



Majubeki Report:

Housing Crisis-

The

Weak Suffer in Silence

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1. OBJECTIVE OF REPORT:

- a. To expose the levels of corruption by identified council officials
- b. To highlight the plight of Majubeki Lines in Mbare
- c. To recommend ways to address the challenges facing the residents.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Harare Residents Trust (HRT) undertook this tour on Friday 23 August and Saturday 24 August 2010. The HRT has constantly received reports from the residents concerning various aspects of their living conditions. In response the HRT has registered significant successes. Residents' programmes have been

built around residents' capacity to unpack local government legislation, policies, and local authorities' policies, regulations and by-laws. Corrupt practices by elected Councillors and City employees have been exposed and will continue to be exposed through parliamentary advocacy, stakeholder engagement and through the media.

The crisis of accommodation in Harare has created a lucrative opportunity for City employees in the City's Housing and Community Services department to exploit the poor and vulnerable members of society. This has been a serious concern of residents in suburbs where hundreds of residents are living in the so-called "rented accommodation".

This report details how bona fide dependants and relatives of deceased owners have been haunted out of their family houses in Mbare's Majubeki Lines of Ward 3. The houses in this area were built in the early 1940s. The majority of the citizens living in the area remain hopeful that one day they would secure title deeds to their houses. However the city of Harare, through the Department of Housing and Community Services has constantly threatened residents with eviction whenever they demand ownership to their dwellings, which the residents insist are on home ownership. But the city claims that the houses belong to them.

This scenario has created intense acrimony between the city and the residents in Majubeki. What has become very clear is that the City of Harare lacks a clearly defined housing policy that can reduce the challenges of overpopulation. The expectations of the residents remain unmet over home ownership.

In this report, the HRT exposes how politicians in ZANU PF and MDC-T, in cahoots with named city employees at Remembrance District Office have caused the displacement of innocent residents from their houses. The victims have named some of the politicians as chief actors in the ongoing accommodation scandal that has left some orphans without shelter. Others now live in constant fear of being evicted because they have failed to pay the demanded bribes.

Suspended Ward 3 Councillor Paul Gorekore faces serious allegations of corruption involving residents' houses in Majubeki, market allocations and other issues related to housing cooperatives. Bridget Mandizha an Allocations Manager, Mrs. Tembo, Mr Chipaga and other identified workers at the Remembrance District office have allegedly created a well refined syndicate of repossessing residents' houses working in close cooperation with identified politicians.

This report also explores the trends in the allocations of new markets and the link that exists between meter readers from Harare Water and the Department of Housing and Community Services. Emphasis in this report would be put on what is happening in the allocation of houses, repossessions, acquisition of title deeds and the roles of policy makers and city employees in Majubeki.

The contents of this report are supposed to be the basis for a thorough investigation by the City of Harare and other authorities. Recommendations made in this report are meant to address the policy deficiencies and they have to be taken seriously by the City of Harare, Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development, the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Local Government and the District Officers. Residents expect stern and deterrent measures against those implicated in this report.

5. **TOUR DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

During the tour, the HRT observed the status of the houses and the living conditions of the tenants. Interviews were conducted with residents, cognisant of the fact that Majubeki remains one of the least developed places in Mbare. Discussions were held with members of the residents' leadership in Majubeki. Some City of Harare employees were interviewed before, during and after the tour.

6. **LIVING CONDITIONS IN THE MAJUBEKI LINES:**

a. **Background of Majubeki:**

The planners intended that the working population starts living in the hostels as singles, where four males would share a room. Once these men decided to have a family, they were systematically moved to the Majubeki Lines, where the then Salisbury Municipality built 81-four roomed houses to accommodate four families, one in each room. This would translate to 324 residents. However an average family has four people, meaning

there are approximately 1 300 people living in Majubeki today. The first inhabitants who lived in the area were married people with small families.

