

The Human Security Implications of Operation Restore Order on Urban Habitation in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT This paper examines how the 2005 Operation Restore Order, popularly known as *Murambatsvina*, impacted on the key facets of human security on urban habitation in Zimbabwe. Precisely, the paper examines the humanitarian consequences of the clean up exercise from the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and human security dimensions. By applying one of the key principles of the R2P mandate, namely, 'the responsibility to rebuild', the study explored the extent to which the government of Zimbabwe delivered its R2P mandate of protecting its people from the unintended consequences of the Clean Up exercise. Utilising the case study research strategy and guided by the R2P theoretical framework, the study sought to investigate and gather artefacts of the 2005 clean up exercise from four locations in the city of Harare. Purposive sampling was employed in order to gather primary data from people who experienced and were directly affected by *Murambatsvina*. Semi-structured interviews and structural observations revealed that the government of Zimbabwe did not fulfil its promises to *Murambatsvina* victims, as outlined in the R2P mandate. From the findings, we conclude that, in the absence of international intervention, operation restore order ended up inflicting more negative socio-economic consequences on urban inhabitants in Zimbabwe.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most publicised post-independence conduct of the government of Zimbabwe is the demolition of urban settlements in 2005 under an operation code-named, *Murambatsvina* which means 'drive out rubbish or clean up the dirt' (Bracking 2005; Potts 2006; Bratton and Masunungure 2007; Chari 2008; Mlambo 2008; Fontein 2009). *Murambatsvina* can also be literally translated to mean, refusal (by the government) to tolerate dirty living conditions for the people. The major objective for the clean up operation according to the government was to destroy illegal urban structures that foster criminal activities and stemming the black market trade in foreign currency (Bracking 2005; Potts 2006; Masunungure 2007; Chari 2008). The July 2005 report produced by the UN Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe, Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, and other sources concurred that over 700 000 people were made homeless by the operation (Tibaijuka 2005; Solidarity Peace Trust 2006; Fontein 2009; Amnesty International 2010). An in-depth study on the impact of *Murambatsvina* conducted in 2005 by Action Aid International (2005) in collaboration with the

Counselling Services Unit (CSU), Combined Harare Residents' Association (CHRA) and the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) concluded that 20 per cent of the urban population were affected either in terms of loss of shelter or sources of income, especially in the informal sector. In a report published in December 2005, Human Rights Watch (2005) observed that according to the United Nations estimates, 700,000 people – nearly 6 per cent of the total population lost their homes, livelihood, or both as a result of the evictions, while 2.4 million people were either directly or indirectly affected by Operation *Murambatsvina*.

This study was therefore undertaken to gather primary data from people who were directly affected, as victims of the much criticised 'clean up' exercise.

Literature Study

The official report by the July 2005 United Nations (UN) Special Envoy to Zimbabwe, Anna Tibaijuka, reveals the humanitarian ramifications of the 'clean up' exercise, which is popularly known as operation *Murambatsvina* (remove the dirt). It further spells that the operation took a particularly heavy toll on vulnerable groups, such as widows,

orphans, female- and child-headed households, the elderly and those people living with human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV and AIDS) (Tibajuka 2005). It is reported that the operation displaced more than 80 000 people infected with HIV/AIDS and many of these were left without access to antiretroviral (ARVs) pills (Poloch 2010:29). The operation therefore impacted negatively on the unemployed urban inhabitants who depended on the effective and efficient operation of the non-formal sector. This included the backyard industry workers in high density suburbs like Glen View, Budiro, Warren Park, Highfliefs, Chitungwiza, Hatifield among other areas in the case of Harare (Tibajuka 2005; Fontein 2009).

The government's justification for launching operation *Murambatsvina* was to get rid of the economic saboteurs in the informal sector, such as money laundering, the black foreign exchange market and illegally built backyard industries, flea-markets and kiosks (Potts 2006; Bratton and Masunungure 2007; Mlambo 2008). However, Mbeki (2010) refutes this view by claiming that the government's post-colonial economic policies perpetuated exclusion of people with skills which could not be accommodated in formal employment sector because of slow growth. Statistically, it is estimated that between 1986 and 1987, the formal sector employed only 20 percent of the labour force, 27 percent in 1991 and 40 per cent in 2004 (Coltart 2007; Vambe 2008). This implies that around 60 percent of the urban population in 2004 had either to work as casual labourers or adopt the informal path in order to survive. This therefore did not only promote socio-economic exclusion in the formal sector, but promoted a culture of informal survival.

