

“Meltdown”-

Murambatsvina one year on



Solidarity Peace Trust

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Bishop Rubin Phillip

Archbishop Pius Ncube

THE SOLIDARITY PEACE TRUST

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“Ten years of rejection by those mandated with ensuring the well-being of the weak as well as the strong, has seen our members in the informal sector eking out a living in situations which ensure only abject poverty and despair.”

[P.C.Ncube, Secretary General for Bulawayo Upcoming Traders' Association, 21 July 2006]

“This is not just a crisis, but a meltdown...”

“...The UN could have done more if there were good working conditions....Government should remove bureaucracy. They should let us help their people.”¹

[UN Emergency Relief Co-ordinator, Jan Egeland, December 2005]

“We are happy with the whole programme. We cleaned up our city and built houses for our people. We removed illegal foreign currency dealers and tsotsis (criminals) from the streets.”

[Cain Mathema, Resident Minister for Bulawayo Province
The Chronicle, 20 May 2006]

¹ *Zimbabwe Independent*, 9 December 2005: “Egeland endorses Tibaijuka report”.

Photo 2:

“Should people be like animals living in the open? If government had done this and then said ‘Go stay over there’, it would have been better, instead of destroying everything and leaving us like animals. That is not helpful....If you destroy someone’s home – it’s like when you pull down a cattle kraal (pen), but first you build another one. You put the cattle in the new kraal and then you destroy the old one.

“....He (President Mugabe) is like our father – but one who takes a stick and beats the child who says ‘I am hungry’.”

Commentary from couple living in a lean-to in Njube, Bulawayo, June 2006.

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Abbreviations

BCC	Bulawayo City Council
BUTA	Bulawayo Upcoming Traders' Association
CAP	Consolidated Appeal Process
CIO	Central Intelligence Organisation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IMC	Inter Ministerial Committee
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
Lt-Col	Lieutenant Colonel
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non governmental organisation
OGHK	"Operation Garikai/ Hlalane Kuhle" – Shona and Ndebele for "Operation Live Well"
OM	"Operation Murambatsvina" – Shona for "Drive out the dirt"
RBZ	Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SPT	Solidarity Peace Trust
UN report	"Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Zimbabwe to assess the Scope and Impact of Operation Murambatsvina", by Mrs Anna Tibaijuka, the "United Nations Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe"
USA	United States of America
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African Nationalist Union – Patriotic Front
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions

Executive summary

Between 1991 and 2003, urban poverty trebled in Zimbabwe. It was against this background of escalating economic collapse and social disintegration that “Operation Murambatsvina” (OM), or “Discarding the Filth”, took place in mid 2005. In the space of a few weeks, 700,000 people lost their homes and/or livelihoods in a process that the UN has referred to as “indiscriminate and unjustified”. More than two million others suffered related losses as a result of the demolitions.

One year on, this report assesses the state of meltdown. The situation on the ground remains dire. Fifteen months later, almost nothing has been done to house those who lost homes and livelihoods, or to salvage the informal trading sector – either by the Zimbabwean government, or by the international community.

OM began with an assault on the informal trading sector, with arrests of 90,000 vendors nationwide in the space of a few weeks, and destruction of vending marts. One year on, the informal sector in which 80% of Zimbabweans eke out a living, remains largely criminalised. In Bulawayo, 9,000 vetted and licensed vendors operate where only 120 individual sites have been built in the past year! This means thousands of breadwinners live their entire working lives on the run, and lose millions to theft of their goods by the police. Vendors and their families are visibly sliding into an ever greater abyss of poverty. There is an urgent need for legal vending sites to be (re) built nationwide, and for immediate allocation of temporary sites on a massive scale. The arrests and harassment must stop.

A handful of houses have been built under the government’s so-called ‘Operation Live-Well’. These have been surrounded by scandal, including corrupt allocation of the few hundred houses built, to ruling party members. In western Zimbabwe, *not one house under this scheme is fit for occupation*, as there are no services connected: out of more than 100,000 displaced people in this region, not one person has yet been officially housed.

International donor organisations have fared scarcely better – even though the UN Consolidated Appeal aims at 23,000 shelters in 2006, only 800 temporary dwellings have been built nationwide, and all of these are in greater Harare. Reasons for this failure to provide shelter include international concern that any shelter provided will end up housing government supporters including the army, and not those who were displaced. However, in some towns such as Bulawayo, local councils have taken a stand against corrupt allocation of housing.

The demolitions have resoundingly failed to change people’s urban identity. People have not left the towns, as ordered by government. A survey of two suburbs in Bulawayo shows that in 90% of homes affected by backyard demolitions, those displaced have remained in the urban setting, in conditions of shocking overcrowding. In some houses, people now co-exist in around 1 sqm per person of floor space! Married couples are forced to sleep apart, unmarried adults are forced to share space, and single people live continually on the move, from one tiny house to another. Children are exposed to sex-for-money activities, and face schooling difficulties from overcrowding and poverty. Some breadwinners have been forced into the Diaspora. People live in a state of permanent existential crisis, with no way out.

This same survey illustrates that the backyard shelters knocked down were in fact mostly robust dwellings, with access to safe water, sanitation and electricity. 86% of shelters destroyed do not meet the criteria for “slums” – the demolitions were not “slum clearance”, but destroyed valuable living space.

During the demolitions in Bulawayo, the police rounded up 1,400 displaced persons who were being housed in the churches and forcibly dumped them in rural areas around Matabeleland. The authors have been tracking some of these families over the past year: follow up reveals that around 75% of these families are now back in the urban setting, where they live in appalling conditions, in shacks that are very inferior to those demolished. While conditions in the urban areas are dire, those in rural areas are perceived by many to be even worse. Even forced relocation to rural areas has failed to change this perception, or people's urban identity. However, people have been severely impoverished and highly stressed by continual movements: all have lost possessions and many have lost their health. A distressing number have died.

OM has left the informal sector in misery and disarray. The terrible exercise of destroying people's shelter and vending marts has left large sectors of urban populations criminalised by the very government that should protect their rights. It has also undermined the power of local urban councils, by the imposition of army headed committees who have overriding powers in the government's rebuilding exercise.

The UN and the government of Zimbabwe have been at an impasse over how to proceed on the issue of housing. The government is opposed to construction of temporary shelter because that would mean acknowledging people were thrown into crisis by the demolitions, which is still officially denied. The UN has been opposed to building permanent shelters because of concerns over issues of tenure.

However, the option is to continue to do almost nothing, or to do something. Solidarity Peace Trust believes that there is no solution to the humanitarian crisis faced by those left in the cold and rain, other than to go ahead and build decent shelter, and to deal with the issue of tenure as an ongoing struggle. If this is not done, then in a year from now, more Zimbabweans will have been forced into the Diaspora, or will be eking out lives of even worse poverty and despair.

Photo 2: One year on, a woman sits in the debris of what used to be her house, June 2006.

Recommendations

Informal Trading Sector

- There is an urgent need for vending marts to be built throughout Zimbabwe: some local authorities already have extensive plans and costing for what is required, but lack the funds to go ahead. It is in everyone's interests for the informal trading sector to achieve a system of accountability and regulation. This will protect the rights of vendors and will prevent the continuous arbitrary arrests currently taking place, as well as controlling litter and crime.
- The UN and the diplomatic corps should bring pressure to bear on the authorities including the police, to recognise the need for temporary vending areas to be established, in consultation with vendors and bearing in mind what is convenient to customers. This needs to be done immediately, in order to decriminalise vending.
- The UN CAP for Zimbabwe recognises the urgent need to help those in the informal sector struggling to re-establish livelihoods. Concerted efforts in providing skills training and SME development are needed: local NGOs already involved in this need capacity building and support to increase their initiatives.

Urban housing crisis

- The international community should investigate possibilities of funding large housing projects either directly through some of the more accountable local authorities, or through NGOs partnering them. The Bulawayo council already works with several NGOs providing housing. Control of tenure could be easier for international donors if housing were built through local NGOs in partnership with international NGOs, rather than through bilateral agreements giving support directly to the government.
- International donors should help build the capacity of local NGOs to be able to build on a large scale.
- Pressure must be brought to bear on the Zimbabwean government to return full control of the building of housing to local authorities, in accordance with the UN report recommendations; the IMCs headed by the army should be disbanded.
- The UN report has pointed out the need for Zimbabwean local authorities to relax urban housing legislation. This should be a priority, to facilitate building of temporary or transitional housing in urban areas, with materials that can be upgraded over time by owners. Colonial by-laws mean building costs are prohibitive, as types of materials that can be used are limited. Changes in legislation might protect residents against a future Murambatsvina, as the government would no longer have the rationale that their housing was in some way illegal.²

² The issue of legality of structures is a contentious one: it is dangerous to go along with the assumption that those in poor quality housing have fewer rights than those in 'legal' dwellings, but nonetheless a relaxation of housing laws at this time would reassure residents and make it easier for people to afford the building costs of dwellings.

- Local councils need educating on housing alternatives used in other developing nations, such as packed earth, wooden and other prefabricated dwellings: there is currently a distinct reluctance on the part of city council officials to relax housing regulations, seeing this as posing a health and safety risk to residents. Their position is that everyone deserves good quality housing and this is what the laws currently enforce.
- The international community should consider prioritising the building of sewerage, water and road networks in areas where stands have been allocated in urban areas. This would reduce one of the most arduous cost burdens currently facing local councils and plot holders. Sewerage and water systems in and of themselves cannot be usurped, and their provision would go some way to meeting the concerns of councils with regard to health and safety issues in developing urban areas.

Quite simply the choice is to do something on a large scale – or to continue to do very little or nothing. If nothing is done, then obviously in a year from now, the situation will have changed only for the worse for the hundreds of thousands who have lived in hopeless squalor since their shelters were demolished over a year ago.

Photo 3: Bulawayo, May 2006: “Rain pours in, pours in, we sleep in wet bedclothes”

1. Introduction

Meltdown

The current report is the third by Solidarity Peace Trust to document the mass demolitions in Zimbabwe and their aftermath. It is now one year since an estimated 700,000 people had their lives ruined by the wanton and illegal destruction of their homes and/or livelihoods; another 2,4 million are estimated to have suffered related losses. One year on, the desperate plight of those immediately affected has not been alleviated.

Zimbabwe has degenerated into ever-greater poverty and crisis over the last ten years. A decade ago, Zimbabweans had among the most economically and socially secure urban populations in sub-Saharan Africa. In 1991, an estimated 25 to 30% were below the poverty datum line, with only 10 to 15% earning less than the minimum industrial wage. A majority of male headed urban households were employed in the formal sector, and social services functioned fairly well.³ The speed with which this situation has degenerated has been unprecedented: by 2003, the Zimbabwe National Vulnerability Assessment Committee defined 72% of urban households as poor, and 57% as very poor – able to afford only food. The proportion of urban dwellers below the poverty datum line had trebled in twelve years.⁴

By May 2005, employment in the formal sector stood at only 20%; domestic health, education and legal systems had almost collapsed; more than 80% of the population was estimated to be below the poverty datum line. Already at that point, an estimated 70% of Zimbabweans of economically productive age were estimated to be outside their nation, on the run as illegal immigrants, or eking out an existence as cross border traders⁵. Inflation was around 500%.

It was against this background of escalating poverty and social disintegration that the demolitions took place in June and July. In December 2005, the speed with which the demolitions had accelerated social decline was aptly referred to by UN Envoy Jan Egeland as having precipitated “not just a crisis, but a meltdown”.⁶

One year on, we assess the state of meltdown for those most affected. Zimbabwe’s inflation rate is now over 1,000% per annum, with no turning point in sight. The formal sector continues to shrink; more Zimbabweans are forced into the Diaspora, causing accompanying collapse of family and social units. Collapse of social services and family units has escalated HIV deaths. Most tragically, those who lost homes and livelihoods as a result of OM have received close to no assistance: they remain in illegal dwellings, or in shockingly over congested urban housing: their sources of income in the informal sector remain largely criminalised. There is no sign of economic recovery or of any imminent political breakthrough. 2006 may well be Zimbabwe’s bleakest year yet.

³ Figures cited in D. Potts, “ ‘Restoring Order’ ? Operation Murambatsvina and the Urban Crisis in Zimbabwe”; *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol 32, Number 2, June 2006.

⁴ Ibid, page 274.

⁵ Zimbabwe has a population of around 12,000,000 with an adult population of less than 5,000,000; more than 3,000,000 are estimated to be in the Diaspora, either permanently, or as regular cross border traders. These figures are notoriously fluid and as most border crossings are illegal, are very difficult to clarify.

⁶ *Zimbabwe Independent*, 9 December 2005: “Egeland endorses Tibaijuka report”.

One year on, the impression on the ground is that there has been no sustained effort by any group, including the Zimbabwe government, the United Nations, or international or local NGOs, to provide more than token assistance with shelter to victims. The reasons for the lack of visible response are different in each case:

- the Zimbabwe government has to date never publicly acknowledged that the demolitions resulted in a humanitarian crisis and cannot respond to what they refuse to accept exists; government continues to insist that the demolitions were in fact part of a structured programme aimed at improving housing – yet this programme has failed to materialise in any useful way, as this report shows.
- the UN was for a long time unable to get beyond an impasse with the Zimbabwean government who would not agree on the terms of UN assistance; general lack of security of tenure raises concerns that any structures built by donors may be usurped by government supporters in due course, once more displacing the most vulnerable; this has further created international reluctance towards providing permanent housing.
- International NGOs over the last year have been to some extent immobilised by the government's refusal to allow them access to those most affected by the demolitions, or to render assistance to those who will not return to rural areas. Furthermore, attempts to build temporary camps have met with active interference from government.⁷
- Local NGOs are under resourced in both human and material ways to deal with a calamity on the current scale.

It is the belief of the current authors that much more could have been done, and could still be done to alleviate the plight of hundreds of thousands of Zimbabweans whose lives were seriously damaged by the illegal actions of their government.

UN Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP)

In their revised mid 2006 Consolidated Appeal for Zimbabwe, United Nations agencies seek to raise US\$ 257 million for relief before the end of this year. Since the appeal first was launched in November 2005, around US\$ 142 million has been committed. The appeal identifies: “decreases in the quality of and access to basic services; deepening of urban poverty; continued difficulty for people previously employed in the informal sector in re-establishing their livelihoods; continued emigration, both legally and illegally; and deepening overall vulnerability to natural disasters”.⁸

The CAP refers to the intention to provide 23,000 shelters for the displaced during 2006. There are extensive budget lines for shelter (US\$ 20 million) and also for sanitation and water (US\$ 15 million). Yet by the end of July 2006, fewer than one thousand temporary shelters had been built for those displaced by Murambatsvina, according to interviews with international NGOs in Harare. This is a 4% delivery rate to date, with 2006 half gone! Obstructive behaviour by government, which has routinely denied access to the displaced, and which refused to cooperate bureaucratically in the supplying of help, have been major problems in getting relief, in particular shelter, to those who need it.⁹

⁷ For example, in October last year, the destruction by police of the tented community established by the International Organisation for Migration in Headlands.

⁸ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); website, accessed 22 August 2006.

⁹ This issue is dealt with in the final section of this report. Other forms of support, such as food and blankets have been distributed through World Food Programme and International Organisation for Migration and have reached around 30,000 families directly affected.

The CAP notes the lack of comprehensive assessment of the scale and nature of the humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe. Human Rights Watch, in their December report, challenges the UN on their failure to have adequately assessed numbers of those affected by the demolitions, and listed various techniques by which the UN could have improved their knowledge in this regard.¹⁰ Human Rights Watch was also very critical of the failure of the UN to respond more effectively to the crisis, and puts forward the view that while Zimbabwe government obstructiveness has indeed been an impediment, more could still have been done.¹¹

However it appears that in the last few months there has been a shift both in the government's attitude and in the attitude of the international community. The authors are informed that the government is now promising improved access to those affected, and there is a movement within the donors to go ahead and begin to provide more permanent or robust transitional housing for people, and to try and obtain safeguards for tenure as part of this.

Issues addressed in the current report

It is of general concern that more than a year after the demolitions, there are no reliable data on numbers affected and their current status. The current authors do not have the resources to undertake research on a massive scale and this report does not claim to fill this gap, but will provide some insight into the impact of the demolitions in localised contexts, in the four western provinces of Zimbabwe.

Discarding the Filth, released by Solidarity Peace Trust (SPT) in June 2005, provided an unfolding chronicle of events and an assessment of the motives behind them. *Crime of Poverty*, SPT, October 2005, remains the only civil society report to follow back into their rural contexts, some of those forcibly displaced from the towns. *Crime of Poverty* analysed the status of "Operation Garikayi/Hlalani Kuhle" (OGHK), or "Operation Live Well" as at the end of September 2005.¹² The current report builds on the documentation of the two previous SPT reports on OM, and further explores issues raised by them.

- *Update on informal sector*: OM began with an assault on the informal trading sector. We overview events in this sector since September last year.
- *Update on status of OGHK*: the massive housing scheme promised under OGHK has, as predicted, dwindled almost to nothing by June 2006 – apart from continuous outcries over the corrupt allocation of the few houses built.
- *Random survey on outcome of backyard demolitions in Bulawayo*: survey of two suburbs in Bulawayo to find out where a sample of the estimated 45,000 affected by the over 10,000 backyard demolitions here have gone. Our findings are in keeping with other surveys: 90% of urban dwellers in this survey have merely moved from the demolished

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch, "Zimbabwe, evicted and forsaken: internally displaced persons in the aftermath of Operation Murambatsvina", December 2005: this report extensively documents the failures of the international community to adequately coordinate their relief effort and assessment techniques in relation to OM.

¹¹ Ibid. Practical instances of the lack of UN coordination and interest in responding to specific situations are given.

¹² The government in July 2005 belatedly insisted that the demolitions were in fact phase one of a massive new housing programme in Zimbabwe, that would be the biggest in Africa. 300,000 houses were allegedly planned in terms of this programme, and 25,000 were promised by the end of August 2005: by this date, fewer than two thousand houses were at roof level nationwide.

backyard structure into the main house, or into another urban dwelling, causing massive over-congestion.

- *Update on families displaced into rural areas:* in the October report we provided situational narratives on eleven groups of people, mostly those who had been displaced from Bulawayo into rural areas by the demolitions, some of them forcibly so. Most had moved five or more times in the space of a few months. The current report gives situational updates on these same groups one year on: around 75% have returned from rural areas to Bulawayo or Victoria Falls, where they are living in appalling conditions. Again this underlines the fact that you cannot change somebody's identity from urban to rural, merely by dumping them in a rural area.
- *The way forward:* it is of great concern to note that one year on, for victims very little has been delivered in terms of shelter in particular, not just by government, but by all players. The reasons for this and possible ways forward are discussed.

2. Murambatsvina: a review

The UN report by Special Envoy Anna Tibaijuka remains the definitive document summarising events in Zimbabwe from 19 May 2005 up to early July 2005.¹³ During this time, according to this report, over 3 million Zimbabweans were directly or indirectly affected by the “indiscriminate and unjustified” demolition of tens of thousands of structures across Zimbabwe, and the blanket arrests of thousands of Zimbabweans working in the informal sector.¹⁴ The reasons and precise officials responsible for this massive and disastrous exercise remain conjectural. The following probable government motives, declared and undeclared, have been discussed in various reports including our own over the past year.