According to senior citizens within the suburb, everyone in the area would be on the waiting list, anticipating to be allocated a house in Mbare National. Citizens of Majubeki have remained subject to easy political manipulation due to their unresolved ownership status. This has left most of them at the mercy of manipulative politicians and city officials who force them to comply with mostly unreasonable and unjustified demands. They remain vulnerable. Action must be taken now to save them from further humiliation and threats. They are humans and deserve equal treatment at law.

b. Situation as Explained by Residents:

Allegations against Ward 3 Councillor Paul Gorekore:

- The residents feel strongly that they have no representation at council level, making them vulnerable to constant abuse and threats by municipal employees and politicians. The residents feel short-changed by their Councillor. From their view, they hoped he would understand their problems since he has lived in Mbare before. The assumption was based on the background of Gorekore who is believed to have been brought up in a family house in Mbare, Tagarika Flats, and lately in Muchirahondo Street, where he grew to be a vendor before getting elected as a councillor. Since his election and subsequent installation as councillor in July 2008, the Councillor has allegedly held one public meeting, sometime in mid-2009, depriving the residents of an opportunity to receive the much-needed feedback from a publicly elected official.
- The Councillor allegedly established Hatineti Cooperative promising to assist residents to secure flea market tables in front of OK Supermarket Mbare. Due to this so-called promise, each person allegedly paid US\$12 for 150 tables. Nothing materialised. Each person who applied reportedly paid US\$10 for fingerprint vetting to the Councillor who in turn sent MDC-T Chairman for Takunda Branch, Jackie Jonasi who paid US\$2 at Morris Depot in February 2009, pocketing the difference of US\$8 per copy.
- The Councillor allegedly also collected waiting list forms, sold them for US\$2 to prospective home seekers, Matererini Flats forms sold by Marlon Williams, the MDC-T Secretary at Matererini flats.
- According to the residents, this was not the only person who sold the forms but the majority of the councillors in the City of Harare.

Issues Raised Against City Employees at Remembrance District Office:

- In separate interviews residents alleged that city employees in the allocations department worked closely with identified political leaders to facilitate the transfer of houses, and the subsequent eviction of the victims. A Mrs Tembo, said to be an allocation officer responsible for flats and rented accommodation allegedly works closely with the political leadership and identifies houses for them, using meter readers. The targeted groups are the orphans or any relatives of deceased owners. What allegedly happens in this operation is that once a resident has accumulated a huge debt, the District Officer issues 'call in notice'

which means the victims have to come in and speak to this Mrs Tembo where they are normally given vacation notices of less than a week. The argument is that the victims have no right of occupancy.

- Once this notice has been issued, Mrs Tembo would allegedly proceed to advise the affected victims to go and speak to identified Zanu PF officials, Mai Chikwinya/ Chipo Mazambani at Mbare hostels. The role of a Mr Demere whose mobile number is 0772 609 565 is not known although he plays a major role in the displacements of targeted residents. Demere reportedly moves around claiming to be a chairman of Mbare residents, however working closely with other identified Zanu PF officials. In Jourburg Lines there is Namion Morden Chirwa, Zanu PF Chairman for Joshua Nkomo District and Elizabeth Madzimure (commonly known as Mai Bwanya) of the Women's Affairs in the party's District Coordinating Committee (DCC) 6 and also a Zanu PF provincial member, whose husband Cornelius Mandizvidza Bwanya is a Zanu PF Central committee member.
- What allegedly happens is that Chirwa, Madzimure and Mazambani would persuade the victims to pay a bribe of US\$1500, which has now gone up to US\$2500 to ensure that they are not evicted from their houses. If the identified victim fails to pay the necessary money, one of the allocations officers at Remembrance District Office identified as Bridget Mandizha would write a letter to a Mr Makara in the City's Legal Department directing him to write to the DO, who is a junior to Mandizha, in terms of the council's Organogram, informing the victim to vacate the identified house. Ms Madzimure is a sister to the Member of Parliament for Kambuzuma, Willas Madzimure.
- However, if the victim pays, the money is allegedly given to a Mr Chipaga, who then summons City employees in the housing department, where they share the bribe money.
- The network of the City employees is said to comprise of Mrs Mandizha, Mrs Fologwe, James Chiyangwa, Mrs Tembo, Mr Mupawaenda and Zigomo, from Harare Water. It is alleged that they work closely with a select group of meter readers, who gather information about house ownership on targeted houses. When they identify the houses, they allegedly begin to inflate the bills to make them so exorbitant that one naturally fails to pay. Zigomo reportedly heads revenue officers in Harare Water, at Mbare.
- An example is a house now in the name of one meter reader, Amos Brown, 21C Adam Chigwida Road. The house is officially registered in the name of a tenant of Malawian origin, Chigaulike Matauka but Council insists the house belongs to them. A widow, Lucia Masocha has been renting the house for the last seven years. Below is an interview the HRT did with her to get details;