The government's economic policies and initiatives between 1980 and 1988 accommodated a significant portion of skilled Zimbabweans within the informal sector, which to some extent converted the informal sector into a formal sector (Vambe 2008; Mlambo 2008). However, from 2000, due to economic meltdown emanating from an unstable political conduct in the country, the government blamed and targeted the informal sector through operation *Murambatsvina*, which to some scholars is some type of window dressing of political gimmicking meant to cover up the government's poor economic policies (Bratton and Masunungure 2007; Fontein 2009). This again calls for further interrogation of the operation in

order to establish what exactly the government intended to achieve by embarking on such an exercise which received international condemnation.

What made *Murambatsvina* questionable was the involvement of the military in destroying houses and backyard industries in all the country's urban areas. It is in the light of the military involvement that the UN, moved by humanitarian concerns, decided to investigate the aims and objectives of the cleanup operation. Furthermore, the timing of the operation was questionable because it was launched in June when the winter season was at its pick and many victims were without shelter in the freezing cold. Also, more interesting was that this took place when the people of Zimbabwe were just taking a breath from the violent 2005 Parliamentary election in which the ruling party had lost in all urban centres in the country. The coincidence that the ruling party lost the 2005 elections in the cities and that *Murambatsvina* was confined only to urban sector resulted in the allegation that the operation was the government's scotched-earth policy against urban dwellers for abandoning Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and mass protests over the growing economic crisis (Poloch 2010).

From a humanitarian point of view, indiscriminate destruction of houses, especially on the country's poor urban dwellers had a catastrophic impact. Most of the victims were taken against their will to police-run camps such as Caledonia and Hopley farms, in the case of Harare victims (Amnesty International, Zimbabwe Annual Report 2007). The Amnesty International report revealed that the conditions in these camps were dire, lacking adequate water, shelter and basic latrine facilities for the population of the affected victims.

Realising what it called the inhuman consequences of *Murambatsvina*, the government quickly launched a reconstruction initiative called 'Operation *garikai/hlalani kuhle*', which means 'to live well'. The intention of operation *garikai/hlalani kuhle* was to construct new houses as a compensation for the victims of *Murambatsvina* (Chari 2008). While the objective was in line with the R2P principle of national governments' responsibility to rebuild, the proposal was however not only ambitious, but a wishful thinking given the fact that the country by then, the repetition was already facing the economic meltdown which led to further loss of

popularity of the ruling party in the post 2000 national elections (Kamete 2006; Bratton and Masunungure 2007; Fontein 2009). The 2006 report compiled by Solidarity Peace Trust entitled, *Melt Down Murambatsvina One Year On*, alleged that the few houses that were constructed were largely seized by the police, soldiers and members of the ruling party (Solidarity Peace Trust 2006). These are some of the allegations which this study sought to verify by gathering data from primary sources, namely the actual victims of operation *Murambatsvina*.

Theoretical Framing of Murambatsvina within the Human Security Paradigm

An impact assessment of the human security implications of the Zimbabwean government's 2005 Operation Clean Up (*Murambatsvina*) finds a better explanation by situating its debate within the framework of the human security paradigm and the (Responsibility to Protect) R2P norms. A definition of human security proffered by the 1993 United Nations Development Programme report (UNDP) envisages protection of humanity from both physical and non-physical threats. Tadjbakhsh (2005), International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) (2001) and Chandler (2004) broaden the definition of human security to include securing of people, their physical safety, their economic well being, respect for their dignity and worth as human beings and the protection of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Unlike the conventional (realist) approach to security that emphasises protection of the state as the referral point of security, critical human security theorists deconstruct this approach, preferring a more people-oriented approach to security. This perspective could be rational because of the observation that more often than not, as in the case of operation *Murambatsvina*; the nation states have emerged as the chief culprits to the extent that people may need to be protected from their state instead of the reverse.