Motives - declared

- ***Criminalising of the informal sector***

Government officials at the time and since have insisted that the exercise was necessary to tidy up the cities, to enforce colonial building by-laws, and to rid the towns of criminal elements.¹⁵ Technically, many of the shelters destroyed did not conform to city by-laws, but some of these structures had been legitimised by being allowed to exist for up to thirty years, and had survived previous rounds of smaller scale demolitions.¹⁶ As the UN report shows, and as this report confirms, the majority of structures demolished, even though they may not have had formal

¹³ *Report of the Fact-finding Mission to Zimbabwe to assess the Scope and Impact of Operation Murambatsvina*, prepared by Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka, United Nations Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe; July 2005. Henceforth this is referred to as “the UN report”.

¹⁴ An estimated 560,000 lost shelter, an additional more than 100,000 were arrested for vending; 2,4 million are estimated to have been indirectly affected through loss of markets for their goods, or loss of income from family members who used to send money back to rural areas: UN Report.

¹⁵ “Crooks, greedy people, opportunists and black market traders in foreign currency, fuel and basic commodities had found convenient operational bases in the informal sector. The obscene feast is over. Law and order must now prevail”: *The Chronicle*, 12 June 2005: Comment; “Parliament has serious business”.

¹⁶ As D Potts (op cit, note 3) points out, the enforcing of urban by-laws in Zimbabwe was not unprecedented: in the early years after independence, colonial by-laws had been enforced, including by urban demolitions on a small scale, but by the 1990s this had stopped. SPT, June 2005 explores this issue in relation to Bulawayo, where government desire to win votes in this region caused a semi-official policy change on backyard structures, legitimising them rhetorically at least, even though by-laws did not change to reflect this. But the scale and thoroughness of OM has set it apart from previous demolitions, not just in Zimbabwe, but in Africa.

plans and approval from local authorities, were good quality shelters with access to clean water, electricity and sewerage disposal. Apart from the sheer scale, what made these demolitions different to previous ones by local authorities was the rhetoric of criminality: “There are no sacred cows. Criminals have been hiding in the shacks and we are after them. They shall face the wrath of the law.”¹⁷

- ***Go back where you came from***

Government officials were unrepentant about destroying homes in the towns, arguing that any “indigenous” Zimbabwean by definition had a rural home and that therefore to destroy somebody’s urban home was not significant – people should simply “go back where they came from, to the rural areas”.

OM can therefore be seen as an attempt at social engineering, to force people out of the urban setting and into more remote rural settings – where ZANU PF has political and social control in most parts of the country. As this report will illustrate, if this was the intention, it has failed: the vast majority of people displaced from demolished structures remain in urban centres.

Motives - undeclared:

- ***Threat posed by increased organisation of the informal sector - fear of an urban uprising***

Over the last few years, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) had been slowly organising and integrating the informal sector into their structures: the informal sector now supports 80% of Zimbabweans and this was an obvious and strategic move for the unions, who were losing membership through loss of jobs in the formal sector, and who were also concerned about the lack of rights and solidarity within the informal sector.¹⁸ This structuring had been done countrywide, without drawing much attention from government, over a period of several years. When the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) realised that this was what had happened, they sounded the alarm, and the informal sector became targeted as a possibly formidable source of resistance to government in the future, representing as it does, millions of Zimbabweans.

OM coincided with an increase in urban unrest in Harare, where there had been minor protests around lack of service delivery, which had been forcibly quelled by riot police. The CIO had allegedly received intelligence of plans to escalate urban discontent. The demolitions were intended to destroy the informal sector’s ability to organise; they were also to depopulate, and to enhance police and army control, of town and city centres.

- ***Punishment of opposition supporters***

The urban areas have consistently voted for the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in all national and local elections over the last five years. OM has been seen as an act of retribution and a reminder that ZANU PF effectively can do what it wants even in areas where there are MDC elected local councils and Members of Parliament (MPs).¹⁹

- ***Control of the towns***

¹⁷ *The Chronicle*, 13 June 2005; “Makokoba structures removed”. Police Inspector Smile Dube of Bulawayo.

¹⁸ Interview with senior ZCTU member, who believes strongly that OM was primarily aimed at crushing the increased capacity of the informal traders to organise themselves.

¹⁹ SPT, June 2005, discusses the contempt of ZANU PF for urban dwellers, who are referred to as “totemless”, and not really authentic Zimbabweans, in the prevailing rhetoric during OM.

The demolitions have allowed government to increase their administrative control of urban centres. OM enabled ZANU PF to punish urban voters for consistently voting in favour of MDC: it warned people that the state has ultimate power even in towns where there are opposition mayors and MPs.

- *Inter Ministerial Committees (IMCs)*: ZANU PF control has been consolidated through the setting up of IMCs to oversee OGHK. This has given government significant power in previously MDC-run urban areas; the IMCs are made up of nine government ministries including police, army and CIO, and are headed countrywide by senior army officials. The IMCs have usurped the powers that used to reside in local authorities with regard to all OGHK activities including building and allocation of housing. The IMCs are also in control of vetting and issuing of licences to informal traders.
- *Patronage*: the fact that ZANU PF-dominated, militarised IMCs are now effectively in charge of deciding who will have the right to vend and who will have the right to OGHK houses, has opened the door to patronage. We predicted in *Discarding the Filth* that the government would use this opportunity to parcel out the informal sector to its supporters. There is evidence one year on that this has indeed been the case.

Who was responsible?

According to the UN report, neither the collective cabinet nor the ZANU PF politburo formally authorised the demolitions; several ministers were caught by surprise by events. The Special Envoy concluded that OM was “implemented by over zealous officials, each with their own agendas”.²⁰ But it is impossible that such a sustained assault on all towns of the nation, involving thousands of police and army, could not have occurred without authorisation at the highest level.

However, as the government has ignored all the recommendations of the UN report, including the recommendation that those responsible should be prosecuted, to date no light has been shed on which branches and ministries of government came up with the master plan, or the exact process by which it was decentralised and put into motion. While the demolitions rolled out with apparent precision nationwide, there was also an element of the ad hoc about them: it is possible that they developed a dynamic of their own and went far beyond what its engineers had originally envisaged.²¹

It remains a necessity for the issue of responsibility to be clarified. The recommendations of the UN Report and others that those individuals responsible be prosecuted, and that those affected be compensated, need to be enacted. The nation has a right to know why and at whose commands over two million people had their homes and livelihoods destroyed.

²⁰ Ibid, pp 76-77.

²¹ For example, entire settlements such as White Cliff Farm, built by government supporters in peri-urban Harare were not spared. International Crisis Group, *Zimbabwe's Operation Murambatsvina: the tipping point?*, August 2005, suggests the demolitions assumed their own momentum at some point: page 5. Tibaijuka (op cit) refers to almost everyone she spoke to denying responsibility: everyone was just following orders – but whose?

The informal sector: updates

- **Operation Sunrise**
- **Update on informal trading in Bulawayo: June 2006**
- **“Operation Round Up”: Vagrancy – a new target**
- **“Operation Garikai / Hlalani Kuhle”: A scandal of dismal delivery and ZANU PF patronage**
- **Urban congestion: the failure of OM to change people’s urban identity – a survey of two suburbs in Bulawayo**
- **The displaced from Killarney and Ngozi Mine: The failure of forced rural relocation to change people’s urban identity**

1. Operation Sunrise

Even as this report was in final stages of preparation, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) suddenly launched a new offensive called “Operation Sunrise”. This is aimed at one level at introducing a new set of monetary bearers cheques with a value of one thousand times as much as those currently in circulation, by dropping three zeros off each denomination: ie Z\$ 1,000 has become worth Z\$ 1. In Zimbabwe’s hyperinflationary economy where people now carry money in boxes, this measure is overdue.²²

“Operation Sunrise” is also clearly an attempt to control the massive 80% of both local and foreign currency that currently does not pass through the banking system, passing from hand to hand on the streets. *Once more, it is the informal sector that is the target of this latest operation*, and while there is justification in the desire of the RBZ to control the monetary system and the parallel currency market more effectively, reports after one week of the operation indicated that it is the poorest of the poor who are suffering financial losses under the currency change over. On Saturday 5 August the authors were receiving reports that bands of youth militia were confiscating any sum of money *more than Z\$3 million* (less than US\$ 5 at parallel rates) of the old currency found on Harare commuters: this is illegal. According to Gono’s own regulations, Zimbabweans are entitled to up to Z\$ 100 million (US\$ 400 at official rates, or 160 at parallel rates) in the old currency on their persons without explanation. For amounts greater than this, tax clearance is needed. But as usual, there is proving to be no legal redress for desperate commuters, who were heading home with their precious week’s pay and who have had millions of dollars quite simply stolen from them by youth militia.

The cities are under siege, and there are road-blocks every few kilometres on the main roads into the country. Human rights are being trampled on as youth militia are given powers beyond their rights and conduct strip searches of cross border traders, confiscating hard earned wares being brought back into the country for resale. It is legal to bring in goods up to the value of US\$ 350 per month, but this is allegedly being disregarded. In a nation where 80% of people earn their income from the informal sector, the actions of Operation Sunrise are plunging those with no redress into further poverty.

2. Summary of initial impact of OM on informal trading sector

“Operation Murambatsvina” targeted first and foremost the informal trading sector. The informal sector was and continues to be the lifeblood of the nation. With formal unemployment standing at over 80%, and with over 80% of the population below the poverty datum line, the informal sector was in 2005 estimated to control as much as 60% of GDP. Much to the ire of government, this money was trading without ever passing through the formal banking system – or the tax department. A thriving parallel market in foreign exchange meant that 90% of money earned in the Diaspora and sent home to Zimbabweans was also not passing through the Reserve Bank.²³

²²As the new money is becoming standard in the process of this report being written, monetary figures will be given in both the new value, and the old (with the 3 zeros), the latter in brackets.

²³ Summary of information from *Solidarity Peace Trust*, “Discarding the Filth”, 27 June 2005: page 15. This position has not changed much in a year – most forex continues to trade on street corners and cross border trading remains the life blood for many thousands of families, but statistics relating to this are hard to come by since the demolitions: much of the informal sector remains criminalised and cross border trading often involves illegal border crossings and smuggling.

While some activity in the informal sector could be legitimately described as illegal, such as foreign currency dealing, much of it involves ordinary people trying to make a meagre living by buying and selling vegetables or other goods at a slight mark up. Prior to OM, they could survive, and many of them had properly allocated bays and licences, but life has been very difficult for this sector in the last year. The hounding of informal traders is a constant phenomenon. They remain abandoned by the government and “on their own”.²⁴ As mentioned in the previous section, “Operation Sunrise” is set to worsen this situation.

OM: summary of 2005 impact on informal trading

OM destroyed the livelihoods of an estimated 90,000 vendors, through the demolition of vending bays - many of them legal and built by local authorities for licensed vendors - through the seizure of goods and through arrests of tens of thousands of vendors. This figure is only for those arrested during the height of OM, and does not include the hundreds of daily arrests since then.

An estimated additional 2,4 million Zimbabweans were adversely affected by OM, taking into account: self employed families who worked out of their back yard shelters, and who lost their livelihoods as carpenters, hairdressers, tuck shop owners etc when their businesses were destroyed; the knock-on jobs lost in rural areas for those who used to weave baskets or make curios for sale in the cities; loss of urban generated income sent back to rural areas to sustain extended family and the rural economy; loss of markets for those growing vegetables, fruit and flowers for sale by vendors.

The need for regulation

Once OM began to raise the anger and concern of the international community, rhetoric towards the informal sector changed from one focused on its criminality. The emphasis became on the need to regulate and order vending, to build proper vending sites and to vet and register vendors. In Bulawayo alone, there were promises of 41,000 vending bays to be built before the end of August 2005.²⁵

Under the control of the government dominated IMCs, lengthy processes of vetting and approving would-be vendors were put in place. Government insisted that vendors should be moved out of town centres and into designated vending markets on the outskirts of city and town centres.²⁶

²⁴ A senior official in the Bulawayo City Council referred to vendors as “out there on their own”, with nobody able to effectively stand for them or protect them.

²⁵ *The Chronicle*, 5 July 2005.

²⁶ This is in keeping with government fears that thousands of vendors milling around in urban centres could enhance the likelihood of an uprising.

3. Update on informal trading in Bulawayo: June 2006²⁷

“Ten years of rejection by those mandated with ensuring the well-being of the weak as well as the strong, has seen our members in the informal sector eking out a living in situations which ensure only abject poverty and despair.”²⁸

Minister of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Sithembiso Nyoni, grandiosely promised 41,000 vending bays by the end of 2005 – yet by August 2006, the number provided under the rebuilding scheme in Bulawayo is 120! A further 120 bays still await completion in this same vicinity. Bizarrely, vendors continue to be vetted and registered: around 9,000 vetted vendors exist²⁹ – but there are no legal bays for 99% of them to use! The promises continue to be made, but not delivered on.

Who got the vending sites?

Minister Sithembiso Nyoni recently opened this 120-bay vending mart in the Lobengula Street/4th Ave area – where vending used to be legal, with shelters previously supplied by City Council – and destroyed by OM. However, the authors were informed by vendors and also by Bulawayo City Council (BCC) officials, that predominantly women belonging to the ZANU PF women’s league were given licences to operate from this small mart.

The Bulawayo Up-coming Traders’ Association (BUTA), which successfully sued the police for illegal arrest and loss of goods during OM, state in a document sent recently to the Mayor, that: “a top official in the Ministry of SME admitted clearly in the presence of the Minister Sithembiso Nyoni... that instructions were issued in Harare which ordered BUTA members to be excluded from being allocated bays at the said site”.³⁰ This bears out the predictions that any meagre benefits out of Hlalani Kuhle would go to ZANU PF supporters in the now-established system of ruling party patronage in Zimbabwe – and would be designed to prevent empowerment of those who have bravely made a stand against the State during OM.

A few-score of pre-existing vegetable and curio selling sites have been re-designated “legal”, in the immediate vicinity of the City Hall. Vending here was always legal – except during OM last year. The legal flea markets built and officially opened with pomp and ceremony at Unity Village and Fort Street in the 1990s – and shut down with much self righteous rhetoric in June 2005 - have been allowed to resume trading; again they accommodate a few score only.

It is fair to state that, officially, vending in Bulawayo remains almost entirely illegal; at least 95% of licensed vendors are without legal sites.

Reduced control of sector

Furthermore, there is clearly less control of the informal sector at all levels in the wake of OM. This is ironic as the need to regularise the sector was given as the main motive for OM. The city is in some areas dirtier than before OM, as pointed out to us by BCC officials. The BCC used to get vending fees from vendors using licensed sites; they have lost income since OM, and can no longer offer legitimacy to thousands of people desperately trying to earn a living. The municipal

²⁷ Information following, unless otherwise indicated, all comes from a series of interviews with three senior members of the BCC and with senior officials in the Bulawayo Up-coming Traders’ Association, representing vendors: August 2006.

²⁸ Letter from Bulawayo Upcoming Traders’ Association (BUTA), which represents vendors: *Re: Lists of concerns*, sent to the Mayor of Bulawayo on 21 July 2006.

²⁹ *The Chronicle*, 15 May 2006, “Govt to construct vending marts for informal traders”.

³⁰ Letter from BUTA: *Re: Lists of concerns*, sent to the Mayor of Bulawayo on 21 July 2006.

police used to maintain the formally designated areas, financed from vending fees, but now there is no control, and litter and vegetable waste is growing.

In short - the sector is now almost entirely criminalised and operates on the run, making its regulation impossible.

Police defiance of Court Order

During July 2005, the vendors' association (BUTA) took the police to court for the illegal arrest of licensed vendors and the illegal confiscation of their goods being sold through officially allocated sites. In an urgent judgement on 21 July 2005, Justice Cheda of the Bulawayo High Court ruled:³¹

That the respondents [Police Officer Commanding Bulawayo Province and the Commissioner of Police and the City of Bulawayo] be and are hereby ordered to cease henceforth the seizure and confiscation of licensed traders' merchandise.

... The seizure and confiscating of the licensed traders merchandise in the absence of a court order is unlawful as this interferes with individual's property rights.

The judgement also concluded:

That the 1st and 2nd respondents be and are hereby ordered to return applicants' merchandise.

However, as the bays had been demolished and as there had in any case not been adequate toilet facilities in the area of the 5th Ave council-designated vending sites, the judgement further ruled:

That applicant [vendors association] be and is hereby prevented from occupying and trading in the allocated bays before 3rd respondent [BCC] constructs suitable bays and/or shelters in compliance with its own Building and Health by-laws.

Continued harassment and theft of goods

The police have ignored the judgement that orders them to supply restitution for goods taken, while vigorously enforcing the ruling that vendors be not allowed to trade until the council has (re) built appropriate vending facilities.

The police have totally ignored that part of the ruling that declares seizure of goods to be in violation of property rights. Seizure continues on a daily basis. Goods taken are then shared out through a sham of a daily auction at the Drill Hall, in which vegetables are sold off for a fraction of their street value to police and their families. The seizures are little short of outright theft; charges are seldom laid against vendors and no records are given to vendors of their goods seized. To our observation, it is one way the under paid police force "do their shopping". Such seizure occurs on a systematic, daily basis in Bulawayo, ensuring that the thousands of vendors remain in a desperate and criminalised situation.

³¹ Bulawayo Upcoming Traders Association versus The Officer Commanding Bulawayo Province and the Commissioner of Police and the City of Bulawayo, High Court, Cheda, Bulawayo, 13 and 21 July 2005. Judgement number HB/65/05.

Vendors complained about the police brutality that often accompanies arrests, saying assaults are routine, and one of their members was thrown roughly onto a truck when pregnant. Women are frequently treated in a way that amounts to sexual harassment, and the endless insults to all are humiliating.

When asked by BCC to desist from the continuing arrests, police reportedly stated that as the vendors had dared to take the police to Court and to get a High Court decision in their favour, they should be punished to show them that the police are above whatever the High Court says.³²

Relations between BUTA and BCC

The BCC has tried to negotiate more space and rights for the vendors, by negotiating directly with the police. The BCC has sent out appeals to sixty businesses in the city to try and encourage them to donate money to build vending shelters. Understandably, they have drawn almost a complete blank – only Ingwebu Breweries, which is in any case council-linked, has expressed a willingness to construct a shelter in return for free advertising on it. Most businesses are battling to survive and are not in a position to be charitable – and if they are, there is a perception that there is no point investing money in building vending shelters when central government may decide to knock them down in a year from now!