Interview with Lucia Masocha:

- Lucia Masocha started living at 21C Adam Chigwida Road in 1997, staying in a cabin, paid rentals to Edith Mandizvidza who lived in block 6 C27 Matapi flats. She claimed she was related to Chigaukile Matauka, but did not pay rates to City of Harare. She has been on the City's housing waiting list for more than 15 years.
- When Operation Murambatsvina was launched in May 2005, most tenants there were removed and she was put in the main house. The house had become a brothel of some sort.
- Then City of Harare workers invited her to Remembrance District Office, together with Edith Mandizvidza. At the time she started living in the house, there was no electricity and water but from her meagre earnings, she managed to sacrifice and had water connected and electricity installed.
- At the meeting, District Officer Mujeni ordered her to clear all debts, which she did. She said she paid nearly Zim\$12 million by December 2005 under Chigaukile's name. She then went to demand an explanation from Mrs Mandizha, but she was told to pay some money to process the matter. She had been first approached by a Zanu PF chairman known as Mr Chirwa. The Chairman claimed that if she needed the house to be changed into her name, she had the option to pay the required US\$2 500 or she could make it easier by becoming his mistress. She turned him down. I am not cheap. That marked the beginning of my suffering at the hands of these people. Chairman Chirwa vowed that, even if she tried, she would never have the house changed into her name because he knew how to discipline unrepentant people.
- She went to Mrs Mandizha to ask her why this was happening. She replied that the choice was mine to make- either to accept Chirwa's sexual advances or pay up the money. She pleaded with Mrs Mandizha that she is poor and could not get such kind of money. She said there was nothing that she could do for her.
- Immediately afterwards, sometime in May 2006, the house ownership on the monthly bills was changed into the name of Edith Mandizvidza. Lucia continued to pay her bills under Mandizvidza's name, although she never came in to stay at the house, until she died towards the end of 2006.
- To back up her allegations, Ms Masocha showed the HRT bills to the house under three names. One of the bills from 2006 is recorded under Chigaukile's name, printed on Receipt Number A316585, which covered both water and other rentals, for Account Number 02-002573-00. A second bill, from Harare Water, printed on receipt Number HRE027702, dated 13 July 2009 was now billed against Edith Mandizvidza's name.
- But the third bill HRE0495008, whose last receipt date 9 October 2009, now mysteriously appear in the name of Amos Brown, a known meter reader for the

City of Harare attached to Harare Water, who reportedly paid some money to named officials in the Housing and Community Services Department.

- Ms Masocha, a mother of four children, says she has faced constant harassment from Harare Water employees who have vowed that they will haunt her out of the house to pave way for Brown. These meter readers allegedly tell her openly that there was no one to help her as long as Mrs Mandizha remained the allocations manager. She claims she previously reported this to one of the team leaders only identified as Zigomo about this harassment but nothing was done. At one time she claims that Mr Zigomo summoned some of the meter readers at the offices for an identification parade after she complained and managed to identify one of the meter readers.
- Masocha said: “On several occasions during this year I have had nightmares with the huge bills that have been sent me. Whenever I go to challenge them at the District Office, I am always threatened with instant eviction because they say I am an illegal tenant.
- “The increases are unexplained. When you pay, the bills do not decrease. Instead, they almost double up in the next month, meaning the huge bills continue to grow despite making the payments. They just want people to fail to pay so that they allocate these houses to rich people who can pay the bribe money. I know of several residents who have been treated like this and haunted out of their family houses.”