Chandler (2004) further interprets the R2P in the context of a new human security architecture that prescribes as to when and how intervention should take place when human security is under threat. The R2P first appeared on the academic scene as a result of the report of the Canadian sponsored 2001 ICISS report. The

Commission was tasked with the duty to find a common ground for responding to crises of humanitarian nature. This was raised against the backdrop of controversy surrounding the praxis of humanitarian intervention. The commission in its report watered down the language of 'right' to humanitarian intervention to 'responsibility to protect' (ICISS 2001; Evans 2008; Thakur 2007). According to the ICISS report, the R2P principle entails that state sovereignty implies that "the primary responsibility for protection of its peoples lies with the state itself. In situations where population is suffering serious harm, as a result of internal war, insurgency, repression or state failure or when the state in question is unable or unwilling to deliver on its duty to protect its own people, the principle of non-intervention yields to that of responsibility borne by the wider international community" (ICISS 2001: 16). The report pins the responsibility to protect on state authorities at the national level and United Nations Security Council (UNSC) at the international community level. The R2P therefore confirms the states' primary responsibility and the international community's secondary and complementary responsibility to protect people against human rights violations. This notion of 'collective responsibility' is also espoused within the English School's International Society theory, where principles of internationalism and collective global society are entrenched.

The R2P entails three key responsibilities bestowed on national state governments. These are: the 'responsibility to prevent', the 'responsibility to react', and the 'responsibility to rebuild' (ICISS 2001). The 'responsibility to prevent' according to the ICISS report envisages a soft approach where the root causes of conflict are addressed before they turn violent. The suggestion is that preventive measures should be invoked before a situation degenerates into a severe humanitarian crisis. The second principle entails the need to respond to situations of compelling need with appropriate measures. This may include coercive measures like sanctions, international prosecution (through the International Criminal Court (ICC)) in this case and military response in extreme situations. The last key responsibility which is the central focus of this paper is the responsibility to rebuild, which entails reconstruction initiatives of the post-conflict or crises. With specific reference to South

Africa, Wilson (2011: 266) indicates that “an eviction will not normally be authorised if it would result in homelessness”. In this paper, evidence from victims and eye witnesses revealed that *Murambatsvina* resulted in loss of livelihood as well as shelter.

Pivotal to the R2P mindset is that if human security is under threat or where the state in question abdicates its duty to provide security for its people, it then becomes imperative for the wider international community to exercise the duty to protect or safeguard humanity from both violent and non-violent threats. This approach gives primacy to the protection of citizens at risk of atrocities arising from failure or perpetrated by state. Tadjbakhsh (2005) broadens the human security debate by suggesting the need to identify threats, avoid them when possible and also mitigate their effects when they occur. In this respect, human security proponents therefore raise a moral argument that “governments and the international community should establish viable response mechanisms to deal with threats to humanity” (Tadjbakhsh 2005: 4). The ICISS (2001) report on R2P thus concurs with Tadjbakhsh (2005: 6) who stipulates “a truly effective state is one that can provide human security and deal with social breakdowns for its people”. Building from this human security framework, it is plausible to assert that when states fail to live up to the principle of sovereignty as responsibility; international organisations have the moral responsibility and obligation to act. This informs the major recommendation for this study. Thakur and Weiss (2009: 23) define a norm as “the pattern of behaviour that should be followed in accordance with a given value system or moral code of society- a generally accepted standard of proper behaviour”. In this case, the R2P proffers a normative explanation on why, when, how and who should respond to an emerging threat to human security. Chandler (2004) expands the theoretical development of the R2P norm by locating it within the confines of the liberal peace theory. The theory advocates the development of international norms to promote human rights and challenges to international peace and security that should be attained through “cosmopolitan frameworks” (Chandler 2004: 60). Chandler (2004) further interprets the R2P by arguing that peaceful and democratic states should take a leading responsibility for attainment of universal peace.

Kaldor (2007: 97) explains this transformation in the praxis through the lenses of the cosmopolitan model of the pro-liberal policy framework which acknowledges the role of the state in its domestic jurisdiction, as well as the need for “multilateral set of rules and procedures”, and also “cosmopolitan” solutions.

Despite some controversies and divergences in the theoretical conception of the R2P, most scholars do concur that R2P illustrates a landmark evolution for human protection purposes and that it enhances the aspirations of the broader framework of the human security paradigm. This adds value to the idea of situating the R2P within the human security framework as adopted by this study.

Research Focus and Purpose

The responsibility for the UN state parties and the international community for protection in situations where a population suffers serious harm, as a result of internal war, insurgency or repression, which has come to be known as the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), is both an obligation and a right (ICISS 2001; Evans 2008). The 2005 Operation Restore Order, known as *Murambatsvina* in Zimbabwe was declared a human security issue by the UN Security Council (Tibajuka 2005; Mahoso 2008; Mlambo 2008) and therefore needed international intervention due to the national government’s inducement of serious harm to the people. The major purpose of this paper is to interrogate and discuss primary data on the consequences of operation *Murambatsvina* using the R2P theoretical framework as an instrument of analysis.

