

Epworth- Harare's Own Version of Kibera: Cases and consequences of Formal and Informal Settlements in Ward 5,6,7 of the town of Epworth

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Abstract: the increase in demand for housing not matching with housing delivery have been the major cause for growth of informal settlements in most urban areas especially on the peripheries of Harare. Epworth as the only settlement which the government accepted and recognized after independence as an informal settlement has seen a drastic increase in in population into the informal settlement which has resulted in vice, prostitution and child abuse. In 2005, the government embarked on operation Murambatsvina as a way to bring order in Harare by getting rid of illegal structures but this brought about suffering to a number of urban population as they were left homeless. This had a negative effect on the satellite town where those who were affected migrated to Epworth as people looked for what is termed to be cheap life and which became a hybrid of all vices. Poverty cases are very high in Epworth especially in Ward 5,6 and 7, which confines them to the absence of opportunities accompanied by high levels of malnourishment, illiteracy, hunger, lack of education, social instability relegating people to life below the poverty datum line. The Biblical adage of "can anything good come out of Nazareth" is typically a true example of Epworth; abject poverty in the order of life in this satellite town of Epworth.

I. INTRODUCTION

The mere mention of Epworth often evokes images of crime, drugs, prostitution, poverty, child abuse and filth. Like the biblical Nazareth, many people think nothing good can come out of Epworth. But one has to give credit to the people of Epworth for the enduring human spirit that is evident there as people battle it, daily adversity as they try to get on with the business of life. The people of Epworth have their personal successes, dreams and hopes, too, like anybody else in the world - even though the odds are against them¹.

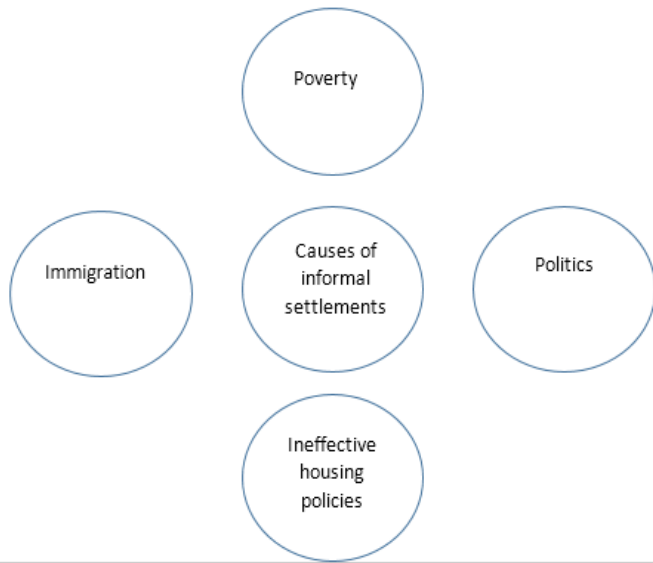
Epworth: The Forgotten Suburb

However, it is a fact that the images associated with Epworth, although sometimes exaggerated, are not wholly misplaced. Epworth is located on the periphery of Harare in the South-East, the high-density township is to all intents and purposes a rudimentary settlement where just about everything goes - including houses, schools, shops - is an improvisation of some sort.²

When getting into Epworth via Chiremba Road, the serenity of the famous Balancing Rock (a national monument) is quickly snuffed by haphazard, sprawling settlements. The match-box houses do not seem to conform to any standard and are not serviced with electricity, water and sewage systems while what are called roads are untarred and run-down strips. Unfazed, resigned or oblivious; people get on with their lives. Making money largely involves selling firewood, fruits, vegetables, groundnuts, maize and airtime; fast foods like fried chips, sausages, basic pastries and so on. Carpentry and welding, too, are big businesses in Epworth. Shopping centers like Dombo raMwari (rock of God), Munyuki, Stop Over, Overspill, Solani, Corner Store and Zimunhu present the kaleidoscope that is known as Epworth.³

Life is hard in Epworth but people survive: shopping does not entail baskets and trolleys. People live for the day and shopping is calibrated accordingly: measures of maize meal, cooking oil, sugar and meat are sold to order - enough for the day. Life in Epworth is very difficult. The people live from hand to mouth and most of them cannot afford to buy for the month. All that a person needs is to eat now and worry about the next meal later. The small measures of daily rations for sale are mostly pegged at one hundred bond, real time gross (RTGS) worth about fifty cents in US value. Such made-to-needs packaging - referred to as "tsaona" is not unique to Epworth and can be found in high density areas of Harare and Chitungwiza. This is the background that lead the writer to unravel the pathetic situation in Epworth which cause child abuse and child sexual abuse. Not many parents are able to send their children to school (reason being poverty, lack of value for education) especially the girl child, because they think that girls can be married and can also help them in making money even through prostitution if drop-out from school⁴