It is clear that relations between the vendors and the BCC are poor, with the vendors' perception being that they are constantly under siege from everyone.³³ The vendors are apparently not fully cognisant of the fact that the BCC itself is now in many ways under siege – it is in some respects answerable to and has had to give up some of its authority to the Inter Ministerial Committee (IMC), set up a year ago and headed by the military under Lt Col Matavire, who oversees the Hlalani Kuhle reconstruction exercise of the informal sector.³⁴ The BCC walks a fine line in trying not to confront central government on every issue, as government is continually attacking the BCC and looking for any excuse to undertake a coup similar to those in Harare and Mutare, which have seen MDC-dominant local councils being replaced by government imposed committees.³⁵

BCC and raids on vendors

The authors have themselves seen BCC trucks taking part in the harassment of vendors and in the blatant theft of their goods. On being asked specifically about this, the Mayor stated that it was true that some council employees had at one time formed a pact with the police, in which council trucks had been used together with plain-clothes police, to confiscate goods from vendors. However, the High Court Order puts council in a difficult position: vendors vending outside of designated marts are illegal. The Mayor stated that he was dealing with it as a matter of priorities - precious council fuel was needed for providing garbage collection and fixing water leaks etc and not to harass vendors.

The Mayor clearly stated that the practice of BCC trucks harassing vendors had stopped. However, when the authors spoke two days later to BUTA, they reported that a BCC truck was still taking part in this harassment, and they had personally witnessed the very truck in question undertaking seizure of goods at Lobengula Street Mall the previous evening – the day after we

³² Senior BCC official reported this, August 2006.

³³ Letter from BUTA: *Re: Lists of concerns*, sent to the Mayor of Bulawayo on 21 July 2006.

³⁴ See previous SPT reports and further ahead in current report for more on the IMC.

³⁵ *The Chronicle* runs stories on a weekly basis in which government is chastising the BCC on a variety of issues: for example on the very day that the authors are drafting this section of the current report, 5 August, the whole front page is devoted to two stories attacking local authorities, under a main headline of "Mujuru raps council leaders".

spoke to the Mayor. It is our belief that the Mayor's concern about vendors' rights is genuine, but his ability to ensure these rights, is curtailed by the prevailing political atmosphere. It is apparent that the BCC does not have full control over the activities of all its council employees; this is likely a direct result of attempts by ZANU PF to enhance cracks in the council ahead of this year's Mayoral election. In the meantime, it is quite literally the vendors who are paying the price, through seized goods.

Flea markets

On weekends, vending is allowed at designated points. While this is welcome, weekend business is not good in most areas; the weekday passing trade, when the main business centres are open, has always been the major source of vending income in the past. Vendors pay a weekend rent to city council to have a bay at these markets, but complain that considering the low volume of business, the rent is high. Rents are Z\$ 1,2 thousand (million) for fruit and vegetables, and Z\$ 2,5 thousand (million) per weekend.³⁶

Temporary bays

In the opinion of the BCC, the likelihood of the repeatedly promised "formal marts" materialising any time soon is dim: there is no money, either within Nyoni's Ministry or within the BCC for building in this hyperinflationary economy. The BCC invested large sums over the years building marts in the city centre and elsewhere, and these were all destroyed under OM.

The BCC has therefore very recently, in the last fortnight of July, finalised a negotiated agreement with the police that they may allocate temporary vending bays around the city centre and suburbs. In seven high-density suburbs, temporary bays for hundreds of vendors will shortly be awarded on the basis that these will be replaced with permanent structures as soon as possible.

This is an important step forward, and it is to be hoped that all those in authority will allocate more temporary bays in as many suburbs as possible to alleviate the intense hardship being endured by vendors and the thousands of extended family members who depend on them.

Permanent bays – one billion (trillion) needed

Plans have already been drawn up by BCC to build 99 permanent marts, each with between 80 and 150 bays, in 13 high-density suburbs and in 18 low-density suburbs. According to BCC officials, based on costs at the end of July 2006, one bay costs Z\$ 70 thousand (70 million) to construct.³⁷ A recent cost analysis of the vending bays needed by the city came up with a budget of a massive 721 million (721 billion), which with inflation by this month could be estimated to have risen to well over a billion (trillion).

Everything is ready to go on this project – except the money. This year, the total budget given to Bulawayo by government under OGHK, for building of both houses and vending marts, was 5 million (5 billion)! Even the smallest of these 99 vending marts, for 80 bays, would cost more than this total budget.

In other words, the total OGHK budget for the first six months of 2006 has been less than 1% of the vending needs alone, without even considering housing! While the BCC is hopeful that there will be a further allocation to OGHK from the supplementary budget approved in July, without

³⁶ New monetary value since 21 August 2006, followed by old value in brackets.

³⁷ In Zimbabwe's hyperinflationary climate, this cost will already, a month later be well over Z\$100,000 (100,000,000).

doubt this will once more amount to a paltry amount in terms of the city's needs, and will be entirely absorbed in trying to complete the half finished houses in Cowdray Park.³⁸

Socio-economic impact of OM on vendors: one year on

We sit on the Lobengula Street Mall, and watch our members visibly getting poorer and sicker by the day. We see more and more children who should be in school joining their parents daily because there are no fees for them. Their clothes are falling into rags as we watch. We see those children becoming thinner and dirtier every week. They eat rotten food from dustbins because they can't afford even food. So many of our members are sick, and they are just dying and dying. We used to go to the funerals but now we can't afford taxi fares to attend. Now we just send our condolences...

[Member of BUTA executive, 3 August 2006]

One year ago, BUTA was a flourishing association with 3,000 vendors on their books and another 7,000 signed up for vetting procedures. BUTA used to provide a multitude of services to their members, including the option to join one of several housing co-operatives, an AIDS support programme and several burial societies.

A year on, executive officials say the association and its members are devastated. All BUTA support programmes and services have been effectively destroyed; their members operate on the run, and they all lose thousands (millions) of dollars-worth of goods weekly, making the possibility of anyone earning a half decent living non-existent.³⁹ The association can no longer pay rent for its one small office, relying on well-wishers. They cannot pay legal bills to take the police back to court to get the original court order enforced, to prevent police from their continual raids.

BUTA says its members continue to trade as an act of defiance – and of desperation. The act of vending is now effectively illegal, with vendors operating in constant fear and on the move. Some of those we spoke to have “illegal” bays on Lobengula Street Mall - where they used to trade legally last year. They know that they have to expect to run and abandon their goods almost daily. This means displaying only a few goods at one time. Some of their members are old, many are ill, and many have young children, so the process of running away from the police is traumatic – but they have no option. The constant theft of their goods means that they have to continuously borrow money to recapitalise in the hope of making some profits before losing everything to the police again. Many are in dangerous levels of debt to loan sharks as a result. Life is exhausting and stressful, with vendors now all balancing on a precarious line between poverty and total demise.

On 21 July, the vendors organised a demonstration and marched on City Hall with a petition of their grievances.⁴⁰ 220 were detained by the police and later released. On the whole, however, the vendors are now seldom arrested and formally charged – yet their goods are seized daily.

³⁸ See section ahead on OGHK and housing.

³⁹ One executive member we spoke to said that in the previous week he had had seized: a box of apples worth Z\$ 10 thousand (10 million), three boxes of bananas at Z\$ 4 thousand (million) each, 4 pockets of oranges at Z\$ 800 (thousand) each and naartjies at Z\$3,200 (Z\$ 3,2 million). This is a total of Z\$ 28 thousand (million) dollars worth of goods basically stolen in one raid – by the police - without recourse. A vendor can optimistically expect to make 50 million a month in total in sales, so this theft constitutes a loss of more than 50% of a month's profits.

⁴⁰ Letter from BUTA: *Re: Lists of concerns*, sent to the Mayor of Bulawayo on 21 July 2006

In conclusion – 80% of families in Bulawayo survive from the informal sector – and yet this sector remains criminalised and un-regularised. This has to change. Obviously this is a senseless and cruel situation, one that has driven thousands of families that were barely coping with extreme economic hardship into the realms of terrible poverty.

4. “Operation Round Up”: Vagrancy – a new target

“We don’t want destitutes, we don’t want vagrants. We want everyone to lead a normal life.”

[Commissioner of Police Augustine Chihuri,
Sunday News, 14 May 2006]

During May 2006, government once more clamped down mainly on Harare, where more than 10,000 “squatters, street kids and youths” were allegedly arrested over Easter and Independence Day.⁴¹ These thousand of “vagrants” were rounded up and taken to a farm on the outskirts of Harare. Police announced that they would vet people and return them – to their rural homes.

Again, those rounded up were criminalised; the news of their arrest was accompanied by claims that street kids and vagrants were responsible for crime in the city. *However, some of those who were rounded up reported that they were not vagrants, that arrests were arbitrary and that many of them were in fact forced to provide free labour on farms owned by senior government officials.*⁴²

In Bulawayo, arrests also occurred but on a very small scale. Around 40 vagrants were picked up, some of them blind and others mentally ill; 22 men were taken to Mlondolozi prison for psychiatric evaluation, while the rest were released – straight back on to the streets.⁴³

This harassment of Zimbabwe’s poorest and most vulnerable must be condemned. While we may all agree that it would be wonderful for everyone to have “normal lives”, the cure is not to punish those who appear not to do so by banishing them to the most shocking of holding camps – or to a psychiatric jail, without any crime other than poverty. The cure is good governance, economic recovery and the renewal of social services that have fallen into total collapse.

5. Operation Garikai / Hlalani Kuhle:

A scandal of dismal delivery and ZANU PF patronage

*In August 2006, not one single OGHK house in Bulawayo is ready for occupancy. Nor is there any prospect of this situation improving before the end of the year. In other words, the total number of people now housed as a result of OGHK in Bulawayo is – **nil!***

A summary: OGHK during 2005

Our previous report, “Crime of Poverty”, was released six weeks after government’s self imposed deadline for the end of phase one of their massive reconstruction programme, OGHK. It was clear that the sudden announcement of the biggest housing scheme in the history of Africa was hastily made to cover up for the cruelty of the demolitions, which threw 560,000 people out

⁴¹ *The Chronicle*, 15 May 2006, “Thousands of squatters, street youths picked up”.

⁴² Interview with human rights activist, Harare, June 2006.

⁴³ *The Sunday News*, 15 May 2006, “State to find lasting solutions to vagrancy”.

of shelter in the middle of winter.⁴⁴ Claims were suddenly made of 300,000 housing units being built by the end of 2005,⁴⁵ and of 25,000 being built by the end of August. Minister Ignatius Chombo boldly promised during 2005 that the government would build 250,000 houses each year until 2008.⁴⁶

Originally, 3 billion (trillion) unbudgeted dollars were promised to the scheme by the President and various ministers.⁴⁷ Only 10% of this money ever materialised, and with inflation, even within a few months of the demolitions, the buying power of this money had been reduced to less than 5% of the promised 3 billion (trillion).

How has OGHK been implemented?

Inter-Ministerial Committees (IMCs) have been set up in all towns and provinces, and they are all headed by high-ranking army officers – in Bulawayo by Lt-Col Matavire. This committee has effectively taken over many of the functions that would normally be the domain of local government, including allocation of stands and houses.⁴⁸ The IMC is in overall charge of the operation, including the actual costs and mechanics of building, sourcing materials and labour, the speed with which targets are met – and allocating who gets the houses. The IMC is responsible for servicing all houses they build – of connecting water and sewerage systems to those for the city; this is *not* the responsibility of the city council.

In October 2005, it was already clear that no building targets had been met, and that in fact they had been dismally failed. And by June 2006, the failure of OGHK to deliver to more than a handful of homes to those displaced is unmistakable.

Housing needs prior to OM: Bulawayo – a review of the promises

Prior to the demolitions, the Bulawayo housing list stood at around 70,000 families.⁴⁹ The demolition of 10,867 backyard structures and informal settlements in Bulawayo's high density suburbs displaced an estimated 45,000 people in the city.⁵⁰ By September 2005, the housing lists had risen to 80,000 families or 350,000 people – around 30% of the city's population.⁵¹

- 1,003 houses were promised to Bulawayo by the end of August 2005. However, only 200 were roofed by that date, and none were allocated.

⁴⁴ It was the opinion of the UN team that OGHK was belatedly arrived at; the Zimbabwe government was unable to present any documentary evidence to the contrary. It is not believable that a scheme to build 300,000 houses – or even 25,000 – could not be backed by extensive planning documents. Minister of Finance, Herbert Murerwa confirmed the operation was not planned, by saying exactly this in parliament when presenting his supplementary budget on 16 August 2005: *Supplementary Estimates for the year ending December 31, 2005*; presented by the Minister of Finance on Tuesday, August 16, 2005.

⁴⁵ *The Chronicle*, 28 July, "UN Report opinionated", page 4.

⁴⁶ *Zimbabwe Independent*, 9 December 2005, "Govt slips on Garikai targets".

⁴⁷ *The Chronicle*, 5 July, front page; 7 July, front page; 13 July, page 4, to mention a few. This amount of 3 trillion was repeatedly announced on ZTV during July and August. *Financial Gazette*, August 18-24, front page: *Zim govt broke, Murerwa admits*. *Sunday News*, 11 September 2005, page 11: *Building material prices double*. The Minister of Finance asked in his September supplementary budget for one billion (trillion) dollars to finance the previously unbudgeted OGHK during 2005 – ultimately, only 300 million (billion) was made available for the programme during 2005.

⁴⁸ See *Discarding the filth*, op cit, by current authors for discussion of how OM has usurped control of local authorities in favour of central government. The UN report was highly critical of this trend, recommending decentralising of power to urban councils. The UN report was also highly sceptical of the appropriateness of having the army in charge of building schemes.

⁴⁹ Interviews, 12 and 13 September 2005. As with most city councils in Zimbabwe, the Bulawayo City Council is MDC led and dominated: OM was conducted without consulting city councils.

⁵⁰ City council estimates, based on information given to them by police doing the demolitions.

⁵¹ Using the 2000 census figure of 4.2 per family, this estimate is arrived at.

- 41,000 vending stands in 46 markets had been promised by the end of August: none were built or allocated.
- By the end of September, the official OGHK housing target for Bulawayo was said to be 2,000 by year-end, with earliest occupancy of those houses already built, set for 2006.

In **Matabeleland South** at the end of August, 283 houses were at roof level in *8 different rural centres*, out of 405 houses planned – this was the best outcome in Zimbabwe. Not a single house was ready for occupation. In Gwanda alone, the housing waiting list stands at 27,000 names ie houses built throughout the province represented 1% of housing needs in this one centre alone.

6. Update on “Operation GHK”: June 2006 ⁵²

A full year has now passed since first mention of OGHK. The last six months have seen one scandal after another affect the scheme, and it is apparent that the building has effectively dwindled to a halt nationwide with even the housing targets that should have been met by August 2005, still not even remotely met a year later in most parts of the country.

In the four provinces of western Zimbabwe, a region where 3 million people live, fewer than 2,000 houses have been built; most of these are incomplete, and all are without basic services. Not one is fit for occupancy. This is a far cry from the 300,000 promised to the nation in June 2005....

The use of unskilled labour, failure to pay for services on time, failure to adhere to municipal by-laws – and then one scandal after another involving allocation of houses, have all confirmed the worst predictions about the scheme, which has indeed become a chaotic part of the ZANU PF patronage system.

Scandals have included:

- The collapse of twenty houses in Chinoyi after the first rains in November 2005. ⁵³
- The announcement in Bulawayo that sewerage and reticulation pipes cannot be laid as OGHK construction sites are on bed rock - which cannot be blasted as the houses are already built. ⁵⁴ Bulawayo city council officials clarified in August 2006 that while blasting is indeed now impossible, it would be possible to lay sewerage pipes by using a jackhammer. However, this will be much more expensive, time consuming and labour intensive, and jackhammers use diesel which is hard to procure. In any event, there is no money to provide any sewerage services at this time.
- By January, contractors countrywide were reported to be removing personnel and services from OGHK sites because of lack of payment. ⁵⁵ It was confirmed in August 2006, that when the money ran out in Bulawayo, there were still bills unpaid to contractors: any money allocated now to OGHK in Bulawayo, will have to first pay off the outstanding bills – with massive interest.

⁵² The authors concentrate on the four provinces in the west of Zimbabwe: Bulawayo, Matabeleland South and North, and the Midlands. Most other reports on Murambatsvina concentrate on Harare and its surrounds.

⁵³ *The Standard*, 27 November 2005: “Rains destroy ‘Garikai’ houses in Chinhoyi”. A construction expert says the construction teams “lack basic skills in mixing sand and cement”: soldiers, prisoners and youth militia are building the houses.

⁵⁴ *Zimbabwe Independent*, 6 January 2006: “Operation Garikai hits snag”: “Under town planning by-laws servicing of stands should be done before construction starts but the govt ignored professional advice at the inception of the operation.” Houses have also not been electrified.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

- From January onwards, the government began allocating incomplete houses saying that the onus is on those who receive houses to finance their completion.
- In February, the Mayor of Gwanda announced that he could not hand over certificates of occupation to beneficiaries of OGHK, as there are no sewer or water services; he estimated that it would cost around \$30 billion unbudgeted (at February costs) to provide roads and services to the new suburb.⁵⁶
- The government announced in January that the much-vaunted phase two of OGHK which was originally supposed to result in 300,000 houses nationwide, will now consist of handing over a few thousand un-serviced stands and the total cost of building houses will lie with the recipients.

In other words, this much-vaunted housing scheme is now simply a case of handing over small parcels of vacant, un-serviced land.⁵⁷

Costs involved in being allocated a house or stand

It was clear even during 2005 that the newly built homes were not intended to benefit the very poor. Local authorities countrywide made it known that beneficiaries of these houses would have to pay for services like any other resident.

In January, the Bulawayo City Council announced that the cost of un-serviced stands would be \$40 (\$40,000) per square meter, or between \$8 and \$ 13 thousand (million) per stand depending on size. This is for a stand that has been measured and pegged, but has no sewerage or water, and no road system.

Process to acquire an OGHK house:⁵⁸

- Would-be house owners in Bulawayo first have to apply to get onto the official council housing lists, and have proof of this.
- The form showing you are on the list has to be taken to the army officer in charge of OGHK at Cowdray Park suburb.
- Here you pay a registration fee of Z\$ 500 (500,000) and get another form which you then take to the council housing office in Luveve, a nearby suburb.
- In Luveve, you pay a sum of Z\$ 10 thousand (million) for the stand – around US\$ 40.
- Once you take occupation, you will buy the house at a rate varying from Z\$ 1 thousand (million) to 5 thousand (million) per month, for an unspecified time.
- In addition, the local authority will charge for service delivery – at some point in the future when there actually are services delivered!

While this process may seem straight-forward and the amount affordable, those who have tried to follow this process have reported to the authors that it is totally corrupt: depending on who you are and whom you bribe, it is possible to by-pass the official route. On the other hand, if you do not know the devious way through, you are likely to sit on the housing list for another twenty years – as some already have.

⁵⁶ With 1,200% inflation, costs more or less double monthly in Zimbabwe.

⁵⁷ *The Standard*, 8 January 2006: "Govt allocates incomplete houses". *The Chronicle*, 9 January 2006: "City council sets price for stands". *The Chronicle*, 19 January 2006: "Reconstruction programme resumes" – "Phase Two beneficiaries are developing stands at their own expense unlike phase one where the govt provided everything for construction." *The Chronicle*, 31 January 2006: "More stands to be allocated in Cowdray Park". *The Chronicle*, 9 February 2006: "700 houses allocated in Mat South" – "in the second phase, people will only be allocated residential stands and will be expected to use their own resources to develop them".

