides for an equitable proportion of money to be distributed from the national to the local level to provide basic services such as shelter, such revenue is not distributed evenly to informal settlements to improve people's dignity. A fresh perspective on implementing human dignity methods should encourage increased engagement and openness in sustainable housing developments. However, a lack of enforcement and constant review of planning laws are generally causing high levels of informality in housing, a critical factor to human dignity in such settlements. Informal dwellers should be dedicated to contributing socially in terms of human dignity as a mediator between the rights and obligations of accessing water and sanitation, ecologically and economically with local authorities under the users-pay and users-polluters principles.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research engaged a desktop method for data collection, evaluating pertinent case studies across the country. Literature available on Google Scholar and other published documents on the cities' housing situation are the main data sources. Case studies were taken from Makokoba, Mbare and Sakubva because they are amongst the oldest townships in Zimbabwe. These townships are characterised by informal shacks, with some dwellings having become slums and others deteriorated to deplorable conditions. These case sites are being used throughout the article to explain, support or even refute claims made in the debate of informality and dignity.

## **RESULTS**

The study focused on Mbare, Makokoba and Sakubva as case studies. These study areas are manned by informality due to rapid urbanisation in

the major cities. Thorough research was done to bring to bring the human dignity thrust into the housing informality debate.

#### **CASE OF DIGNITY AND HOUSING INFORMALITY IN MBARE, HARARE**

As Harare's housing shortage deepens, many citizens have resorted to informal settlements. According to Chirisa and Mlambo (2012) informality in housing occurs when a house designed for occupation by a single family ends up being used by more than one family, diverting from its intended use. A case in point is Mbare which is situated in the southern central part of Harare. Mbare boasts of squatter settlements and backyard dwellings brought about by the need to secure housing. The majority of the illegal housing units are constructed using locally manufactured cement blocks and wooden materials although a few also have tiles. Most of the houses have been using cheap materials to build the illegal structures to avoid huge losses if another operation like *Operation Murambatsvina* (Restore Order) were to revisit them. Chirowodza (2018) noted that a huge population resided in backyard dwellings that ranged from single rooms with multiple uses divided by curtains to several rooms with different uses. According to Mpofu (2012), at least 18 families were residing at one residential unit in Mbare.

Chirisa and Mlambo (2012) noted that in flats like Matapi in Mbare, there is outright overcrowding where the population has fluctuated from about 3 000 males in the 1980s to between 24 000 and 30 000 in 2012. The overcrowding of people (men, women, children) compromises privacy as the rooms are most times demarcated by curtains only. This exposes children to adult activities, thereby reducing the moral fabric of the community. Men and women who are not married or related have been forced to share a room. This alone is a clear indication of the violation of human dignity.

In terms of service provision like water provision, the supplies are very erratic and unreliable (Chirowodza, 2018). Electricity is also unreliable, leading to poor living standards. The lack of access to water is rampant in the residential area. This manifests through sharing taps, insufficient water supplies in houses and queuing for water for long hours. Likewise, the toilets in the Mbare flats are usually messy and blocked half the time.

There are also frequent sewerage bursts in the area. The blockages, coupled with erratic water availability, are a threat to residents' health and ultimately human dignity.

The occupants of illegal dwellings in Mbare fear evictions by the Harare City Council at any time. According to Amnesty International (2020), many people living in informal settlements are not protected from harassment such as forced evictions because their right to live there is not legally recognised. Often the forced evictions are violent, destroy livelihoods and make people homeless. The evictions threaten human dignity. To restore order in the city, informal settlements were demolished during the *Operation Murambatsvina* in 2005 and residents fear a repeat of the operation. According to Amnesty International, *Operation Murambatsvina* was a major violation of human dignity to the majority of those who were in danger of being forcibly evicted. About 700 000 individuals lost their homes and means of subsistence because of the Zimbabwean government's 2005 policy of widespread forced evictions. The victims are still at risk of being forcibly evicted from both their homes and their informal enterprises years after the government failed to offer them alternative accommodation.

There is also a high record of substance abuse and theft that affect people's dignity. Mbare is labelled as a place of robbers, thieves, muggers, prostitutes, con-artists, and all kinds of evil (Chirisa and Mlambo, 2012).

#### **CASE OF DIGNITY AND HOUSING INFORMALITY IN MAKOKOBA, BULAWAYO**

Makokoba is the oldest township in Bulawayo. It has been characterised by informal overpopulated and dilapidated structures. By virtue, it was not spared by the Operation Murambatsvina. In Makokoba, many of the people were affected by the contentious *Operation Murambatsvina* clean-up programme in Zimbabwe and ended up living in slumps because they are still waiting for the new homes the government promised them. Due to this operation, some residents' property and their houses were destroyed during the campaign. This has led to a threat to human dignity as people were left homeless and destitute while many of them did not have rural homes to return to. As of now, the rehabilitation effort has

assigned stands and homes to 5 000 individuals to improve the general dignity levels. The government restoration programme, known as *Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuble* (Shona and Ndebele for living well), intended to build 4 900 homes out of 1.2 million within a few months. Planned annually this was done to address all the issues concerning informal settlements.