II. CAUSES OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN EPWORTH



Poverty

Poverty in informal settlements is much more than a simple lack of income and unemployment. It is primarily extended by the waning of health and nutritional rates, overcrowded housing, increased school dropouts and increased stress upon physical and social environments of low income urban residents. It is in this context that a distinct macroeconomic model of poverty is inadequate while there is a genuine need to consider social needs aligned to the needs for the urban poor. Baumann et al (2004). According to the Kamete and UN reports (2006) and (2003) respectively, poverty is one of the primary causes of informal settlements in most nations and poverty is also the absence of opportunities accompanied by high levels of malnourishment, illiteracy, hunger, lack of education and social instability. This is characterized by a chronic shortage of economic, social and political participation, relegating individuals to the exclusion as social beings.

It can be noted that in Zimbabwe according to Tibaijuka (2006) there were many retrenchments of workers as most industries were crippled by the rising inflation and less production. The result was mass unemployment and increased poverty cases resulting in crime, prostitution and child abuse. According to Sigauke (2003) most of the people who stay in Epworth work in the informal sectors and most of them are self-employed making them live in poverty as their incomes are below the poverty datum line. According the Brocklehurst et al (2013), when the baseline study was carried out in Epworth in 2002 of those employed around thirty-seven percent were working as labourers in the formal sector and sixty-three percent in the informal sector. Hurskainen (2004) noted that majority of the people in the informal settlement depend on informal activities to earn a living because job opportunities are few and most of the jobs require education which most of the residents do not have. The situation has worsened since 2002 as economic hardships have continued to

worsen from then on until now. Families are finding it difficult to fend for themselves and making ends meet hence child negligence in this satellite town of Epworth.

Ineffective housing policies

A joint effort by the central government and the local government have come up with policies to improve housing delivery and order respectively (2009). However, this has proved to be not effective as seen by the continued growth of informal settlements. Moyo (2014) noted that trends in the housing policy since 1980 have marginalized low income earners housing needs. Housing delivery has fallen far behind the demand for housing forcing residents to build their own shacks called (zvitangwena). According to Tibaijuka (2006), Operation Murambatsvina was designed to eradicate illegal housing structures which had become an eyesore to town planners and the surrounding community.

Epworth Profile (2015) came out with a plan to reduce the housing backlog which estimates that the housing waiting list for Epworth Local Board (ELB) was around twenty thousand. However, from the way things look, the price tag for these serviced land is mostly beyond the reach of many even though there are flexible payment plans. This leaves the majority with no houses, resorting to go and settle in informal settlements thereby increasing the informal settlers' population in Epworth.

Politics

According to this articles' observation, land and regime type, whether democracy or authoritative, has become distributive politics and clientilism in the housing sector of urban low income groups in the past years, Mutsindikwa et al (2015)The Second Chimurenga (a coinage name) the government promised free housing for all refugees who fled war zones in the country to urban areas but that did not materialise resulting in informal settlement.

Towards the 2008 and 2013 elections, individuals who were campaigning on main parties' tickets influenced the invasion of open council land distributing housing stands all in the name of empowering the black people and low income earners. In this case there was distributive politics which was linked to the theory of democratic accountability as alluded by Golden and Min (2013). There was involvement by politician's taxes, transfers and particularly the decisions of allocations of government goods and services lying at the heart of politics. Muderere (2010) noted that the urban poor have been mired in patronage politics, which distributed access to residential stands on partisan lines. These stands turned to be informal settlements (a high breed of all vices and prostitution) as people settled on poorly and wetland not services with no properly planned infrastructure.

The haphazard parceling out of land was a clear campaign strategy which caused conflation of state and local board land. Kadirire (2016) noted that the haphazard parceling out of land was a clear campaign strategy which caused conflation of

state and town land. This area of study, Ward 5,6 and 7 up to today has no clean sources of water, no proper road networks and muddy unplanned built shacks.