⁵⁸ Amounts here as reported in March 2006: these figures revise upwardly because of inflation regularly.

Cost of developing an OGHK stand

For those who will benefit under “phase two” of OGHK, which consists of paying between Z\$ 8 thousand (million) and 13 thousand (million) for a vacant plot of land - the cost of developing a stand has become totally prohibitive, with building costs soaring by the day in a hyper-inflationary economy.

According to Bulawayo City Council officials, **the cost of building a two roomed OGHK type house stood at Z\$ 1,6 million (billion) in mid July 2006.** This can be assumed to have risen to over Z\$ 2 million (billion) by the end of August. Few Zimbabweans even in the middle class income bracket can afford this – and certainly none of those left homeless and desperate by the demolitions.

The government itself has urged employers to finance homes for their workers on a buy-back basis, acknowledgement that individuals can hardly be expected to finance building themselves in the current economic climate. However, with 80% of Zimbabweans not in formal employment, the possibility of an employer-financed house is immediately limited to the very lucky few – and excludes almost entirely those who lost homes or backyard shelters, the vast majority of whom survive in the informal sector.

Underlining the difficulty of building in the current climate, BCC officials report that by August 2006:

- *Out of more than 5,000 stands allocated since last year, only 2 houses have been built to roof level, with another 280 at foundation level and 12 at wall plate level. No house is occupied. ie 94% of stands allocated under OGHK remain completely undeveloped.*

In Plumtree on the western border with Botswana, houses are apparently being erected on OGHK allocated stands – by Zimbabweans in the Diaspora, who are sending money and materials home. But this border town is in our observation an exception in this regard.

How many houses have been allocated in Matabeleland and Midlands? ⁵⁹

Bulawayo:

- According to BCC, by August 2006, *464 houses had been completed, with another 236 houses at various levels: some of these are still at foundation level, others at window or roofing level: ie a total of 700 houses have been allocated.* Not one of these houses is serviced or fit for occupation. No new housing whatsoever has been started since January 2006 owing to a lack of funds: these 700 houses are those that were already reported as being in process during 2005.
- More than 5,000 stands have been allocated, with no services: building is up to individuals /cooperatives and at their expense – 94% totally undeveloped to date.

Matabeleland North:

Victoria Falls: ⁶⁰ By June 2006, 100 houses had been built and allocated: none have sewerage or water supplies - ie none are fit for habitation.

⁵⁹ Figures are in some instances the government’s own as reported in the media; the authors also visited some of the towns listed and/or interviewed residents including town council officials, to establish details in other centres.

- Dete:* 50 houses were allocated in early March. They are incomplete and recipients are urged to complete the houses themselves.⁶¹
- Nkayi:* 20 houses were allocated in July: none have services.
- Bubi:* 20 houses allocated in July: none have services.

Matabeleland South:

Gwanda: 246 houses were allocated in February, but are said to be uninhabitable, as they have no doors, windows, sewerage, water, or floors.⁶² The plots are too small for people to erect Blair toilets: people are (illegally) living there and using the surrounding bush to defecate. The area is now unsightly and a health hazard.

Beitbridge: 104 houses were allocated in February, also without any services.⁶³

Filabusi, Esigodini and Plumtree:

100 houses each, were allocated in February – 300 houses altogether.⁶⁴ None of these houses have any services. Houses were also often allocated incomplete, with people supplying their own glass for windows and their own doors.

Maphisa: 57 houses are complete and allocated and 43 are at foundation level.⁶⁵ Only 18 houses had doors on allocation, and people have had to supply their own. There is no water or sewerage supplies, and no Blair toilets. People are using the bush as a toilet.

Figtree: Around 20 houses have been built here, although the exact number has not been ascertained. None of the houses have services, and nobody seems to be living in them. The place appears derelict.⁶⁶

Midlands

Gweru: 41 houses were handed over in June, with 56 more houses to be handed over by December 2006. The Governor Cde Msipa exhorted those given houses to take occupancy, because at the hand-over ceremony “only a handful” of the 41 beneficiaries were there and nobody knew where the rest were or how to contact them.⁶⁷

Kwekwe: Only 10 houses have been built here, in the second largest town in the province! Nobody is living in them and they have no sewerage and no water.⁶⁸

⁶⁰ This small centre was among the worst affected during the demolitions, losing an estimated 64% of all available accommodation, putting tens of thousands out of shelter.

⁶¹ *The Sunday News*, 5 March 2006; authors’ interviews/ observations July 2006.

⁶² *The Standard*, 12 February 2006; authors’ interviews/ observations July 2006.

⁶³ *The Chronicle*, 3 February 2006.

⁶⁴ Ibid; authors’ interviews/ observations May – July 2006.

⁶⁵ Authors’ visit, May 2006.

⁶⁶ Visual assessment by authors in June 2006.

⁶⁷ *The Chronicle*, 4 June 2006.

⁶⁸ Interviews with Kwekwe residents, authors own observations.

Mataga: 10 houses are being built; building only began in July 2006!⁶⁹

7. Housing allocation: one scandal after another

Who has been allocated the houses?

“Priority in the allocation of houses will be given to those who were affected by Operation Murambatsvina”⁷⁰

The greatest scandal surrounding OGHK involves allocation of the handful of houses built – every town has reported gross irregularities, with houses being allocated to government officials, children of cabinet ministers, police, army, multiple house-owners and others who were not on any official housing list.

Who makes the decision on allocations?

The IIMCs are responsible for deciding who gets the houses. Local authorities consisting of town or rural councils have handed over to these committees their official housing waiting lists, with their recommendations with regard to beneficiaries. However, local councils do not have a definitive say – this resides with the IMCs, all of which are headed by senior army officials. In fact, local authorities in Matabeleland have been among those most scandalised by the final allocation lists. From early in February 2006, allocation of housing began countrywide, and simultaneously so did the outcry about fraudulence and favouritism.

Fraudulent allocations in Bulawayo

By early March reports of corrupt allocation erupted in Bulawayo: *“Housing scandal: people who didn’t deserve benefited from Hlalani Kuhle – council vows to expose culprits”*.⁷¹

Interviews with council officials in August 2006 clarified the degree of initial corruption in allocations.

In August last year, the BCC submitted to the IMC their own priority short lists as to who should receive houses under OGHK. Their selection process took into consideration those who had already been on the city waiting lists for years or even decades, who had also been living in a back yard shelter that was demolished, and were civil servants, such as nurses and teachers. Their lists consisted of people who met at least two out of these three stated selection criteria.

Yet when the IMC released the list, out of the 700 houses allocated, **only 37 names** from the BCC short list were included!

*ie 95% of OGHK houses in Bulawayo were initially allocated to people who were **not** victims of the demolitions and were **not** on the BCC shortlists.*

Furthermore, when those allocated OGHK houses came to register and pay for the land through city council offices, which is the standard procedure, it was discovered that a sizeable

⁶⁹ Interview with Mataga resident, who was further deeply amused by the fact that the ZANU PF MP has built a legal vending site for his supporters only, and the ZANU PF senator is therefore in the process of building an illegal vending site – for *his* supporters only!

⁷⁰ *The Chronicle*, 6, 16 and 17 August 2005 for a few articles citing this policy, plus endless rhetoric to this effect during 2006.

⁷¹ *The Chronicle*, 3 March 2006, front-page headline.

percentage of those who had been given OGHK houses were already rate payers in the city – they already owned a house! The city council refused to register these “beneficiaries”, as the scheme is clearly intended for those who have no housing alternative.

The vast majority of those on the IMC lists were employees of the Ministry of Local Government, the army, police or prison services. Most were also Shona speakers, although Matabeleland is an Ndebele speaking region, and some have alleged that tribalism played a hand in the allocations.

Most of those given houses by the IMC were allegedly offered houses first and then tried to join the housing lists: “they rushed to the council at night to get the forms”, Mayor Ndabeni Ncube said. “Under normal circumstances no one is given the forms on the first day since it takes at least three months to verify details”.⁷² Some people have been paying subscriptions for twenty years to remain on the housing lists, yet failed to get houses.

Council pointed out that they are aware that the people at the bottom of the income ladder, did not benefit at all from OGHK. Some of them were offered houses, including some Killarney residents, but they failed to come up with the Z\$ 2 thousand (million) deposit.

Good news: fraudulent allocations reversed

The good news is that as a result of the BCC officials taking a strong stand and refusing to accept the initial IMC listings, the beneficiary lists were dramatically overhauled.

Ultimately, the Bulawayo council managed to get 60% of their short listed beneficiaries onto the allocation lists.

The city council considered all names on a case-by-case basis, and decided that although some of the IMC chosen candidates had not previously been on the BCC housing lists, they were nonetheless deserving, and agreed to register them as beneficiaries. In other instances, Min Chombo gave a directive that certain people, mainly middle income civil servants, had to be left on the OGHK lists.

This should be taken note of, in particular by international donors hesitant to invest in permanent shelters: in Bulawayo at least, a strong stand by scrupulous local council officials has to a large degree reversed attempts at corrupt allocation of permanent housing under OGHK.

Similarly, in Gwanda, corrupt allocations have been reversed as a result of council pressure.

Fraudulent allocations across Matabeleland

Throughout the nation, scandals have continued around corrupt housing allocations. This summary focuses on allocation in the Matabeleland region.⁷³

- In early February, houses were allocated in Matabeleland South, including **Gwanda** and Beitbridge. Immediately, protests erupted as people realised that among the beneficiaries

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Allocation has been fraudulent countrywide: in mid August 2006, Zimbabwejournalists.com reported that Harare Metropolitan Provincial Administrator, Justin Chivavaya and acting District Administrator, Nelson Mawomo, have both appeared in court facing charges of fraudulent allocation of 300 houses and 115 stands in Whitecliff Farm: all went to ZANU PF supporters who have already occupied the semi complete houses, that have no services.

were two children of the Gwanda ZANU PF Member of Parliament and Cabinet Minister Abednico Ncube; each child has received a house. Other beneficiaries include senior civil servants who already live in government housing, including the Head of the Physical Planning Department and five other senior officials.⁷⁴

- The MDC-dominant Gwanda town council held a meeting to condemn the allocations, done without their consultation. Deputy Executive Mayor of Gwanda, Petros Mukwena stated; “to make matters worse, the majority of beneficiaries are outsiders or people who once worked in Gwanda but have since been employed outside this town... In fact, it is scandalous”.⁷⁵
- Undeserving beneficiaries were reported in **Beitbridge** during February, and there was a call for an inquiry into the rampant corruption. Minister of Home Affairs, Kembo Mohadi: “I am really worried because the intended beneficiaries lost out to some selfish civil servants who allocated themselves houses yet they are staying in spacious government houses in low density.”⁷⁶
- There was an outcry in early March when 50 houses were allocated in **Dete**, a small centre about 300km north of Bulawayo; those allocated the (incomplete) houses are not on official housing lists, and are entirely unknown in the area. Local councillors reported that 177 families lost houses in Dete during the demolitions, mainly thatched huts in which they had been living for over twenty years – yet none of these families has been allocated a new house.⁷⁷
- There was similar anger in **Maphisa**, a small town around 250km south of Bulawayo. Beneficiaries of the 57 houses allocated here, include the police, army, members of the CIO, ZANU PF members and some youths working at the hospital known to be affiliated to ZANU PF. Other known beneficiaries include the hospital’s District Medical Officer (DMO), ZANU PF district chairman and the acting DMO. The Maphisa rural district council has complained about the manner in which the houses were allocated, as the list was not drawn from the housing waiting list.⁷⁸
- In June, the Gwanda OGHK houses were involved in another scandal – it was revealed that some are being leased and not occupied by those allocated the houses. This was condemned by officials who state again that the houses were supposed to be for those who had no accommodation and were not intended for resale or rent. The houses are still without doors, windows and sewerage services; rooms rent for around Z\$ 800,000 a room. According to council, they are not fit for habitation and nobody can legally occupy them at this stage.⁷⁹
- In July, a row erupted over corrupt allocation of houses in **Bubi-Umguza**. Outrage was expressed by ZANU PF MP Obert Mpofu that the Governor of Matabeleland North Thokozile Mathuthu has allocated the houses to high ranking ZANU PF officials within the district council, and to people who have already benefited under the land resettlement

⁷⁴ *The Chronicle*, 3 February; *The Standard*, 5 February.

⁷⁵ Ibid. The ZANU PF governor of Mat South has also expressed disapproval of the allocations: she has a long standing vendetta against the local ZANU PF MP Ncube, whose children benefited.

⁷⁶ *The Zimbabwean*, 16-22 February.

⁷⁷ *The Chronicle*, March 2006, “Residents fume over allocation of houses”.

⁷⁸ Authors’ interviews, May 2006.

⁷⁹ *The Chronicle*, 5 June 2006, “Hlalani Kuhle houses leased”.

scheme and who therefore have substantial homesteads. Mathuthu is quoted as saying “Doesn’t Mpofu want people from the party to benefit?”⁸⁰

The Chronicle, 6 June 2006

Summary of OGHK houses allocated

In the western half of Zimbabwe inclusive of four provinces, **considerably fewer than 2,000 houses** have been allocated in a region with housing waiting lists that prior to the demolitions already stood at around 200,000 families.⁸¹ This means a delivery rate of around 1% of the need. Furthermore, allocation has been fraught with irregularities countrywide, with a substantial number of recipients being those who were not on the lists but who were politically connected. The dent on the legitimate housing lists is therefore less than 1%.

August 2006: not one OGHK house fit for occupation

It appears that in no instance has any house been allocated complete with services; houses do not have sewerage or water systems. In most instances they also do not have a road network. It is unclear how many houses have windows, doors, or floors, but media reports suggest that many houses have been allocated structurally incomplete, with the responsibility for completion now residing with the recipients.

The city councils of Gwanda and Bulawayo have both confirmed that they have so far refused to issue certificates of occupancy for any OGHK houses built: until there is a sewerage system in place, occupation will only create a serious disease risk, with people using the surrounding areas to defecate.

⁸⁰ *The Sunday News*, 23 July 2006: “Row erupts over Hlalani Kuhle houses in Bubi-Umguza district”. There is long standing rivalry between these two ZANU PF politicians and rather than being a show of virtuosity, Mpofu’s complaints are more likely to be driven by his anger that *her* chosen few got the houses instead of *his*!

⁸¹ Bulawayo, 70,000; Gwanda, 27,000; lists in the Midlands towns of Gweru, Kwekwe, Mataga etc top 60,000. The total figure of 200,000 further takes into conservative consideration housing lists in the dozens of smaller centres in the region, including Victoria Falls, Hwange, Lupane, Dete, Beitbridge, Maphisa, Plumtree, Esigodini, Figtree etc.

Future of OGHK housing

There is no likelihood of any houses in addition to the existing 700 being built in Bulawayo any time soon. Any money allocated in the foreseeable future will be needed to complete the over 200 incomplete houses, and to provide the sewerage and water services needed before occupancy certificates can be issued. In Bulawayo, council officials told us that the cost of providing sewerage and water to the new housing would cost in excess of Z\$ 200 million (billion) at July estimates. Yet in the whole of 2006, the money allocated by central government to OGHK in Bulawayo has so far been Z\$ 5 million (billion), or 4% of this one budget line alone! One sewer line, which will eventually service around 100 houses, was laid before money ran out last year - but none of the houses have been connected to this line because of lack of funds. For individuals themselves to pay to connect the service would cost Z\$ 500 thousand (million) per person – or a minimum of 10 months gross income for most recipients. As people try and save, the costs keep rising.

It was stated a year ago that it would be the responsibility of the IMCs to finance supply of sewerage and water services, but BCC officials expect that this will be revoked and the city will be told it is their responsibility to connect the services. They have no funds to do so; the city battles merely to maintain existing services in the current economic climate.

Blair toilets? A health risk

Housing Minister Chombo has recently sent a directive that Blair toilets (pit latrines) must be built for each house in the Bulawayo scheme, to make it possible for people to move in. However, the city council is resisting this, as Bulawayo is a water shortage area, and is increasingly relying on boreholes to provide water for the city. They point out that sinking hundreds of Blair toilets, so close to the Nyamandlovu aquifer, will pollute precious and currently pure underground water supplies.

Photo 5: Hlalani Kuhle houses in Cowdray Park, Bulawayo

8. Urban congestion:

The failure of OM to change people's urban identity

The two proclaimed intentions behind OM were to tidy up the towns by removing structures that did not conform to the law, and to remove the people that lived in these structures, driving them back to rural areas. The intention of the following survey was to conduct our own investigation into these issues:

- *Were the structures demolished in fact “slums”?⁸²*
- *Has the intention to displace people from urban to rural areas succeeded?*
- *What is the basic quality of life on properties affected by demolitions?⁸³*

The authors have spent much of the last year following up on some of the 1,400 displaced from the informal settlements of Ngozi Mine and Killarney, who were forcibly kidnapped out of the churches and dumped in remote districts in July 2005.⁸⁴ By our estimate, between 60% and 75% of those forcibly abandoned in rural areas by the police in July 2005 have made their own way back to the towns.⁸⁵ We give in-depth histories of some such cases in the following section of this report.

As we followed up on this group by travelling a wide cross section of rural areas, it appeared to us that very few of those from the approximately 10,800 Bulawayo back yard structures demolished had in fact relocated to the rural setting – or at least we were not coming across them. Similarly, in Victoria Falls, tens of thousands of residents were displaced by the demolitions, yet we were finding remarkably few who had migrated permanently to rural areas.

Reports such as that by Action Aid have indicated that the majority of those displaced had remained in the urban setting.⁸⁶ We set out to verify this in Bulawayo, and to do our own assessment of the impact of the demolitions on basic quality of life in urban areas.

⁸² Backyard dwellings by definition are illegal in terms of town by-laws, unless council approved, which most are not. But we were more interested in whether the quality of these dwellings was likely to pose a health or safety risk to those living in them, in a more general sense, and whether they qualified for the UN definition of what constitutes a “slum”.

⁸³ This survey has not examined types of income before and after OM; we have assessed space per person, and the disruption to family units of the current housing arrangements.

⁸⁴ The taking in of the displaced by the Bulawayo churches and then the forced removal of them from the churches at midnight by armed police was covered in detail in “Crime of Poverty”, October 2005.

⁸⁵ More than half the previous inhabitants of Killarney and Ngozi Mine are now back there, with 3 or 4 more families arriving weekly in July 2006; authors’ own continuous observations.

⁸⁶ Action Aid in conjunction with Combined Harare Ratepayers Association, *A study on the impact of “Operation Murambatsvina/Restore Order” in 26 wards of Harare high density housing areas*, July 2005.

9. Survey of two high density suburbs in Bulawayo

In January 2006, the authors conducted a survey of two suburbs in Bulawayo affected by demolitions.⁸⁷

1. In the first suburb, the authors relied on lists compiled by the Bulawayo City Council of houses that had had illegal structures demolished. Out of a total of 1,000 stands for this suburb, the BCC had listed **266** stands - or approximately 27% - on which a backyard structure had been demolished.
2. In the second suburb, the authors relied on lists supplied by the churches, who had been approached to take property into safe-keeping by families who had had backyard structures destroyed. The churches had listed **620** properties all in the same suburb on which a structure had been demolished.