All city councils were expected to furnish lists of prospective housing recipients so that the government could "vet the names in terms of ability to pay, which includes earning a government-scale income. It said that *Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuble* had nothing to do with a humanitarian assistance operation because the great majority of internally displaced people were unlikely to fit the criteria for ownership of the new residences. According to the study, the number of dwellings being built in Makokoba is "negligible" in comparison to the hundreds of thousands of people who have been displaced by the evictions, a worry expressed by UN Humanitarian Relief Coordinator, Jan Egeland, during his recent visit to the nation.

#### **CASE OF DIGNITY AND HOUSING INFORMALITY IN SAKUBVA, MUTARE**

Sakubva is the oldest low-income suburbs in Mutare. According to Mapira (2004) there are three forms of accommodation in Sakubva, namely hostels and flats for singles, small houses and flats for married couples as well as shacks for illegal occupants. The existence of the informal settlements in Sakubva because of conventional urban planning methods to the test as conflicts over land use between "planned for" zones and unplanned zones continue to rise (Saidi, 2019). This case of Sakubva provides an analysis of the informal housing experience and its general cause of human dignity and sanity in Mutare, Zimbabwe, as a challenge to urban design. As a result, it provides a fair evaluation of the origination of informal settlements because of high rural-to-urban migration, hence it provides pressure on the concerns of management, policy, regulation, and spatial planning that should guide urban planning concerning changes in human dignity.

The informal houses in Sakubva are poorly maintained. Sewage pipes frequently burst and are not repaired on time. The shacks which dominate the Sakubva township are made of cheap materials such as iron sheets and wood (Mapira, 2004). Most houses are old and cracking. Families now occupy sections that were originally meant for single people, leading to overcrowding. As in Mbare, this has negative implications on human dignity as people are exposed to health risks and poor living standards. The local authority should come up with sustainable policies to eliminate poverty in informal settlements so that it improves the general dignity of people living in informal settlements.

The impoverished residential and informal settlements in Mutare were affected by lack of resources to uplift the living standards of people. *Operation Murambatsvina* also hit the Sakubva township where a number of illegal structures were demolished. However, people have gone back because they have not received the houses that they were supposed to get after the clean-up campaign. Recently, the Government of Zimbabwe initiated the upgrading of informal settlements, with Sakubva been one of them. This will go a long way in advancing and protecting human dignity.

## **EMERGING ISSUES AND DISCUSSION**

The difficulties that informal communities in Zimbabwe are currently facing with their water services have prompted researchers to examine the contribution that human dignity makes to enhancing water services. The government promises to renovate the suburbs of Mbare, Makokoba, Mucheke, Mbizo, Rimuka, and Sakubva. Government prioritises the construction of housing infrastructure in both urban and rural regions, backed by the essential infrastructure and long-term services. The government promises to recapitalise the Housing Fund and the National Housing Guarantee Fund to enhance the housing stock from a backlog of over 1,3 million units nationwide, ensuring affordable housing and good living for all. To do this, the government promises to work with the private sector to offer mortgages and other forms of easily accessible funding. It is a crucial method of wealth generation as we work to achieve the middle class as envisioned in our 2030 Vision. Residents noted that urban infrastructure restoration is a worthy undertaking, and that

rehabilitation of the suburbs was a wonderful notion because some of the buildings were too old.

The complexities surrounding these transient communities, have not been adequately addressed in these informal settlements so as to improve people's dignity. This is because there are still no clear communal commitments regarding water concerns and on the contrary, they continue to live informal settlements, undermining people's sense of dignity (Mehta, 2014). No strategy has been developed by authorities or community members in informal settlements to jointly improve the condition of taps and toilets per person, which is connected to inadequate waste collection facilities (Van den Berg, 2013). People living in informal settlements and squatter camps use improvised pit latrines since non-flush septic tanks are not frequently cleaned (Westaway *et al.*, 1998). The population's health is at risk because of this (Miroso & Harris, 2012), and more terrifying when accessing such facilities after dark (Wessels, 2015). In this regard, relatively little research has concentrated on the relationship between rights and obligations and reasonable access to water, and how these rights and obligations are affected by individual human dignity. The great majority of water studies about the management of the human right to water in informal settlements has not considered the impact of better water governance for these vulnerable groups.

## CONCLUSION

Besides the issues of promoting responsible behaviour in vulnerable populations, this study sought to expand on earlier research studies by presenting a more thorough examination of the human viewpoint on sanitation and the level of dignity in slums. Hence this article leads to several conclusions. Firstly, the social and human implications of sanitation and living conditions on human dignity in the informal settlement needs to be changed. Second, long-term sustainable and economic strategic planning for informal settlements should incorporate an environmental viewpoint and, more crucially, the dignity of its informal occupants' human situations by defining their responsibilities. Furthermore, the rights and personal responsibilities for improving water services are based on a cooperative partnership between municipal authorities and informal inhabitants. This might be accomplished by



increasing the participation process and human development. Due to the complexities of connecting personal obligations with water services, efforts must be supported by lowering pollution levels and boosting awareness of justice in making economic payments based on personal wages. Local governments should educate informal residents to offer fair access to appropriate water and sanitation, and a healthy water distribution procedure (Macer, 1998). This education should emphasize ethical water usage by preserving water infrastructure and learning about water recycling activities.