These informal settlements have also led to the chasing away of potential investors and jeopardizing local board plans. Land reserved for future development has most of it been invaded as people put on structures, Muderere (2010). According to Mhlanga (2015) an Olympic Africa project of constructing a state of the art sports centre was left hanging as the land which was reserved for it was invaded by those affiliated to opposition parties as a way of countering their main opposition party which had invaded another open place adjacent to it. Not only is the case above but there are a number of land which has been reserved for schools, social amenities and urban expansion have also been invaded in the same manner. Epworth is in a sad sorry state regardless of it being twelve kilometers away from Harare central business district (CBD). The causes of informal settlements in Epworth triggers poverty which results in child abuse especially the vulnerable girl child.

III. CHILD ABUSE/CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

In Harare, Epworth in particular child abuse /child sexual abuse is on the rise due to poverty and increased population of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. Child sexual abuse is an insidious, hideous and persistent serious problem in Epworth and the worst part of it is that some of the perpetrators deliberately infect the victims with HIV virus. Children now feel insecure, a factor which traumatises hem for the rest of their life as they live in fear of being abused and not being sure of a life tomorrow. The Zimbabwe republic Police (ZRP) revealed that in the low density suburb of Hatfield adjacent to Epworth, they were six reported cases of parents who raped their own children while in the crime infested informal settlement of Epworth ninety cases were reported in 2016 and in most cases the rapists were HIV positive who willfully infected the children⁵.

More cases were suppressed as some parents were paid to conceal such abuses and in some cases the offenders were the guardians/ caregivers, so people were afraid of losing breadwinners. According to the Daily Newspaper of December 2016 in response to increasing cases of child sexual abuse the ZRP Victim Friendly Unit (ZFU) went around both the primary and secondary schools educating the teachers and learners to be alert and take preventive measures on child sexual abuse.

According to Zimbabwe Statistics Office (ZimStat 2012) and UNICEF, out of all sexual abuse cases, females accounted for over ninety percent of child survivors of sexual abuse. Most of the girls aged twelve and above were sexually abused in the homes of their boyfriends, whilst those below twelve were mostly abused at their homes by their guardians/caregivers. Over the ninety percent of child sexual abuse perpetrators were males (sugar daddies). Since child sexual abuse may

endanger the life and wellbeing of children; it is a serious problem that requires urgent attention.⁶

Causes of Child Sexual Abuse

Causes of child sexual abuse includes namely inability of men to control their sexual desires, magic and ritual beliefs. Some of the perpetrators get access to children through bribes, gifts to ensure continuous compliance, systematically desensitize children through touch, and talk about sex and persuasion.; through engaging the children the following were noted also to be some causes of commercial child sexual exploitation:

- Poverty,
- Coercion by guardians/caregivers;
- Lack of supervision,
- Dropping out of school;
- Peer pressure,
- Drug abuse;
- Orphan hood,
- Migration (diaspora).

However, abandonment by parents/caregivers due to the above, results in children having to resort to perform in dance groups in beer halls by making themselves even more vulnerable. The writer of this paper noted that, the patriarchal society has ruled for a long time and must not give man the leverage to abuse children as they wish and get away with it. Some drastic legal measures must be put in place to curb such wicked practices and root them out from society.⁷

IV. INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

The Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) and some Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have been working tirelessly to eradicate crime and child sexual abuse in Epworth. Evidently, during the day of a campaign once held, many perpetrators were brought to the ZRP station for questioning and litigation. The Seventh-day Adventist Lawyers Association ran two programs in 2017 and 2018 conscientizing the community of Epworth on the rise of child sexual abuse cases in Epworth. The programs were attended by many people who responded positively to assist in the prevention of child abuse in the high-density suburb of Epworth.

The following recommendations were put forward by the police, community and stack holders to remove abused children to places of safety:

- Community Education Centers were to be put in place where the young children and youth must be taught vocational skills.
- Rehabilitation centers were to be established where the young are rehabilitated from abuse and involve them in developing them and the community at large.
- Centers of influence were to be created for both old and young people where they are taught new skills to fend for themselves.⁸

V. CONCLUSION

All the identified children were removed from risk and placed at a safe house where a one stop service center was set up by the department of Social Welfare. The children were profiled by the Social Workers. Profiling was a part of the needs assessment, which was an initial stage towards a wholistic rehabilitation process. The services which the children were receiving ranged from therapeutic, psychosocial sessions, medical assessment, counselling, education and other special needs required by the children. The children were also provided with other basic needs like accommodation, food, clothing and cleaning.⁹

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