The city council reports that 10,867 properties were affected by demolitions citywide: the addresses in these two suburbs amount to 8% of all properties affected by OM.

Methodology

1. In the first suburb, a random number system was used to select 40 properties, constituting 15% of the total of 266 properties alleged by BCC to have had demolitions.⁸⁸
2. In the second suburb, every tenth property on the church lists was selected. This totalled 63 properties, or 10% of the total of 620 addresses on the list.

In total 103 properties were therefore included in the survey, constituting 12% of addresses where demolitions had allegedly taken place in these two suburbs.

A questionnaire was designed [see appendix], and residents at these addresses were invited to take part in the survey.⁸⁹

1. In the first suburb, six addresses were found not to have been affected by the demolitions. At one address, there was rubble, but the turnover in the house had been complete: nobody there had been resident prior to demolitions and as the major focus of the inquiry was to establish where people had gone to, and to compare floor space per person before and after demolitions, this property was therefore excluded from the survey.
2. A total of **33 stands** were therefore included in the survey from this suburb, and 7 excluded.

⁸⁷ In June 2006, we conducted an update survey on 10% of properties originally sampled in this January survey, to monitor any marked changes; the situations remained either much the same or in some cases, congestion had worsened.

⁸⁸ 40 slips were drawn from a box that contained slips numbered from 1 to 266.

⁸⁹ Five specifically trained researchers conducted the survey. Collecting all the necessary information meant more than one interview and more than one visit in most cases. It also meant (see question 4) going to more than one property in order to find families/individuals who had moved away from primary address as a result of the demolitions, for full details of where all those once on primary property are now.

3. In the second suburb, four stands were found to be on the list even though no buildings had been destroyed there. On one stand, there were only children who were uneasy about answering questions; on another, the landlord demanded a police clearance for the questioning exercise; one address turned out not to be traceable.
4. A total of **56 stands** were included from this suburb and 7 excluded.

An overall total of 89 stands was therefore included in the survey, constituting 10% of the number of properties alleged to have had demolitions in these two suburbs (886).

Findings⁹⁰

The buildings demolished

Number and facilities of destroyed structures

- On 62 stands, one “illegal” building had been destroyed; on 27 stands, either 2 or 3 “illegal” buildings had been destroyed.
 - A total of 119 buildings were destroyed on 89 stands
- 83 destroyed buildings had one room each: the others had from 2 to 6 rooms each.
- **A total of 178 rooms were destroyed on the 89 stands.** Prior to demolitions
 - 171 rooms had been housing people: 96 %
 - 6 rooms had been used for storage: 3,3 %
 - 1 room was partially constructed:
- Mean age of buildings destroyed: 10 years (built in 1995)
- Age range of buildings destroyed: up to 33 years (built 1972 - 2005)
- Average size of demolished rooms: 9,2 sqm⁹¹
- Median size: 9 sqm

Quality of buildings destroyed

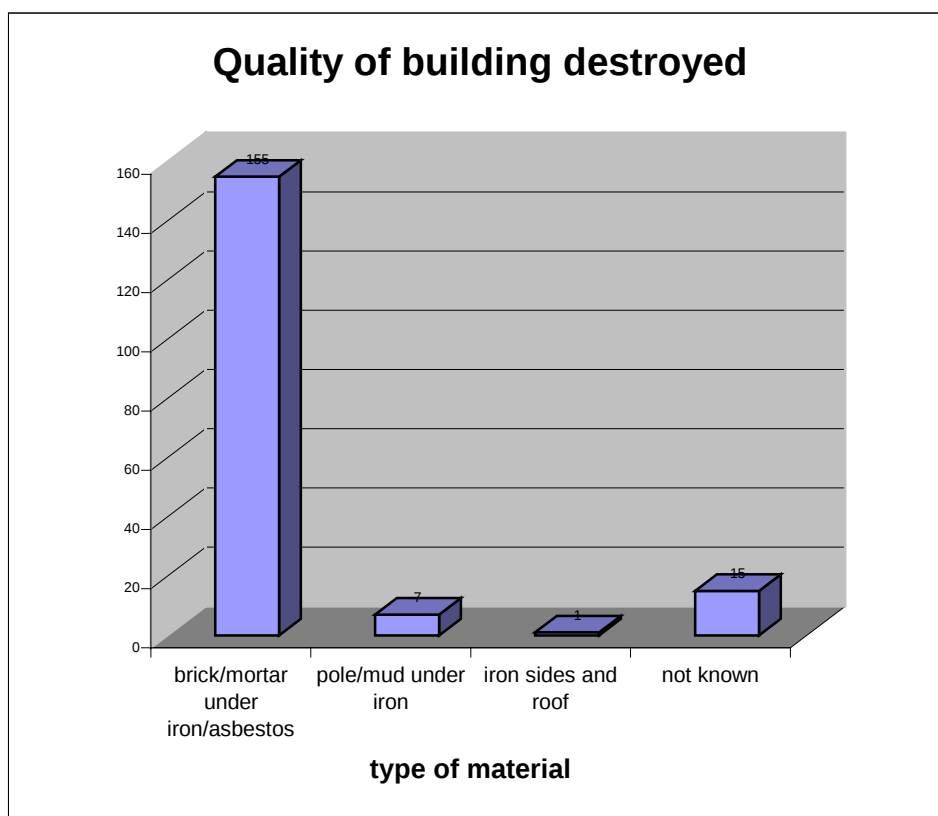
- 155 rooms were brick/mortar under corrugated asbestos/iron roof
- 1 room had corrugated iron sides and roof
- 7 rooms were pole and mud under corrugated iron roofs
- 15 rooms – no longer know what materials were used.
- All rooms had access to municipal water through the main house or from a standing tap outside
- All rooms had access to an outside toilet connected to the municipal sewerage.
- 153 rooms had electricity: 15 rooms – no longer known
 - 10 rooms are known *not* to have had electricity: 6 of these were used for storage

87% of rooms destroyed were therefore high quality living spaces, built out of brick and mortar and with access to clean water and safe ablutions.⁹²

⁹⁰ The figures here are a summary of the combined suburb findings.

⁹¹ Taken on 155 rooms where size was known. In 23 cases original size could not be established.

86% of rooms destroyed had access to electricity



The demolition of such buildings in the name of slum clearance only serves to illustrate the point made by the UN report – Zimbabwe has one of the lowest figures for genuine slums in Africa, and fewer slums than in many European countries; if a dwelling has access to fresh water and sewerage and is built of brick and mortar, it does not qualify for the definition of “slum”.⁹³

In conclusion: *in 87% of cases in these two Bulawayo suburbs, the government did not demolish slums, but living space of a high standard.*

Occupants of the buildings demolished

The following information pertains only to those who were living in the 171 demolished rooms used for accommodation purposes, and not to occupants of the main structures on each of the 89 stands.

- 432 people lived in 171 backyard rooms on 89 stands
 - o 133 were children aged under 16
 - o 299 were adults
- **4,85 people were displaced on average per stand**
 - o An average of 2,52 people per room were displaced

⁹² These are minimum assumptions: we do not know what 15 rooms were built of and have assumed they were not of high quality in this calculation.

⁹³ The UN report made the point that in Zimbabwe, prior to the demolitions, only 3,6% of housing would have constituted the UN Habitat definition of slums, giving it fewer slums than many EU nations.

- o The median number of people per demolished room was 2

There has been much debate about the number of people displaced by the demolitions, with the government arguing that the UN report has overestimated the numbers displaced by using the findings from the Zimbabwe 2002 census, of 4,2 people per household. The findings of this survey of two Bulawayo suburbs would suggest that the UN figure of approximately 550,000 displaced is conservative – that a figure of closer to 5 people per property may have been displaced by the demolitions, in Bulawayo at least.

Relationship of occupants: prior to the demolitions

- 105 family units were identified as occupying one or more backyard rooms on the same property.⁹⁴
 - o 66 of these units had children under the age of 16: av = 2 per unit
- 10 units of “individuals sharing” one room were identified.
- 28 rooms had individuals living alone, not related to anyone else on the property.

TOTAL: 143 units / individual combinations on 89 properties

Where are they now – after the demolitions?

- 54 units or individuals still live on the same residential stand, having simply moved into the main house.
- 54 units or individuals remain intact in Bulawayo-urban, at a new address
- 2 individuals moved to another urban centre in Matabeleland
- 1 family unit split up and went to two different Bulawayo urban addresses
- 13 family units split up but left at least one family member on the same residential stand:
 - o In 5 of these units, the rest of the family moved to another Bulawayo address
 - o In 3 of these units, one family member now commutes from either South Africa or Botswana
 - o *In 5 of these units, the breadwinner remained in town and the rest of the family went back to a rural district.*
- 1 family split up and went partly to Botswana and partly to the rural areas
- 3 family units moved intact to the rural areas
- There is insufficient information on 15 units or individuals

Who went to rural areas?

Out of 143 family/individual constellations *only 3 are known to have gone intact to a rural area:*

=> 2%

In a further 6 family units, part of the family returned to a rural area: in 5 cases the breadwinner remained in town and in 1 case, went to Botswana to look for work:

=> in 4% of known cases, part of a family returned to a rural area

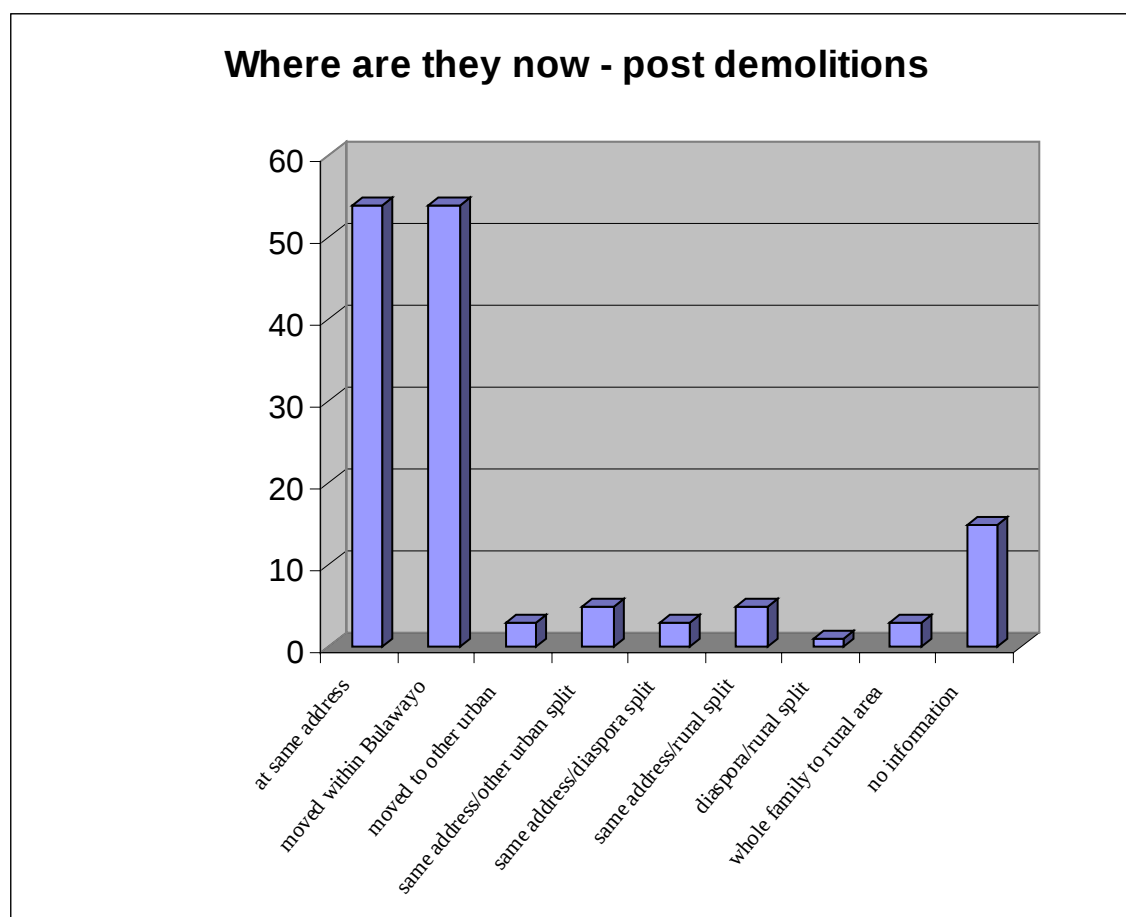
⁹⁴ A “family unit” is any combination of related people sharing one or more rooms on one property; this could mean parents and children, or uncles/aunts/grandparents with/without dependants.

If we assume all the 15 units/individuals about which we have insufficient information went to rural areas, this would give the highest possible estimate of 24 unit/individual returnees:

=> between 7% and 16% of the displaced returned to rural areas.⁹⁵

In the graph following:

- The first five columns are those who are known to have kept their urban identity: **84 %**
- Columns 6 to 8 are those who are known to have made a partial/ total return to a rural home: **7%**
- In **10%** of cases, there is no information on where people are now.
- The vast majority of the displaced remained in the greater Bulawayo area – 76% (columns one, two and four).
- 12% of families were forced to split up as a result of the demolitions (columns 4 to 7).



⁹⁵ It must be said this is an unlikely assumption based on the choices made by the others, but we make this assumption to see the very highest possible numbers who may have followed the government directive to “go back where you came from”.

In summary:

=> **between 84% and 93% of people displaced by the demolitions defied the government directive to return to rural areas.**⁹⁶

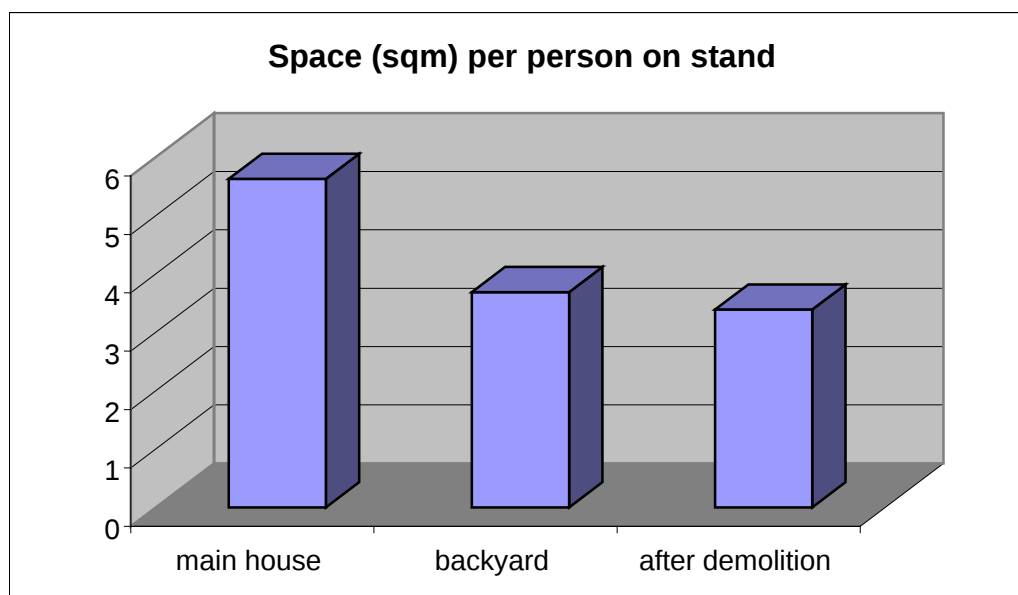
It is clear that the government's stated intention of driving people out of the towns and back to rural areas has resoundingly failed. This whole appalling exercise of demolishing town dwellings has served only to illustrate that there is more to a person's identity than a particular building, and that governments cannot reverse rural to urban drift simply by demanding that people leave the towns. It is not possible to knock down somebody's house and tell them that they are now therefore a rural dweller. People will cope with extreme hardship in order to maintain their rights to an urban life, however tough, if that is what they have decided they want.

Quality of life, post demolitions

The determination of those who lost their backyard dwellings to nonetheless remain in Bulawayo, has resulted in a tangible drop in the most basic of living conditions on the properties where they reside. This has impacted not only on those displaced from the backyard but obviously on their landlords.

On only two properties (2,3%) did the space per person go up after the demolitions, from 2,67 sqm to 3,87 sqm, as a result of tenants moving out.

For the other 97,7% of properties where dimensions are known, the findings are given below.⁹⁷



Prior to the demolitions:

- Living space per person in the main house: 5,63 sqm
- Living space per person in the backyard structures: 3,67 sqm

⁹⁶ Actual figure depends on where the missing 10% are. It is reasonable to assume that 90% of the displaced in this urban study are still in the urban setting.

⁹⁷ On 50 properties for which all measurements were available for both remaining and previous structures: approximately 56% of stands in the sample.

After the demolitions:

- Living space per person in the main house: 3,39 sqm

For the landlords, the influx of tenants from the backyard structures has meant a reduction of more than 40% of their personal living area.

Even for the tenants, who had less space than landlords to start with, the space per person is reduced, by 9 %.

In some cases, the overcrowding is massive – in Case example III ahead, living space 8 months after the demolitions was 1,18 sqm per person!

Families appear to have made every effort to stay together, enduring huge overcrowding rather than split up. In spite of this, 12% of families were forced to split up as a result of demolitions. Staying together has meant that there are now entire families or groups of individuals living in what would have once been a kitchen or living room. The lack of privacy is total for all concerned. The over populating of main houses has led to uneasy reorganisation of family constellations. In many instances, husbands and wives now sleep in separate rooms, as men all sleep together in one room and women in another. In some instances, teenage children of the opposite sex, sometimes related and sometimes not, are forced to share rooms. There is constant movement between houses now, with single men in particular finding themselves camping out a few nights with one relative, then a few nights with another.

In some cases, backyard lean-tos are starting to emerge [see photos 5 and 6], but they are of appalling quality compared to the structures that were demolished: people live in fear of further demolitions and are not prepared to invest in structures; shacks are kept low and therefore not obvious from the road....

The impact of the demolitions and the resultant movements of people can be best illustrated by some detailed case histories.

