

HOPLEY FARM RESIDENTS

A life without Dignity



*A visit to Hopley Farm by the Zimbabwe Lawyers
for Human Rights(ZLHR) on
2 August 2006*

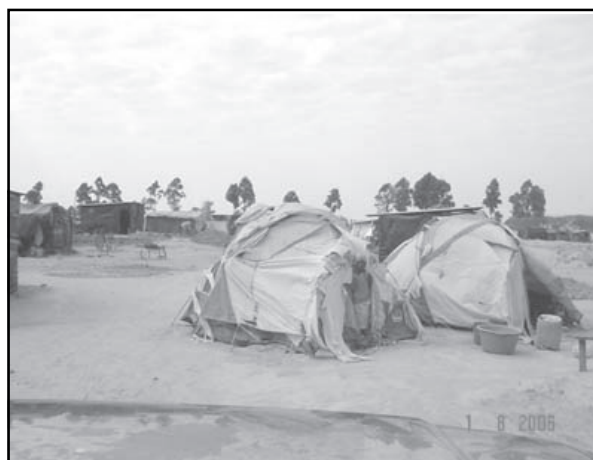
Situational Human Rights Training and Visit Hopley Farm

On Tuesday the 1st of August 2006, Mr Otto Saki, Mr Zvikomborero Chadambuka of Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights and Mr Cledwin Dzinamarira of the Law Society of Zimbabwe went to assess the human rights situation and distribution of stands at Hopley Farm. The stand sizes are approximately 20m x 40m; in most cases there is clearly inadequate spacing for roads or any other infrastructure, particularly in the area allocated to people evicted from Tsiga grounds (Mbare), compounded by the fact that the area is yet to be fully serviced with basic amenities, residents depend mainly on borehole for drinking water, pit latrines and the nearby bush.. One of the residents Mr. Ashtony Shumba (committee member of the residents association and active member of ZimRights) took us to his residence and showed us the living conditions there. Mr. Shumba informed us of problems they are encountering including but not limited to food shortages, ill-treatment from welfare officers, alleged politicisation of food aid, concomitant illnesses as a result of dust and other unsanitary circumstances. Ashton Shumba in front of his house a 1 year 2 months after being evicted from Porta Farm



Mr Ashtony Shumba in front of his shack, a year after being evicted from Porta Farm

The sanitation at Hopley Farm is in a sorry state, at the time of visit an unidentified voluntary organisation was setting up sewer reticulation drainage. Allegations of stands being sold at close to market rates were received with profound allegations pointing to the Welfare officer at Hopley Farm being key in such corrupt practices. The residents raised concerns over the right of their children in particular to education and health. The area has been divided into Zones, vis a viz : Zone 1, 2 and 3. The majority of the former Porta Farm residents in excess of 300 have been allocated stands and living in plastic shacks since June 2005 and are in Zone 2 and 3



The shacks in which residents of Hopley are staying

Over 242¹ former residents of Tsiga are yet to be allocated stands, a crowd gathered around to hear our views on their current conditions from a human rights perspective and situational human rights awareness

Currently the residents are staying in plastic shacks. None of the completed houses have been given to any of the intended beneficiaries but instead, these have gone to senior army, state security and city council officials. The people have been told by Mpande (Social Welfare Officer) and the ZANU(PF) ruling party chairman, one, Masendo that there is a list of ruling party supporters and they will not get a stand until all the ZANU (PF) supporters have stands. On several occasions, the residents informed the lawyers that local authorities have reported that they do not recognise them, resulting in them being expected to pay twice the usual rates in burial fees; they are facing complications when burying fellow residents. This problem had occurred in the burial of a child on the 30th of July 2006; the child had to be carried to Porta farm by a well-wisher's benevolence and was buried there².



Mr Otto Saki, ZLHR Projects Lawyer addressing Hopley residents

On this day, Ms Zvikomborero Mashonganyika called the residents who gathered and were introduced to the lawyers. Mr Shumba and Ms Mashonganyika then further addressed the persons with Ms Mashonganyika informing them that they should state their problems without fear. Mr Otto Saki then addressed the gathered residents. Mr. Saki made a brief introduction on what ZLHR and LSZ stand for. A brief introduction on human rights ensued with a deliberate focus on social economic rights, the dignity of a person, cruel and inhumane degrading treatment and torture. Emphasis was made that these rights are not a creation of the west or a privilege from a government or political party as Zimbabweans have been meant to believe through propaganda. Cases which have been brought before the courts were discussed briefly and the cases that have been taken to the supra national bodies after the realisation of the ineffectiveness of the local courts in addressing the plight of victims of forced evictions. He also informed them that as people, they were not and should not imagine themselves unworthy and forgotten, but should remember that they had rights and should have no fear in demanding their enforcement. He further clarified that ZLHR could help them in many challenges linked to their desire for stands and was doing so.

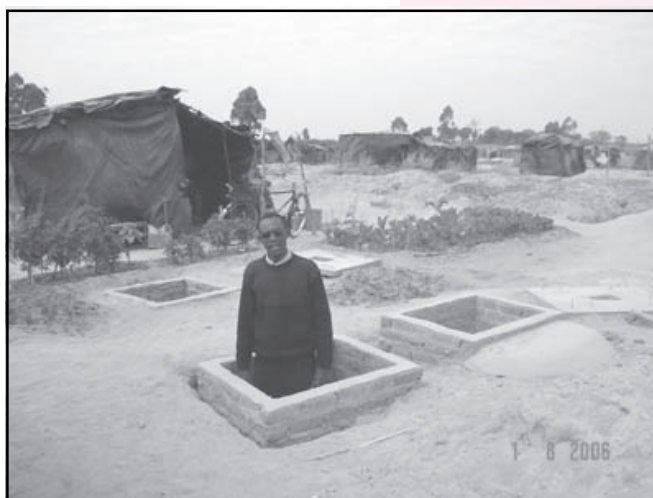


Participants asking questions to lawyers in attendance

During the question and answer session, the residents were concerned that they would easily be divided into various local

authority jurisdictions which authorities would be used to evict them and turn them against each other, stating that this knowledge was derived from their experience at Porta Farm and also in light of the coming urban council elections. Most of the residents raised concerns over the role of Mpande and his shenanigans in the allocation of stands. Another issue which was a clear source of consternation was that there was no clarity as to who was in charge at Hopley with people being informed that if they wanted stands they had to see the City council, who will in turn direct them to the Governor, from there to the Ministry of Local Government, from there to the MP in a merry go round scenario. This in our view is an attempt to avoid liability in instances of court action.

Hopley In Pictures



Otto Saki (Projects Lawyer ZLHR) in pit latrine measuring 1 metre x 1 metre meant for each residential stand. Most of the toilets are incomplete and residents are having to share.



A mother and her children at Hopley



Part of the residents that attended the situational human rights awareness at Hopley Farm shown here dispersing after the meeting

(Footnotes)

¹ ZLHR

brought an urgent application before the High Court on behalf of the residents and they were moved in the middle of the night by Harare City Council trucks, more information on the case can be provided upon request from osaki@zlhr.org.zw or zviko@zlhr.org.zw