7. **SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS:**

- a. **Women’s Rights:** Women in Majubeki are facing constant harassment from political leaders and public officials who reportedly demand sex in exchange for safety and protection from having them thrown out of their family homes. Women complained that their rights were being violated by office bearers when they visit the District Offices to complain about their living standards and the services being rendered. According to reports the residents said they are being asked to pay exorbitant charges for their housing problems to be solved, if they fail to raise the funds they are being forced to pay in kind. The majority of people living in this area, who are largely of foreign origin, are lowly educated and lack information and knowledge about the protection of their rights. As long as organisations that claim to defend the rights of ordinary citizens continue to shun this area due to alleged political intimidation and other forms of violence, women in Majubeki will forever be oppressed without legal assistance.
- b. **HIV/Aids:** The HIV/Aids scourge has, just like in any other part of the country, left widows and children as landlords. Instead of finding ways to rescue these vulnerable groups to secure title to their properties, the City of Harare has continued to claim that they own the houses, which they have abandoned in reality. Due to lack of ownership documentation, manipulative politicians and city employees have allegedly taken advantage of these vulnerable groups for purposes of self-enrichment. Water disconnections and other forms of harassment have worsened the plight of those people infected with HIV/Aids.

c. **Rates and Services:** The Council rented houses have a master plan numbers and for a tenant to acquire ownership one has to pay US\$150. The residents are being charged US\$56 as illegal structure fees per month. Despite making regular payments for rates and services to the city of Harare and the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA), the residents cannot afford to pay the huge bills they receive. The services being rendered are not tallying with the money they are supposed to pay at the end of every month. Refuse collection has been erratic and water consumption charges are based on estimates. The majority of residents in Majubeki are in the informal sector where their earnings are not uniform. This has left the majority of residents indebted to ZESA and the City of Harare. The billing system in the City of Harare is easily manipulated and this scenario has led to more houses being targeted for re-possession by the City of Harare. Residents believe this is a well calculated strategy to evict some people from the houses. The majority of the residents who have had their water disconnected for non-payment have observed that the City of Harare is removing water meters and taps as a way of coercing the residents to pay.

d. **Maintenance of Majubeki Houses:**

According to residents, the City of Harare has traditionally repainted the interiors and exteriors of Majubeki houses and other council-owned houses, which they claim they wholly own. Broken down doors and windows were also repaired. The council has abandoned this responsibility, leaving the properties to deteriorate by each passing year. Drainages which were cleared ahead of every rainy season have now filled with sand, and other objects thrown by residents. The residents complained that nothing is being done to serve their interests. Toilet seats are broken and constantly leaking, constantly wasting treated water. The residents queried how the City of Harare could not make repairs to their houses when it has been charging them at least US\$56 as 'illegal structure fines' for illegally changing the structures of their houses, without council's authority. During the HRT's visit to the area, it was discovered that most houses' verandas have been transformed into rooms due to acute shortage of accommodation. What they find worrying about these charges is that this so-called illegal structure fine was not included in the 2010 City Budget. What this means is that this is unbudgeted revenue, which the city has to channel towards the maintenance of the houses. The question that the people repeatedly asked was: where is the revenue being generated from the area being spent?

8. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- These are serious allegations that have been raised against named City employees and politicians. These issues should be thoroughly investigated by a properly constituted committee of council and Local Government to ensure transparency and accountability. Those found to be guilty should be punished using council's disciplinary measures. Where it is established that criminal offences were committed, the police have to be allowed to discharge their mandate without political manipulation.
- While the HRT is treating these issues seriously, this does not mean that the named officials are guilty. They only have to explain their roles and their relationship with the Majubeki residents, who are ready to testify in a court of law or before any body of investigators.

- Majubeki residents deserve the right to legal protection from abuse by politicians, public officials and city employees.
- Children and women's rights should be respected and authorities should stop the violations of their rights as a matter of urgency.
- The City of Harare has to restore the image of Majubeki lines to the previous levels where everything worked to perfection, through repair of broken toilets and water taps and regularly repaint the houses.
- The City of Harare should enhance its monitoring systems to ensure that no employee abuses their authority and power but should serve the interests of residents.
- To hold civic seminars to the residents on how to obtain title deeds and their rights as house holders.
- That the City of Harare reduces by 60 percent the debt by the residents up to December 2010. That way more residents would be able to pay up and increase council's revenue in the process.

ENDS