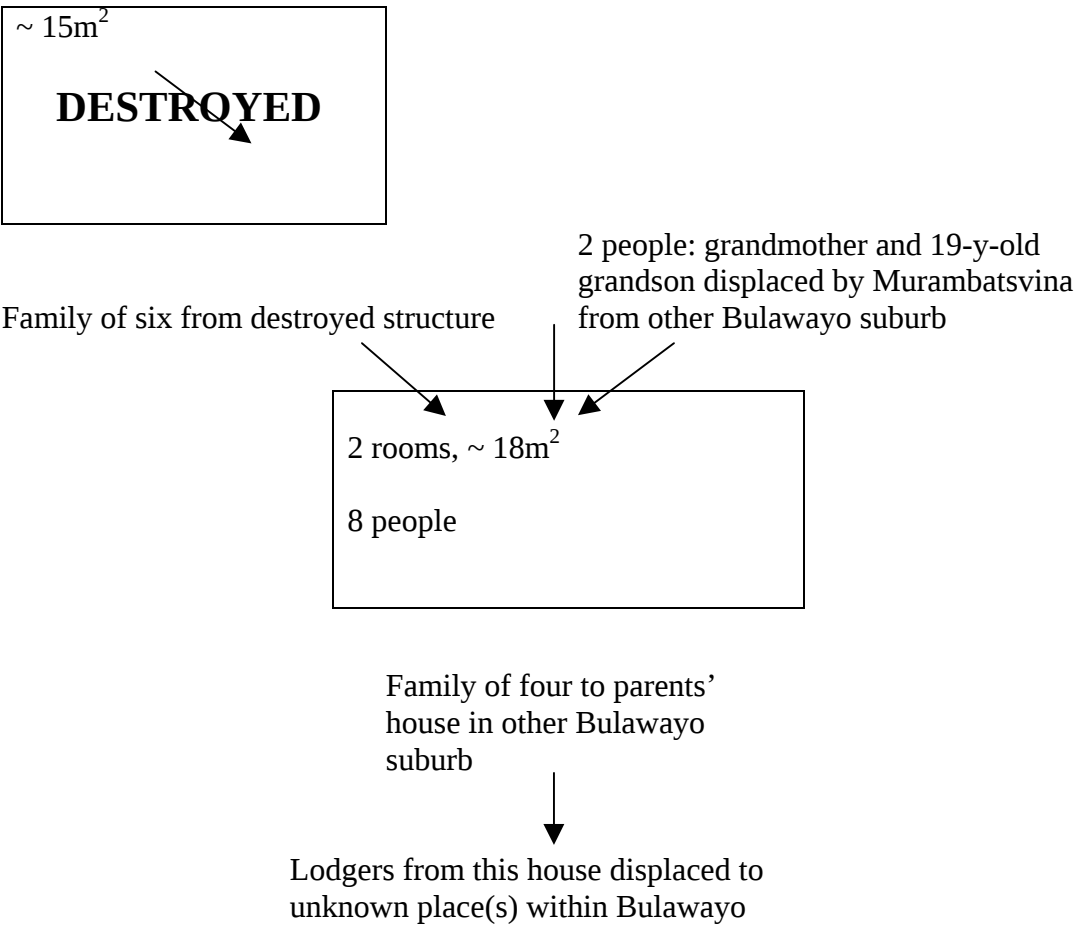
Case example I:

Before Murambatsvina: 2 buildings on one stand, 1 main house and 1 ‘illegal’ structure, the latter erected in 1984, both brick and mortar under corrugated iron, electrified, with outside water and toilet.

1 room, ~ 15m²
6 people: couple with 8-y-old daughter and wife’s sisters (22, 17 and 3 years old)

2 rooms, ~ 18m²
4 people: family of four, related to family of six

Situation: 10 people on 33 m² in 3 rooms (‘illegal’: 2.5m² and legal: 4.5m²/per person)
After Murambatsvina:



Net result: 8 people on 18m²/in 2 rooms (2.25m² per person); two buildings destroyed (the 2nd one being the former place of residence of grandmother and grandson); family of four has displaced lodgers in parent’s house with subsequent loss of income; nothing is known about the former lodgers’ living conditions.

Case example II:

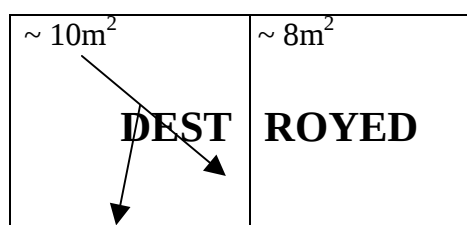
~ 10m ² 6 people: old couple, 22-y-old daughter, 3 grandchildren, 4 & 2x3 years	~ 8m ² 5 people: couple & 3 children, 10, 7, and 3 years old
---	--

~ 9m ² Couple with 7-y-old girl	~ 9m ² Single man	~ 9m ² Single woman with boy (17) and girl (10)	~ 9m ² Single woman with 4 children (15, 14, 9 & 2)	~ 6m ² Single man	~ 5 m ² Single man	~ 6m ² Couple with 3 pre-school ch.	~ 5 m ² Couple with 2 ch. (10, 4)
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Before Murambatsvina: 2 buildings on one stand, 1 main house and 1 ‘illegal structure’, the ‘illegal’ two-roomed one erected in 1979, both brick and mortar under corrugated iron, electrified, with outside water and toilet.

Situation: 34 people on 76m² in 10 rooms: ‘illegal’: 1,64m² and legal: 2,52m²/per person

After Murambatsvina:



6 people: old couple, 22-y-old daughter, 3 grandchildren, 4 & 2x3 years

5 people: couple & 3 children, 10, 7, and 3 years old

~ 9m ² Couple with 7-y-old girl	~ 9m ² Single man	~ 9m ² Single woman with boy (17) and girl (10)	~ 9m ² Single woman with 4 children (15, 14, 9 & 2)	~ 6m ² Single man	~ 5 m ² Single man	~ 6m ² Couple with 3 pre-school ch.	~ 5 m ² Couple with 2 ch. (10, 4)
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Couple with daughter were displaced by husband’s parents and relatives who had nowhere to go; the former now rent one room at a friend’s house in another Bulawayo suburb

Single man offered his room and moved to friend’s place nearby. Friend about to marry, so he needs his room back and has given notice to present occupants

Situation:

two-roomed building destroyed; 30 people now on 58m² in 8 rooms : 1,93m² per person.

The family of three moved within Bulawayo to make space for their relatives, whose living space has shrunk from 10 to 9m², with rent simultaneously going up from Z\$ 50.000 to Z\$ 200.000. A single man offered temporary shelter in his room for the family of five, but must go back soon. Where will this family go?

Case example III:

Before Murambatsvina: 2 buildings on one stand, 1 main house and 1 ‘illegal’ structure, the ‘illegal’ two-roomed one erected in 1972, both brick and mortar under corrugated iron, electrified, with outside water and toilet.

~ 5m ² Couple, 3 children (8, 4, 1½)	~ 7m ² Couple & 3-y-old daughter, 43-y-old uncle
--	--

~ 8 m ² Couple and 1-y-old daughter	~ 7 m ² 2 nephews of late landlord	~ 5 m ² Niece of late landlord (11yrs)
---	---	---

Situation: 15 people, all relatives, on 32m² in 5 rooms : ‘illegal’: 1,33m² and legal: 3,33m²/per person

After Murambatsvina:

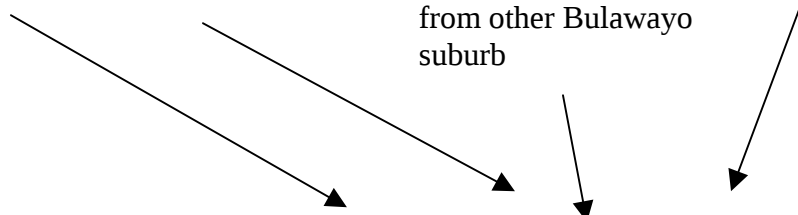
~ 5m ² ↓ ↓ ↓ DES	~ 7m ² TROYED
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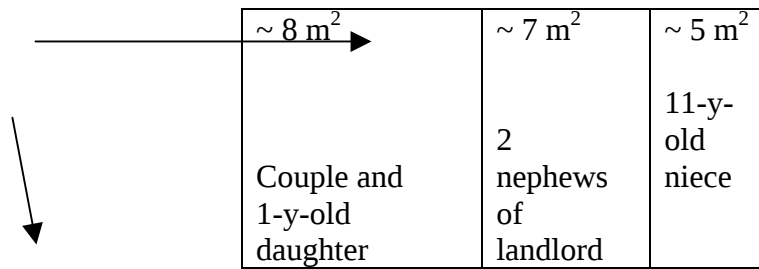
Couple,
3 children
(8, 4, 1½)

Couple with
3-y-old girl,
43-y-old uncle

Nephew, his wife &
3-y-old daughter,
Murambatsvina-displaced
from other Bulawayo
suburb

Newly-wed wife
of youngest nephew





~ 8 m ²	~ 7 m ²	~ 5 m ²
Couple and 1-y-old daughter	2 nephews of landlord	11-y- old niece

Wife and daughter stayed only for one month, then moved to rural home about 40km away because of lack of privacy at the house

Situation: one two-roomed building destroyed on site, another one elsewhere in Bulawayo; first 19, later 17 people on 20m² in 3 rooms: 1,1 and then 1,18m² per person;

Massive overcrowding, considerably worse than before.

The husband who sent his wife and daughter to stay with her parents in a rural area last visited them during the Christmas holidays, as they could not be accommodated in Bulawayo; for him to stay at his in-laws place is very inappropriate according to local tradition.

The newly-weds both expressed that they felt bad about not being able to share a room. They cannot move elsewhere as they are unemployed and cannot raise rentals for separate accommodation. An opportunity was created for them to sleep together in December 2005 when the couple with the 1-y-old daughter slept in another high density suburb for a few days to attend to an ill relative there.

Case example IV: child-headed household

Background Information

Thandi is 15 years old. Her father died in 1996, her mother in 2002. In January 2006, she was staying with her fifty-five-year-old maternal grandmother and two younger sisters at a Bulawayo high density suburb. Thandi dropped out of school in 2005, when she was in form two, because of lack of money. Their source of livelihood is making mats, which they sell.

Thandi's story

In July 2005, police destroyed the backyard structure in which Thandi, her younger sisters and grandmother lived. They had no other place to go to, so stayed in the very same place, living and sleeping in the open. It was very cold at that time. After one week, the owner of the house decided to put up some shelter in the backyard. When interviewed at the end of 2005, the family was living under a very makeshift shelter of wood and a sheet of asbestos roofing.

Thandi remembers that her 12-year-old sister talked to her grandmother and requested permission to go to South Africa to look for work, to be able to support the family. The grandmother did not consent, but the girl went anyway to talk to a local man who takes illegal border jumpers to South Africa. She then disappeared and later phoned from South Africa to say that she had found a job: she was working now for relatives of the local man who had taken her to South Africa. However, she also complained that she was not being paid.

Supposedly she worked without pay for four months. Then her grandmother went to complain to the local man who promised to look into the matter. When next he came back from South

Africa, he said that Thandi's sister was lying and that she was being paid. The granny was bitter and demanded that he should bring her back, but when he returned again, he reported that the girl had died. He claimed that she had been knocked down by a car on 4 December 2005. The grandmother was devastated and cried a lot. She then went to South Africa to bury her granddaughter. At the time of the interview she was still there, trying to get a death certificate.

Thandi aged 15 has been in charge of the household since December and stays with her youngest sister who is 10 years old. She is quite bitter and says, "I wish my father was alive so that I could lead a normal life like all other children." Asked what her wishes are, she says that she wishes to go back to school, grow up and be able to look after her grandmother. She also says, "If I was like other girls, I could have a baby now, but I don't want that, I want to grow and be able to look after my grandmother." Prostitution is not an option for her; this has never crossed her mind, she says - contradicting herself by raising the issue.

Summary of findings

In the two suburbs from which our samples were drawn, the Zimbabwean Government has not destroyed slums, but valuable living space. Contrary to their declared intention to force people out of town and 'back to their rural areas', this has had one major effect:

Massive urban overcrowding, leading to the following:⁹⁸

- A need to shift around on almost a daily basis within one house.⁹⁹
- A need for some displaced, in particular single tenants, to stay on the move from place to place.¹⁰⁰
- Pressure on individuals to join the Diaspora, thus dividing family units.¹⁰¹
- Knock-on effects with evictees displacing other people, and those displacing others again (case examples I, II, III)
- Unmarried men and women forced to share rooms, and married couples forced to sleep separately at night.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ All examples following are taken from our survey findings.

⁹⁹ For example: in a two-roomed house, the bedroom is occupied by husband and wife, the lounge by 4 evictees of both sexes, between 10 and 24 years of age; when adult visitors stay over night, all regroup such that males occupy one room, females the other.

¹⁰⁰ For example: of an evicted family of six, only 4 found accommodation in the main house; their 20-y-old moves from one friend to the next, in Bulawayo, his brother has been re-admitted to Ingutsheni Psychiatric Hospital (it remains unclear whether his condition deteriorated too much to keep him at home [related to the family's eviction?], or if his family was desperate to reduce overcrowding for a while).

¹⁰¹ For example: young adults, but even family heads separate from their families to go to South Africa or Botswana, e.g., a single mother with three children (11, 15 and 17 years old) first displaced her uncle's family of three from the main house; next, she began to commute in and out of South Africa, to earn a living for her family (no more rent from single room main house; reduced income from vending vegetables).

¹⁰² For example: a mother of two (7 and 3 years old) who occupied one room in the main house, shares now with 2 evicted male relatives (21 and 30 years old). In case example III, the newly-wed husband had to choose between having his young wife share a room with him, his uncle and two brothers, or with his married brother, the brother's wife and two young girls.

- Deterioration in school performance or dropping out of school; while staying put on the same premises has enabled some children to continue going to the same school, overcrowding has reduced space for doing homework or studying, or sleeping well. Increased poverty from loss of rent and /or vending income has resulted in school drop-outs because fees are not paid.¹⁰³
- Exposure of children to sex-for-money arrangements as a means of survival.¹⁰⁴

Photo 6: Backyard lean-to, Bulawayo, June 2006.

10. The displaced from Killarney and Ngozi Mine:

The failure of forced rural relocation to change people's urban identity

Most of those displaced when the Bulawayo informal settlements at Killarney and Ngozi Mine were destroyed are, quite simply - now back at Killarney and Ngozi Mine, or in another urban setting. However, they have been severely impoverished and highly stressed by events of the last year. Some have moved seven times or more, and have had shelters repeatedly knocked down. All have lost possessions and many have lost their health. A distressing number have died.

¹⁰³ For example: 12 people, including 7 school children, on 27m² (2.25m² per person) is not an ideal situation to start with; influx of another family of five, with 3 children (12, 7, and 3 years of age) makes things even worse: 17 people, including 9 school children, squeeze on 27m² (1.59m² per person). In another case, one school girl and 11 school boys (from Primary School to College level) now share 27m² with their grandmother (2.08m² per person); before the evictions, the old lady cared for 7 children, giving them 3.38m² of living space per person.

¹⁰⁴ For example: seven children (grade 7 and below) shared the main house; 3 female relatives who depend on "handouts from their boyfriends" have now moved from the destroyed backyard room into the kitchen (4.29m² per person before, 3m² per person now).

In the last report, the authors related events around the destruction of these informal settlements, the taking in of the displaced by the churches, and then the abduction of the displaced from the churches by the police.

1,400 displaced were dumped in rural areas in July, even though many of them were not originally from a rural area, having been born in Killarney and being of foreign descent.

4,000 people from Victoria Falls were returned to rural homes on a voluntary basis by the churches in conjunction with authorities.

The churches made a huge effort to keep track of people displaced to rural districts, and to keep them supplied with food. Some families were given doors and thatch to help them build before the rains. Some were given seeds for farming. School transfers were organised for some.

Case histories: where are they now?

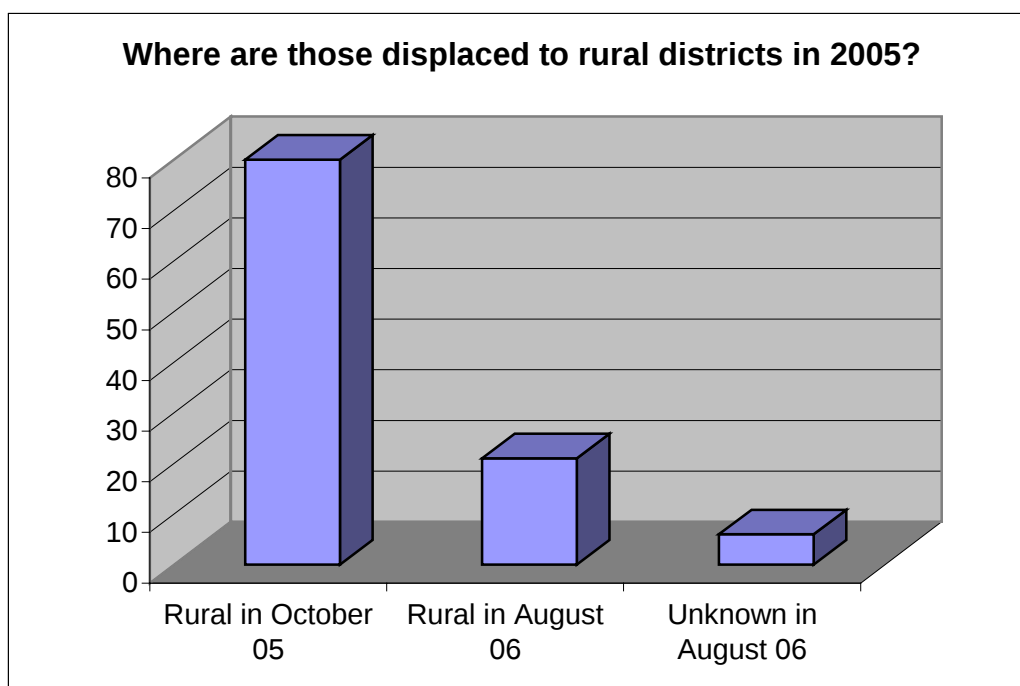
In October last year, we provided various detailed scenarios in which we followed families or groups of families in the aftermath of the demolitions, across the length and breadth of Matabeleland. We have maintained contact with most of these groups, and provide updates on where people are now and how they have fared. The majority of people dumped in rural areas, including those who were helped with building and farming materials, are now back at Killarney, Ngozi Mine or in Victoria Falls.

Out of 106 people displaced to rural areas by the demolitions, and represented through our case example interviews:¹⁰⁵

- 19 % remain in the rural setting
- 5 % can no longer be traced
- **75% have returned to an urban setting**

It should be a salutary lesson to the government of Zimbabwe that even those who had their homes destroyed and lost almost everything, and who after that were forcibly relocated to remote rural areas, have largely returned to the urban setting.

¹⁰⁵ Some of the families we interviewed in 2005 remained in the urban setting through the demolitions, for example those in the tented camp at Cowdray Park in Bulawayo, or people beaten by the police in Ngozi Mine. They have not been included in the figure of 106 – although we note here that they are all still in an urban setting. However, the majority of individuals or families interviewed for the case examples in 2005 were in the rural setting. Our general observations and interactions with people in Killarney and Ngozi Mine over the last year, have provided us with the conviction that substantially more than half of those forcibly removed are now back.



These findings are even more telling than the study on backyard structures. Even providing people with help in building rural homes, in some instances even the growing of reasonable harvests, has failed to keep people from returning at the earliest opportunity to the urban areas.

It is interesting to note that in our survey of 100 IDPs reported on in October 2005,¹⁰⁶ we predicted that:

***Only 21% of respondents seem likely to stay where they have been currently placed.*¹⁰⁷**

The survey respondents of October 2005 were a different group of IDPs to those followed in our detailed case histories and graphed above, but the 2005 prediction and the current findings of only 19% left in the rural setting, bear each other out. We concluded in October 2005 and conclude again now:

Whatever reasons people had to leave rural areas and head to urban centres in the first place, those reasons still remain and have not disappeared as a result of the demolitions.