METHODOLOGY

Since this study sought to investigate and interpret the human consequences of a specific operation/event that occurred among Zimbabwe’s urban dwellers in 2005, the researchers categorised the study as a phenomenological research. Creswell (2007: 57) posits that “a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon.” Operation restore order (*Murambatsvina*) was in this study the commonly experienced phenomenon by the study participants whose views were developed into a composite narrative description and inter-

pretation of this phenomenon. By focusing on *Murambatsvina* as the object of human experience for the study and gathering of data from a wide spread of participants who experienced, and were affected by *Murambatsvina*, we sought to achieve a deep description and analysis of its aftermath on urban habitation in Zimbabwe

The Study Sample

With reference to phenomenological research Craswell (2007:62) advises that "Participants in the study need to be individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon in question". In line with this, we applied theoretically or purposive sampling method (MacMillan and Schummacher 2006) to select urban households that were directly affected by either being moved from their original settlements, or having their structures demolished and replaced. In purposive sampling, "samples are chosen because they are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon the researcher is investigating" (McMillan and Schumacher 2006: 319). Because *Murambatsvina* caused human movement and relocation, loss of both movable and immovable property, as well as replacement of lost property to some of the subjects, we identified four study sites that were representative of the urban population that was affected by the hastily implemented clean-up operation:

- ♦ One low density urban habitat were different structures that were defined by government as illegal were demolished.
- ♦ One high density urban settlement where "illegal" structures were also demolished.
- ♦ One urban housing cooperative settlement where residential structures were also demolished.
- ♦ One post-*Murambatsvina* settlement where some of the victims of the clean up operation were re-located and allocated new dwellings as compensation for their losses.

At each of these study sites four households were selected to participate in the study. All members of the selected households who included parents, grandparents and children were interviewed using focus group interviews at their homes. The researchers complemented purposive sampling with snowball sample (Seamark and Lings 2004; Creswell 2007; McMillan and Schumacher 2006; Silverman 2005) by asking an interviewed household to also identify another

household which was also directly affected by operation restore order. The total sample for the study finally comprised 102 participants, made up of 28 heads of households and 74 dependents from the 16 households that were selected from all the urban settlements.

Data Gathering and Analysis

The researchers used focus group interviews as the main data gathering instrument for the study participants to cooperatively re-create their past experiences and relate them to their current situation and circumstances (Seamark and Lings 2004; Creswell 2007). Each focus group comprised of all members of the selected household, and for accurate representation of their views and meanings, we tape-recorded the focus group discussions. Since *Murambatsvina* left structural artefacts that were of interest and relevant to the study, we complemented data from focus group interviews with primary evidence in form of photos (see Figures 1 to 5).

The researchers employed hermeneutic data analysis (Cromer and McCarthy 1999; Ploeg 1999; Thorne 2000) for inductive interpretation of the lived experiences of the victims of *Murambatsvina*. The R2P provisions constitute an analytical framework of analysis. As qualitative researchers, we mediated between the different meanings that the study participants gave to operation *Murambatsvina* and the R2P provisions and human security principles, to process the gathered data and distil them into findings of the study (Moss 2004; Lietz et al. 2006). The data generated were largely in the form of verbal narratives which we presented from a naturalist context of the study participants (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Using observations and narrative data from the research participants, the researchers presented and discussed findings following six themes that emerged from the data on the consequences of operation *Murambatsvina* on human habitation and other key socio-economic facets of human life. The main objective of the interrogation of gathered data is to illustrate how operation *Murambatsvina* contravened the international statute on national governments' responsi-

bility to protect and rebuild whenever and wherever human security is under threat. In the first theme, the researchers explored why the victims of operation *Murambatsvina* described it as the Zimbabwean *Tsunami*. In the following three themes, they explored how operation *Murambatsvina* was a reversal of the post-colonial government policies on housing for all, urbanisation and the empowerment of the informal economic sub-sector and indigenisation processes. Finally, in the last two themes, they illustrated using narratives from the study and gathered artefacts to show the illusions of Operation Live Well, known as *Garikai/Hlalani huhle* and the international community's responsibility to protect victims of operation *Murambatsvina*.