## REFERENCES

- Bandauko E., Kutor, S.K., Arku, R.N. (2022). Trapped or not trapped? An empirical investigation into the lived experiences of the urban poor in Harare's selected informal settlements. *African Geographical Review* 0:0, 1-20.
- Chavunduka, C. and Chaonwa-Gaza, M. (2021). The political economy of urban informal settlements in Zimbabwe. In *Urban Geography in Postcolonial Zimbabwe* (pp. 287-305). Springer, Cham.
- Chirisa, I., Dumba, S. and Mukura, T. (2012). Innovative, adaptive and survivalist strategies by small business enterprises in Zimbabwe (1990-2009): Implications for policy and planning. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 2(5), 114.
- Clough Marinaro, I. (2021). Living the liminal life: Informalities in a utopian housing project. *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 21(2), 196-219.
- Cook, L. J (2015). Constraints on universal health care in the Russian Federation: Inequality, informality and the failures of mandatory health insurance reforms. *Journal of Self-Governance and Management Economics*, 3(4), 37-60.
- Fradejas-García, I., Polese, A. and Bhimji, F. (2021). Transnational Mobilities and Informality in Europe. *Migration Letters*, 18(2), 121-133.
- Chirisa, I., Matamanda, A. (2019). Forces shaping urban morphology in Southern Africa Today: Unequal interplay among people, practice and policy. *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability* 12:3, 354-372.

- Maloney, W. F. (2004). Informality revisited. *World Development*, 32(7), 1159-1178.
- Matamanda, A.R., Chirisa, I., Rammile, S. (2021). Elitist Domination and Its Import: Survey of Four Decades of Perpetuation of Inequities in Zimbabwe. *Politikon* 48:3, 450-467.
- Matamanda A.R., Mafuku S.H., Mangara, F. (2020) Informal Settlement Upgrading Strategies: The Zimbabwean Experience. In: Leal Filho W, Azul A, Brandli L, Özuyar P, Wall T (eds) *Sustainable Cities and Communities. Encyclopedia of the UN Sustainable Development Goals*. Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71061-7\\_8-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71061-7_8-1)
- Matamanda A.R., Chirisa, I., Dzvimbo, M.A., Chinozvina, Q.L. (2020). The political economy of Zimbabwean urban informality since 2000 – A contemporary governance dilemma. *Development Southern Africa* 37(4), 694-707.
- Mbiba, B. (2019). Planning scholarship and the fetish about planning in Southern Africa: the case of Zimbabwe's operation Murambatsvina. *International Planning Studies*, 24(2), 97-109.
- McGregor, J. (2010). Diaspora and Dignity: Navigating and Contesting. *Zimbabwe's New Diaspora: Displacement and the Cultural Politics of Survival*, 31, 122.
- Muchadenyika, D., Chakamba, M. K. and Mguni, P. (2018). Harare: Informality and urban citizenship - housing struggles in Harare, Zimbabwe. In R. Rocco and J. van Ballegooijen (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook on Informal Urbanisation* (pp. 124-134). Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315645544-12>
- Muchadenyika, D. and Waiswa, J. (2018). Policy, politics, and leadership in slum upgrading: A comparative analysis of Harare and Kampala. *Cities*, 82, 58-67.
- Muchadenyika, D. and Williams, J.J. (2016). Social change: Urban governance and urbanisation in Zimbabwe. *Urban Forum*, 27(3), 253-274. Springer Netherlands.
- Muderere, T. (2011). Think globally, act locally? The reverse osmosis of housing rights in transitional democracies.
- Musoni, F. (2010). Operation Murambatsvina and the politics of street vendors in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36(2), 301-317.

- Nhodo, L., Maunganidze, E., Gukurume, S., Nyamubarwa, W. and Marimba, G. (2013). Surviving on the margins of the formal employment, an analysis of the life experiences of pensioners in Masvingo Zimbabwe. *Current Research Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(1), 28-34.
- Nyarota, G. (2018). *The Graceless Fall of Robert Mugabe: The End of a Dictator's Reign*. Penguin Random House South Africa.
- Robina-Ramírez, R., Sañudo-Fontaneda, L.S. & McCallum, S. (2020). Human dignity as a mediator effect for the rights and duties of accessing water and sanitation, *Transactions of the Royal Society of Zimbabwe*, 75:2, 203-212
- Saidi, U. (2019). Operation Murambatsvina, Transitional Justice, and Discursive Representation in Zimbabwe. *Indigenous, Traditional, and Non-State Transitional Justice in Southern Africa: Zimbabwe and Namibia*, 71.
- UN-HABITAT (2016). Introduction. Displacing Zimbabwe: crisis and construction in southern Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36(2), 263-283.