However, the costs paid by those displaced have been enormous. As the following histories will relate, families have fragmented, marriages have collapsed, people have died. There is almost not a single child left in school out of our entire case history group. The last year has seen the wettest summer and the coldest winter in memory, which has created misery, severe illness and death for those living in tiny shacks. Families who have moved back to Killarney and Ngozi Mine live in appalling conditions. Their current shelters are less robust than those knocked down: people still live in fear of further demolitions. Many of those living here are vendors, and they have to carry out their daily attempt to earn money in the impossible situation described already in this report, in its analysis of the informal trading sector.

¹⁰⁶ "Preliminary findings of survey of 100 IDPs", in *Crime of Poverty*, op cit, pages 65-70.

¹⁰⁷ This prediction was based on an analysis of the combinations of replies by those dumped in rural areas, to three questions: *Do you feel welcome where you are now? Explain: Are you happy to stay where you are now? Explain: If you had the option, would you go back to where you were living in May 2005?* See pp 68-70, *ibid*.

Police harassment

Harassment is constant. Police sweep regularly through both Killarney and Ngozi Mine. In July 2006, police pounced on Killarney and arrested over a hundred people, mainly women, children and the elderly; all the able bodied young men ran away, leaving the most vulnerable. Those arrested were kept in appalling conditions for two days, were harangued and finger printed and accused of being illegal and criminals. No charges were laid against them, but the intimidation was intense.

Photo 7: This woman in Killarney has had her home knocked down eight times in the last year.

Photo 8:
Killarney: brewing beer and crushing
quartz for gold

Photo 9:
23 people still live in 5 tents in Cowdray Park, now
worn out by the weather

The two displaced persons from Killarney pictured below have died in the past year. Both died
having known no permanent home since the demolitions.

Photo 10:
Cowdray Park tents, July 2005

Photo 11:
Killarney demolitions, June 2005

11. Case histories

Situation one

Cowdray Park, Bulawayo urban

A community of 9 adults and 14 children

Originally from Killarney informal settlement

Interviews: bi-monthly since September 2005; most recent mid-June 2006

Of the original eight families here in October 2005, six remain.

One family has gone back to Killarney, where they were originally living, and one woman has got a job at the OGHK building site and has moved into a room where she pays rent. One of the group has died – the very ill man pictured in the last report in *photo 9*; he died within weeks of this photograph being taken.

A woman who has returned from these five tents to Killarney was located there and interviewed. She reported that life in the tents was unbearable and that life in Killarney is better. However, she complained about the fact that her child was now out of school, but had been attending school in Cowdray Park.

There is still no water or sanitation on the site of the tented camp, which seems to have been entirely ignored by everyone since it was set up. There is no official awareness that this camp exists. When one of the families from here walked over to the OGHK project being developed nearby, to enquire as to whether and how they could be allocated a house, as promised, the District Administrator Mr Moyo expressed total surprise and asked them why they were staying there and ordered them to move. They went to inquire about buying a HK house, and were threatened at that point. They were told they should have moved by then. It was made clear they were not supposed to benefit from the houses.

This was at the end of April. This was not the first time that they have been threatened with further removal. At the end of 2005 and again early in 2006 they were warned by a policeman that they should prepare themselves for removal at some point to an unspecified place.

The adults here support themselves by piecework. Some of them are vending in town. One of the men here has formal employment at a furniture company. Others are gold panners within the vicinity.

Some of the families from these tents were reported to us as having been seen back in Killarney, assessing the area and their options of going back. Those in Killarney predict that the Cowdray Park families will in time head back to Killarney.

NGO support: they have been getting food from Churches in Bulawayo, and the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace has been providing school fees and clothing, and health care via the local Catholic parish. There has been no support from UN agencies or any other group. They commented that they had been interviewed by so many people and this had raised their expectations, but had not resulted in anything tangible apart from basic support from the Catholic church.

Situation two

Resettlement area: Matabeleland North

Five families: approx 17 people

Originally from Killarney informal settlement

All of these families are foreign nationals, descended from Malawian or Zambian parents, but themselves born in Zimbabwe. They had never lived in a rural area before, but were forcibly dumped in this resettlement area in July 2005, after being abducted from churches by the police. They were allocated plots by the local community leader, but found themselves in the middle of a difficult land dispute, where the plots they were allocated had been already allocated to others.

In October 2005, the families had reported that they were very unsettled and unhappy about the lack of security of tenure, long distances to the clinic, and lack of resources with which to start building a life for themselves, supposing they got tenure.

Update: June 2006

Eight months later, out of the five families dumped here, only one remains in the resettlement area, and four have returned to Bulawayo. One family is in Mahatshula suburb of Bulawayo, the other three are in Killarney, where they were living before the demolitions.

Why did four out of five families return to Bulawayo?

Four families did eventually get land ownership certificates in the resettlement area, saying that they had security of tenure and owned their homesteads, although for two families this involved one further move within the resettlement area first.

Three families planted crops. The other two families did not even attempt to do this. In April, two of the three families who planted reported they expected reasonable harvests, but the third felt that their harvest would not be more than a few months of food.

The husband in this third family was already back in town and the wife was pregnant. By June, the wife had returned to town too. She reported that they had harvested a few months supply of food. The homestead had been left empty, and we have the impression that this family will not maintain a rural home, but will merely return there from time to time to collect part of their harvest until it is gone. The wife further commented that in their rural area, families are supposed to work on Wednesdays to repair the communal fence around the cropping fields. If you miss this exercise, you are fined \$ 200 (thousand) per week. She is worried that as they have missed this exercise for several months, they may return to find the community demanding a thousand (million) dollars or more from them. This concern is her greatest worry.

She thinks this resettlement set up is too expensive for her and her family and she would rather live somewhere that does not have such fines and communal overheads. Their son who is 8 is now at school in Mahatshula in Bulawayo as the distance to school was too great in the rural areas. It took him all day until sunset to get home from school. She further complained that the shops were too far away in the rural areas.

One of the families who did not even plant is back in Bulawayo at Cement Siding. The husband of this couple has left for South Africa. The wife and their three children share a wooden cabin with her sister with her three kids – and another couple. There are four adults and six children sharing one wooden room!

They came back because they did not plant anything because they had no draught power and no seeds. They also did not have enough money to come into town to collect food from the churches. The school was also too far away for their children to walk. They are now surviving by selling vegetables and milk in their area. They get the milk from people with cows nearby and resell to the community. The only child of school going age is not in school as the school refused to accept her half way through the year, having missed more than a term.

This couple has separated because the husband allegedly ran off with another woman. He went to South Africa in May. He said he could not cope with the demands of life since the demolitions. She has had no word and no money since he left.

The two families with good harvests initially remained in the resettlement area – but by mid-June, it was reported that one of these two families had also returned to Bulawayo.

Summary:

- One family left for town in October owing to the uncertainty over tenure.
- Another family left in March 2006 – the wife went back to Killarney looking for food and a source of income and did not return. The husband followed in April.
- The families had no experience of rural life and did not adjust to the activities needed to plant a harvest. They were born and bred in Bulawayo, and they had no idea how to adjust to rural existence.
- Three out of the four families that returned to Bulawayo say that they were driven back by economic necessity and the lack of food in rural areas.
- Day to day community activities were not to their liking and they did not have the skills needed to survive in a rural context, such as farming skills.
- They could not cover their share of community expenses. For example, all families were asked to contribute cement to the building of a classroom at the school, and they could not afford this. Community leadership fined those who failed to provide cement.
- There was no allowance made at community level for the fact that they were from “Murambatsvina’d” communities and had nothing. In fact, the other families in the resettlement area insisted they sell the blankets they had been given by the churches, so that they could then contribute that money to community overheads. So they arrived with almost nothing and then had to sell the little they had.

Situation three

Rural district, Matabeleland North

One extended family of 4 adults (brothers and their wives) and 6 children

Originally from Ngozi Mine informal settlement

Interviews: bi-monthly since September 2005; most recently mid June 2006

This family was pictured in the last report living on an open veranda in a rural district. They had a three-month-old baby and had lived in seven different places in three months as a result of the demolitions. They had been forcibly relocated to the rural area by the police, being among those abducted from the churches in July 2005.

The authors were in the process of negotiating a permanent place for them in a rural district at the time of writing the last report.

The short life of one child affected by the demolitions

Photo 12:

*Aged 2 weeks: Ngozi Mine, week after OM
June 2005*

Photo 13:

*Aged three months: Tsholotsho, dumped by
police after abduction from churches*

Photo 14:

*Aged 10 months, orphanage:
March 2006 - she died a month later*

Photo 15:

*Her mother died in January 2006
[picture taken in September 05]*

This child, pictured at different points in her short life, was featured in both our previous videos on the demolitions and is part of the family reported on in the third case study in both this and the October report. She lived in no fewer than ten places in her eleven months of life: she was born the week before Ngozi Mine, her first home, was demolished, and never lived one day in a permanent home with her family. She was in an orphanage, following the death of her mother in January 2006, when the third picture was taken. She died aged 11 months, failing to make her first birthday. Her father lives, after one year of displacement – back at Ngozi Mine....

Update: mid June 2006

The mother of the three-month-old child featured in the SPT October report and video, died on 9 January 2006. The baby died in late April – aged less than one year. This little child did not survive one year – she had a short and difficult life, made impossible by demolitions and the continual movement of her family.

The father of this deceased child is himself ill, with suspected TB. He is living back in the rubbish dumps of Ngozi Mine, where his original shack was demolished last June.

Events since October

The original family interviewed, as well as a brother and his family displaced by the demolitions, were accepted into a rural community about 150km from Bulawayo. They were given homestead and cropping space by the local leadership, and the community were prepared to integrate them. The children were registered in the local school and the churches in Bulawayo paid their fees for two terms. The families each managed to erect one small hut before the rains.

However, on visiting in mid-June, the authors established that things had not worked out for these two families. Neither family had grown a reasonable harvest, although one had harvested three bags. Neither family had succeeded in building an additional hut since last year, which is very unusual for a rural area. Families with children do not typically live all in one hut, but will have two or three huts, one being a kitchen.

In June, no adults from either family unit were left in the area; one was deceased and the other three had all gone back to Bulawayo.

There is a surviving son from the Ngozi Mine family, who is eight. He has been taken in by a “grandmother” who is not related. He is the only one still in school in either of these families. However, the school is very far away and there is a good chance that he will drop out of school, and the possibility of him being brought back to Killarney to live with his uncle is being considered.

At the other homestead, neither husband nor wife was present. The wife was said to have left for Bulawayo some time earlier, and her husband had followed her thereafter. Their daughter, aged between twelve and fourteen, who had been enrolled in Grade Seven, was said to be now out of school and living with her boyfriend in Entumbane suburb in Bulawayo. They were said to be “married”. The parents of the girl are reported to feel this relationship is okay, although others are scandalised by what they consider to be statutory rape.

His two school-going children are still enrolled in school, but are not attending. They are living on their own in the rural areas, under supervision of neighbours. The oldest is around twelve, and is supposed to be keeping both homesteads secure.

The other younger children are all out of school as there is no longer money for fees, as the church funds have dried up.

One child was severely burnt three months ago in the rural setting. She burnt her feet in a rubbish pit that had hot coals in it. Her feet are badly burnt and infected. She was admitted to hospital for two months and was discharged before the wounds had healed. The clinic is so far from the rural home, at least 20 km, so the wounds received no medical care after discharge and were in a very bad state by mid June.

At Killarney in Bulawayo the authors located the husband and wife. They are brewing beer to make a living. The wife visits a butchery in town and cleans the sanitary lane, in exchange for condemned meat off cuts. Back in Killarney she sells these to the rest of the community, either fresh or dried.

They are basically doing any kind of piecework to survive. They seem to intend to commute from Killarney to their rural home, but are clearly establishing a substantial shack in Killarney. They have a licence of ownership on their homestead in the rural areas, which they paid Z\$ 400 (thousand) for. Our perception is that they are investing most in being back in Killarney, but will keep one foot in the rural areas for a while at least.

Summary:

These two related family units have fared poorly over the last year. They appear to have disintegrated, with one parent and one child having died, and only one of the children still attending school. Three of the children appear to have been left to fend for themselves as the parents have returned to Bulawayo in search of income and food. Concern must be expressed about the young girl who is certainly under the age of sixteen and who is referred to now as “married” and back in Bulawayo. Both rural homesteads have degenerated during the last six months; the single huts give off a clear air of neglect. No time or interest has been invested in these rural homes. It is apparent that these families do not intend to build a long-term future for themselves in rural Zimbabwe, and have taken themselves back to the urban context. It is also apparent that both families are dealing with multiple crises of poverty, family disintegration and poor health. Now that the churches are no longer paying school fees, they are receiving no help from anyone.

Situation four:

Bulawayo urban:

15 year old girl

originally from three roomed house: displaced when landlord’s relatives displaced.

This girl had the terrible experience of being raped as a result of being stranded in a bus station without money to get home to her rural area, after she was displaced as an unaccompanied minor from her backyard shelter by the demolitions. She was kept for three days in a police station after reporting the rape, because the police did not know where to send her. She was then given the bus fare to go home by the churches.

Update: one year later, July 2006

When asked in July 2006, the police reported that they did not ever apprehend the rapist although his identity was known. They have done nothing to pursue the case. Nothing is known about the whereabouts of the girl: she is assumed to be still in her rural home of Nkayi.

Situation five:

Rural district, Matabeleland North**2 women, a mother in her 70s and her daughter in her 50s, both widows****Originally from Killarney informal settlement**

In October, the older widow was in a state of deep mourning, having had to cope with her dying daughter throughout the process of displacement and dumping. She had had to nurse and then bury her daughter in this strange community. She was left raising two grandchildren aged 8 and 13. Her daughter (interviewee two), also a widow supporting a child, had been battling to establish a homestead in another part of the same district, and had been offered two derelict huts.

Update June 2006

Interviewee one: the elderly mother now has a stand on which to build her own homestead, and she has a piece of land to cultivate her own crops. However, as an old woman on her own, she has no resources whatsoever to develop the plots at this time. She cannot chop down trees or cut thatching at her age. She cannot build a fence around a field, or plough or plant it all on her own, and has no resources to hire labour.

She has maize seed from the churches, which she could not plant in this last season, as she had no land or capacity to plant at that time. She has received no assistance from any other group. She has been finding piece jobs in the rural areas to earn some mealie-meal or other basic supplies.

This old lady is now effectively cheap labour to the community, who will weed or do other tasks in return for a meal. She has been living in the homestead of another old lady who is a relative. The two grandchildren she inherited when her daughter died she has had to send away, as she could not look after them. The thirteen-year-old grandson has gone to live with his aunt, interviewee two, living in another part of the district. He is not going to school for economic reasons. The eight-year-old granddaughter has been sent to relatives in some other district – she is also out of school.

Interviewee two: she is the daughter of the other widow and is herself a widow. During the 2005/6 season, she did manage to cultivate some crops but they were entirely destroyed by cattle, as she had no fence around the field. She had no resources to build one before she planted. She will harvest nothing. Life is very tough for her, as she has no regular source of income. She has also resorted to being cheap labour to the neighbours. Her fourteen-year-old granddaughter has returned to Killarney to live with family members there. They have had no help or support from anyone, they have no relatives who are capable of taking care of them.

They do not have the energy or the courage to return to town at this stage. The experience of the demolitions and then being dumped in this district was very traumatic and they are afraid that if they go back to town, they risk a repeat of this experience. At their ages, they feel they cannot survive going through this again. However they are not happy and are not coping. They are appealing for assistance, as they cannot survive where they are.

Situation Six

Rural district, Matabeleland South

Informal mining settlement deep in the bush

7 interviewees

Originally from Bulawayo back yard structures

Re-interviewed, March 2006

Note: there are literally scores of informal mining settlements across Matabeleland, and these have become home to unknown numbers of those forced out of the towns

In September 2005, interviews were conducted in this mining settlement with 6 women and 1 man displaced from Bulawayo when their back yard structures were demolished. Two of the women reported that they had been among those forcibly rounded up in the city by police, prior to the visit of the UN envoy to Bulawayo. They were arbitrarily dumped in a rural town around 120 km away, and had no previous links to this area. All those interviewed indicated that they made their way to this mining settlement deep in the bush in the hope of income generation. Some of the women were making money from prostitution, and others by vending. The man was gold mining. Life was very tough and the police often raided looting all their gold, money, and vending wares.

Update, March 2006

Shortly after we conducted interviews here in 2005, the entire settlement was razed to the ground by the police. This was around November 2005. The entire make-shift camp (as pictured on the front of the last report) was burnt to the ground in the presence of the people living there: they lost all their possessions. Everyone was rounded up and taken to the police station where they were forced to pay fines for illegal activities.

After coming back from paying fines, the community decided to relocate further into the thicket along the river. They were very concerned about not being razed again, and so they did not settle as a cohesive mining camp this time. They have separated their shacks, scattering in the bush so that they are really hidden. Even if the police come they are unlikely to identify more than a few shacks at one time.

The miners have managed to avoid being re-raided by the police with this new arrangement. They now only come together for mining activities and do not live as one community. They are scared of visitors, and we can confirm they are really well hidden – it took the interviewers some time to find anyone from the old settlement. By randomly following little trails through the thicket for some time, the authors eventually found some of the miners. They were reluctant to talk at first but eventually accepted the interviewers were not police.

In the original visit, six women and one man were identified as being displaced from back yard structures during OM. **Of these seven, only two are now left.** The other five have relocated. One of the six women is left (photo 16 in last report, and in this one). She is now living with a man who is one of the miners. She looks thin and very unwell. She is now assisting the panners, and is no longer vending.

The other five women moved after the settlement was burnt, to a different mine altogether. It was claimed that business at this other mine was better for vendors and women prostitutes. With the new dispersement of people over a wide area, it was hard to find customers.

The Bulawayo man who was interviewed in September is still there. Life is worse for him now than when they lived more as a community. They were yielding better gold where they used to be: they are more or less still prospecting and trying to find a good site where they are now. The gold buyers also cannot easily find them now, so life is generally much deteriorated. There used to be radios and dancing and socialising in the previous camp, now people live in hiding and do not get together in this way.

Photo 16: Home for two, Matabeleland South mining community

Situation seven

Rural district in the Midlands

Family of husband, wife and seven children

Originally from Porta Farm near Harare

Interviewed mid June 2006

This family with seven children had lived at Porta Farm, outside Harare, for many years prior to the total demolition of this settlement in June 2006. They lost a four bedroomed home, the wife's shop, and the husband's surgery where he practised as a traditional healer. They were forcibly taken first to Caledonia Farm and then by police trucks to Masvingo, and from there had to make their own way to the Midlands district where they had rural extended families. In September last year, they were very angry about what had happened to them, but felt they had no option but to now stay where they were and try to rebuild their lives. They had been given a derelict homestead by their family.

Update, mid June 2006

The old homestead they were given is still derelict, and the family has not been staying there. The husband is living with his mother in law, which is in the same village as the old homestead. The wife is living ten kilometres away from this village, running a shop. Two children are with her, the youngest and one child in Grade two, who is in school. The school is very near to the mother. Three older children are staying with their father. **None of them are in school.** The nearest school is 5 km away, and it is not clear why they are not in school as the family seems to

be doing well enough financially to pay fees. The two elder children who were left behind in Harare are still there, but the family is not clear how they are faring or whether they are in school or not. Communication is apparently very difficult between them.

The store, run by the wife, is well stocked and they appear to be making a reasonable living from it. However the store needs a ceiling because the health inspectors said it was needed and this they say they cannot afford to put in. The father is practising his traditional medicine and has fee-paying clients. He has taken on two apprentices. They seem to have had a reasonable harvest.

The family is considering purchasing an established homestead from the widow of their late brother. This is a very nice homestead with three huts and a roofed summerhouse. There is a need to clear the front yard and do some renovation, but it is structurally sound, with doors and windowpanes. It is fenced and has a field that is also fenced.

The relations within the family are sorely tried however. The husband is very stressed about the fact that he and his mother-in-law are not getting on well, which is why he needs to buy another homestead and move. She feels he is not doing much for the family and all the money-generating is being done by her daughter, his wife. He says that he is doing more than his mother-in-law realises, as he is the one organising stock for the store.

Although the couple were used to living in one house in Porta Farm and now live ten kilometres apart, they are managing to maintain their marriage. The wife thinks that everything is fine, except they need more money to renovate the shop and homestead. They are not thinking of going back to Harare as they have decided to try and establish themselves where they are.

This family is what could be referred to as a rare success story. In the last year since losing everything in the demolitions, they have made a new start and are looking ahead. They are obviously a highly competent couple who were successful in Porta Farm, and who have taken their survival skills and competence with them back to their rural area, where they have a family with resources to supplement them while they get established.

Situation eight

Ngozi Mine: informal settlement razed to the ground in June 2005 Around 400 settlers lived here at that time

In the last report, there were interviews with several settlers from this area who were assaulted by soldiers during OM. Everyone in this area lost all their possessions. Ngozi Mine is close to the municipal rubbish dumps, and people in the vicinity often scavenged from the dumps as a way of surviving. People living here are among Bulawayo's poorest and most vulnerable.

Update, July 2006 [see front cover photo]

This informal settlement is slowly rebuilding itself. However the community remains very afraid of strangers and very hesitant to talk to outsiders. People when asked, all profess not to be actually living there, but to be just passing through. Over some weeks of observation and interaction, the authors have noted that in fact there are many people who scavenge off the dumps by day but do not live there, and there are others who are in fact living there.

Approximately 40 shelters have been erected, and more than 200 people sleep here at night, in appalling conditions.

We recognise among those now living there, some individuals and families that we observed being displaced last year: because of the shifting nature of people here, it has not been possible to derive exact numbers of residents or to decide how many are new and how many are returnees. One of the individuals living back here is the father from Case study three.

The general living conditions of people and the opportunities for earning a living here are dire.

Situation nine

Victoria Falls

An estimated 60,000 displaced when suburbs were razed

Six families interviewed, Victoria Falls:

20 heads of families interviewed, Lupane:

Interviews in April and May 2006

In terms of percentage of town demolished, Victoria Falls was one of the worst affected areas in the country. The UN refers to 64% of dwellings being demolished during OM.

The authors visited Victoria Falls in April and in May 2006, for a general overview of current living conditions for those displaced. We visited an informal settlement called 'Mfelandawunye' (we have to die together), which is a building cooperative consisting of hundreds of families. It has existed since way back before the demolitions. Most people had not developed their stands here prior to OM, but when the other houses they were living in elsewhere in Victoria Falls were demolished, they then erected shacks on their pre-allocated stands. The stands are therefore legally theirs since way back, but the dwellings now being erected are illegal. The shacks are around 3 feet in height, with low walls of cement bricks with asbestos sheets on top. They have been kept low so as not to draw official attention. These dwellings have no water or sanitation and families here have to depend on water from neighbouring structures completed years ago in the same area.

Some who did not have stands, are occupying shell-houses that are being built to plan but are incomplete. These housing shells are **not** part of OG/HK, but were partially constructed years before the demolitions, by members of this co-operative.

Shell-house communities

Living conditions in these shell-houses are astonishing to observe. Each shell-house consists of only walls, no floors or roof, no electricity, sanitation or water. But each shell has effectively become the location of a small settlement, as families erect shelters within the outer walls of the shells (see photos). More than one family may erect a shelter of corrugated iron and plastic within each room of a shell-house, so that five or six families live in one incomplete building. The shell thus provides some form of protection from the wind, as well as some form of legitimacy and protection from officials: the inner shacks within each shell are not that visible from outside. As these sites are clearly under construction in any case, nobody is paying much attention to the shambolic interior living conditions.

We conducted consecutive interviews with families living in one such shell-house community. *There were five families living here in April when we first interviewed them; a sixth family had*

*moved in by May. **Twenty-three people** are living in this one incomplete, three-roomed house.* The house has concrete brick walls but no floor and no roof. There are no windowpanes and no electricity, water, or sanitation. The house shell is owned by a Victoria Falls resident who has an alternative shelter. He charges them rent to occupy small spaces within the shell. In May the rent was \$ 300(000) per family. Each family has built a remarkable shack of corrugated iron and plastic sheets inside the house.

Living conditions are squalid and there is insufficient food for the children. The families all have to scavenge for water and find bathing a problem, as with twenty-three people in one small space, there is no privacy for washing. **The children are all out of school**, and nobody is employed except for one woman working as a domestic worker.

One man interviewed in this house indicated that after the displacements, he went to the rural district of Lupane, but he has returned from Lupane because living conditions in the rural area were impossible. He was supposed to stay with an uncle who himself was living in a tiny wooden cabin. He had to sleep outside. So, grim though the situation is in this shell-house in Victoria Falls, it is better than his rural option. In May when he was re-interviewed, he had sent for his wife and newly born child from Lupane and they had now built their own shack inside the house shell and were living there.

Three of these six families had been initially displaced into rural areas by the demolitions, and had then come back to town because it was impossible to survive in their rural homes. People survive at the most basic level by finding casual jobs, and it is easier to find such work in Victoria Falls than in rural areas.

Victoria Falls displaced interviewed in Lupane

Ten families were interviewed in Lupane in January. They had been displaced by OM from Victoria Falls to Lupane, a rural area about two hundred kilometres away. A follow up visit was made by the authors in May. *We established that five of these ten families were no longer there, but had returned to Victoria Falls.* In some cases, parents had left dependants in Lupane but had themselves gone to find work in Victoria Falls. It was explained to the authors that people had moved back to the town because life was not bearable in the rural areas.

On the May visit, six families were interviewed whom we had not met in January, but who had also relocated to Lupane after OM: they referred anecdotally to many other families that they knew, who had returned to Victoria Falls within the last few months after failing to make a living in rural Lupane.

The churches in Victoria Falls do not still have an active programme for OM victims. They have no access to food schemes or any other assistance. Not a single interviewee reported having received any assistance whatsoever since the time of the demolitions. In fact some interviewees were aggressive and said they did not want to be interviewed by people who then went away and offered no help.

Situation ten

Two year old boy: disabled after feet burnt during “Murambatsvina”

Victoria Falls

Incident on 2 June

Interviewed repeatedly during 2006, up to June

This child had suffered horrific burns to his feet, in particular his right foot, after wandering into the smouldering ruins of a row of houses that had been torched by police during OM. His foot was still bleeding and he was unable to walk three months after the incident. The mother was battling to find accessible, affordable health care for her child.

Update June 2006

The authors had organised access to a surgeon and a health programme for this child. He has made good progress in the last six months. The toes on his right foot had been completely dislocated as a result of the burns – this can be seen in the photograph, where the toes appear as strange appendages on top of the foot. The surgeon recommended amputation of all the toes once the foot was sufficiently healed.

In May 2006, the amputation of all the toes on his right foot took place. Prior to amputation, the child had healed sufficiently well to walk and play but could not wear a shoe as his foot was deformed, especially by the toes in a row on top. His peers are very empathetic and protective of him, and socially he seemed to have adjusted well to his situation.

The family is still based in Victoria Falls, where the father of the child is a curio seller. They do not have permanent lodgings.

Photos 17 and 18: Twenty three people live in 6 shacks built inside one semi-constructed house in Victoria Falls: no roof, floors or services.

The way forward

- **Shelter for the displaced: United Nations and**
- **International Organisation for Migration (IOM)**

Photo 19: Hatcliffe shack, July 2006

1. Shelter for the displaced:

United Nations and International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

Many of the worst fears of the government driven OGHK housing programme have been realised. The scheme has failed to deliver; it has been confirmed to be no more than a hasty cover up by government once it realised that the demolitions had drawn the ire of the international community. Many of the few houses built have become, as predicted, part of the ZANU PF patronage system.

However, it is alarming to note that no other group in Zimbabwe, including the United Nations and other international donor agencies, have fared any better in providing relief to IDPs. When the UN report was released in July last year, with excellent recommendations and offers of support to the displaced, Zimbabweans were full of hope that by now, one year on, much would have been done to alleviate the suffering of those left destitute by the demolitions.

Yet interviews with agencies in Harare confirm that in the last year, only **eight hundred** temporary shelters have been provided by the international community via their main delivery agency, IOM.¹⁰⁸ These shelters, with white canvas sides, tin roofs and some with concrete slabs, were built very recently by IOM for some of the displaced in Hopley and Hatcliffe in the Harare area.

Effectively, in the entire of the four provinces on which this report is focused, not one single dwelling has been provided for a single displaced family! This is shocking.¹⁰⁹

Reasons for international inaction

The UN cannot unilaterally insist on any provision of humanitarian support in any nation: support has to be part of bilateral agreements with the government of the recipient nation. The last year has seen a prolonged and difficult stand off between the Zimbabwean government and the international community in terms of what should be done about the displaced. This is not a new stand off – the previous report by ourselves discussed in some detail the background to the government's reluctance to accept donor aid, whether for food or for anything else: this is linked to their resentment of international criticism of their human rights record, international targeted sanctions against the Zimbabwean leadership, and their propaganda position that the British and USA in particular have an agenda of "recolonisation", and that aid is a means of promoting this.

The government has publicly never admitted that OM was a disaster of its own engineering and that those behind it have committed criminal offences for which they should be prosecuted. To continue to deny the scale of the humanitarian crisis on the one hand, and to allow the construction of thousands of temporary dwellings on the other, would be clearly contradictory.

¹⁰⁸ Much of the information in this section of the report comes from discussions with IOM and with personnel from the OCHA office of the UN in Harare, in July 2006.

¹⁰⁹ The churches in Matabeleland did try and provide thatch and doors for a few score of families forcibly dumped in rural areas by police last year, so that they could build their own homes, and the churches in Manicaland have provided basic support to 13, 000 displaced, but this can hardly be equated with supplying housing. The UN has, through the WFP, IOM and other channels, provided food and blankets to the displaced, reaching around 25,000 families in this way. While this has been vital support, decent shelter is also vital. IOM has stated its intention to build temporary structures in Victoria Falls shortly, but so far this has not been done.

IOM camp, Headlands

In the months immediately after the demolitions, IOM did construct a tented camp at Headlands, outside of Harare, and several hundred people were accommodated there. However, a few weeks later, the entire camp was dismantled in the middle of the night by the police, IDPs were forced onto trucks and dumped elsewhere. The official reason, from President Robert Mugabe himself – “We are not tents people”.¹¹⁰ The government accused the international community of trying to create an impression of desperation and of implying that government was not capable of meeting housing needs, by putting people in tents.

The authors were informed that within days of this happening, scores of tents that had been flown to Zimbabwe for emergency accommodation by one international donor, were flown out and taken to Pakistan where the government was appealing for aid for earthquake victims. This act expresses clearly the frustration felt by those who would help, and whose help was being refused or slapped back. And those who really paid the price, the IDPs, were left in the rain.

Obstruction of access to the displaced

The government has routinely refused access to the displaced, particularly in the temporary camp at Hopley Farm near Harare. This issue has been recorded in detail in other reports, but has not been that relevant since January 2006 in the four provinces under focus here.¹¹¹ This is mainly owing to the fact that the displaced in Bulawayo were forcibly spread around rural areas by police in July last year, since when there has been little official interest in them.

The UN model house

UN emergency relief coordinator Jan Egeland commented after his visit in December: “The UN could have done more if there were good working conditions....Government should remove bureaucracy. They should let us help their people.”¹¹²

Within a fortnight of Egeland’s comment, his concerns were aptly illustrated. A row broke out between the government and the UN over the provision of temporary houses at Hopley Farm by the UN. The Minister of Local Government, Ignatius Chombo, accused the UN of constructing a temporary model that was “substandard and a mockery to Africans”. He said the house was “below human dignity and built by people guided by a this-is-good-enough-for-Africans attitude.”¹¹³

The UN Resident Representative and Humanitarian Coordinator, Dr Agostino Zacarias, categorically refuted Chombo’s position, and pointed out that the UN had never undertaken to build permanent housing for the displaced; bearing in mind that the government refused to accept tents, and that the UN had finite resources, this model was a compromise to get people out of the rain as fast as possible. The house design was reached after protracted discussions between the UN and government, and was in fact a model agreed to by both parties, as a response to government’s refusal to allow tents for IDPs. The house was built of bricks and asbestos roofing, and was designed to be a “transitional or temporary home”, which beneficiaries could in due course enlarge into a more permanent dwelling.

¹¹⁰ Cited in *Zimbabwe Independent*, 6 January 2006: “UN house-model feud exposes ZANU PF ploy”.

¹¹¹ See reports by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and statements by Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights during 2006, for more on obstruction of access at Hopley Farm and elsewhere.

¹¹² *Zimbabwe Independent*, 9 December 2005: “Egeland endorses Tibaijuka report”.

¹¹³ *Zimbabwe Independent*, 23 December 2005: “UN rep slams Chombo over houses”.

The mid term 2006 CAP for Zimbabwe indicates the intention of the UN to fundraise to build 23,000 shelters this year. With only 4% built to date, this target will clearly not be reached this year, but it is to be hoped that the UN and government will find an acceptable way forward on the types of structures to be built.

Lack of tenure: will IDPs retain ownership of any houses built by donors?

Concerns were voiced at the time of the UN house feud and since, both within the donor communities and in the broader Zimbabwean context, that the reason Chombo wanted permanent housing to be built by the UN was that government did not intend UN housing to be ultimately for the very poor - for whom ZANU PF has shown ample contempt in recent years - but saw it as part of the ZANU PF patronage system of the near future.¹¹⁴

As this report has shown, the allocation of the very houses built by government in the name of its own OGHK programme, have illustrated graphically that government officials assume the right to subvert every resource in Zimbabwe at this time to their own local patronage systems. There was – and remains – a very serious doubt about the likelihood of any shelter given to IDPs remaining in their hands if government decides it is good enough to house the army, police and CIO.

There is an understandable reluctance on the part of donors to be persuaded into providing permanent structures that might be attractive enough to be desirable to the armed forces or others whom government have to keep happy in this collapsing nation.

What can be done?

The above doubts notwithstanding, the authors were heartened to hear in Harare that some in the international donor community were nonetheless prepared to consider the possibility of donating towards permanent housing construction. The authors share the concerns that many have on security of tenure for such housing, but nonetheless agree with those who are beginning to say that permanent housing is the only solution at this time, considering the scale of humanitarian suffering, and the economic prospects of people providing their own housing to recover what has been destroyed.

Both the IOM and the OCHA office of the UN appear to be in favour of building more permanent structures, or temporary dwellings with materials that recipients could upgrade over time. Both offices express a willingness to do battle with officials over tenure in relation to structures financed through them. Both believe that there has been a shift towards a willingness, by some government officials at least, to cooperate on issues of humanitarian relief. The OCHA office reports that some government officials are identifying high need areas around Zimbabwe and are asking for specific urgent help in relieving the humanitarian situations here. These regions include Masvingo and parts of Matabeleland South, where harvests have been poor again this year.

While building permanent dwellings may seem risky, what humane alternative is there? Those who favour continued inaction should consider living for a week or two at Hopley Farm, or in Killarney in Bulawayo. They should consider living in 1 square meter of space in a high density house with 18 others in the suburbs of Bulawayo, as illustrated in this report. The conditions of

¹¹⁴ Many people interviewed have expressed this view: this concern is also voiced in *Zimbabwe Independent*, 6 January 2006, op cit.

living for hundreds of thousands of Zimbabweans are deplorable, and if new housing schemes are not developed, will only deteriorate over the next twelve months.

Way forward

Certain city councils, such as those in Bulawayo and Gwanda, have shown themselves to be able to withstand attempts at corrupt allocation of permanent structures built under OGHK.¹¹⁵ These councils appear to be organised and ready to implement substantial building schemes at a moment's notice. The only problem is funds. The Bulawayo council indicated that they have building brigades already in place capable of building 50 houses a week – this output could be doubled if funds were made available.

Photo 20: Hopley Farm, July 2006.

¹¹⁵ In Harare, prosecutions of those involved in fraudulent allocations are currently under way, although apparently too late to reverse the existing allocations: *Zimbabwejournalists.com*, 15 August 2006.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE [used in survey of two suburbs in Bulawayo]

1. Have one or several buildings been destroyed on this residential stand? Yes/No
No. of destroyed buildings _____
(if more than 1, fill in a separate questionnaire for each building, mark a), b), c), and pin these questionnaires together)
2. How many rooms did the destroyed building have? _____
Description (quality, size in sqm, function; water?; electricity?; toilet?) _____

Erected in _____
3. No. of people who used to live in this building before destruction _____
Demographic details (age, sex, marital status, other) _____

4. Where did these inhabitants move to after the destruction?
 - a. Away from this residential stand Yes/No
(if Yes, get details of where inhabitants moved to, follow up, and continue questionnaire there, starting with # 5.)

New address: _____

- b. To other building on same residential stand Yes/No

Continue recording at old site, if displaced people remained; continue recording at new site, if they moved; record influx to old or new site from ELSEWHERE as well

5. Description of buildings on stand, as of now (quality, size in sqm, function; water?; electricity?; toilet?; original/present no. of inhabitants): _____

6. Which room(s) do the displaced people occupy now?
Description (quality, size in sqm, previous function; water?; electricity?; toilet?)

7. Way of making a living before and after destruction: _____

8. School attendance before and after destruction: _____

9. Health care before and after destruction: _____

10. Any (other) disruptions – social, spiritual, etc. – as a result of the destruction/
displacement? _____

11. If displaced people were one family: did family remain united? Yes/No
12. If ‘No’, who was separated from family? _____
13. Where does this family member stay now? (specify income, school, health care as
applicable; follow up?) _____

Date _____

Source(s) of information _____

(circle ‘anonymous’ if informant does not want to identify her/himself)

(use blank sheets of paper to record answers to qualitative questions that could not be
accommodated on lines below the question; e.g., record as ‘6, continued:’)