Murambatsvina as the Zimbabwean Tsunami

The term *Murambatsvina* literally means 'clean dirt'. By implication, the operation must have left urban Zimbabwe physically and socially cleaner than before. The victims of the operation however found it ironic in that it left them in no better conditions than they had been living in before. The intensity of human suffering and atrocities that *Murambatsvina* inflicted on its victims was illustrated by the terms that were used in reference to what the urban inhabitants of Zimbabwe experienced in June 2005. Terms like *musiyatvsina* (that which leaves dirt), 'operation condemn the poor', 'operation meme the poor', 'operation create orphans' and the 'Zimbabwean tsunami' illustrated the magnitude of human suffering that the 'clean up' had. Making reference to the fact that it was a 'sudden attack', some of the victims who narrated their ordeal had this to say:

The government or the municipality did not give us any warning. Otherwise we would have removed our property than let them to be burnt by the police. This was just like an earthquake or the tsunami (Former housing co-operative resident).

It was in June and very cold. We just woke up only to find ourselves surrounded by police and told to destroy our shelters. They accused us of being squatters. Those who were slow had their belongings burnt down. Murambatsvina was the same as a tsunami. Imagine children seeing fire destroying where they had slept all their life (Displaced victim).

To illustrate the socio-economic consequences of *Murambatsvina*, informants of this study complained that they were left worse off in many respects:

Some people were being given farms for free, but for us land was taken away from us as if we were Whites. People slept in the open during the whole winter of 2005, many got sick. They should have built good houses first before destroying, if they wanted to remove dirt. But instead there was more dirt left, more poor people and more people without houses (Female fruit vender).

Nobody cares of how people suffered because of Murambatsvina. Even the MDC does not care because they are in this new government but they do not talk about compensating people who lost houses and property in 2005. That's why it is said the poor will always remain poor or even become poorer. Maybe there was a plan to destroy our houses to create house shortages in order to make us lodgers so the rich can make more money (Displaced male lodger).

Narratives from this study therefore concurred that apart from causing intra-urban and urban-rural population movement, *Murambatsvina* was also one contributing factor to the economic meltdown that Zimbabwe experienced from 2000 (Vambe 2008; Amnesty International 2010). While the objectives of the 'clean-up' operation were cited as bringing back sanity to the country's urban settlement system by destroying all illegally built structures and criminal activities, such as the black foreign exchange market (Potts 2006; Chari 2008), the consequences of *Murambatsvina* ended up reversing most of the socio-economic gains that Zimbabwe had achieved since 1980.

Murambatsvina and Reversal of Housing for All Policy

On attainment of independence in 1980, the new government of Zimbabwe sought to achieve basic education for all, health, housing and sanitation for all by the year 2000 as its main social responsibilities (Zanu (PF) Manifesto 1980; Mlambo 2008). Even after failure to achieve this in 2000, the Zanu (PF) government, which ruled the country from 1980, put the same objectives at the centre of its vision 2020 objectives. Among strategies adopted towards the goal of housing



Fig. 1. Police supervised destruction of illegal structures

for all included government aided low income home ownership schemes in urban areas which were initiated by the late Edson Zvodgo as the first Minister of local government. Urban building brigades and housing co-operatives also emerged in the 1980s and continued to be a source of hope for the homeless urban dwellers throughout the country due to the huge long waiting lists on all the municipal towns.

Narratives from housing co-operative members, who were displaced by the Operation Clean-up the urban areas implied that the government, instead of promoting the vision of housing provision to the low income urban groups seemed to be reversing this responsibility, which is internationally acclaimed by all UN nation states. The following statements illustrate the confusion victims of *Murambatsvina* developed on government housing policy and their loss of hope to ever own a house:

I paid a lot of money to the co-operative, which was registered and allocated me the stand I was moved from by force in 2005. May be the leaders of the co-operative connived with the government so that we cannot claim our money back (Former housing co-operative member).

The problem is that this thing was done by the government itself. If Murambatsvina had not been done by the government, we would report the leaders of the co-operatives to government. We see them but they also say they also lost out. It looks like the government protected criminals who defrauded us by this Murambatsvina (Former housing co-operative member).

We were squatters before we joined the co-operative, and hoped to own our own house in the end, but now we are squats because of Murambatsvina (Former housing co-operative member).

Due to acute shortage of accommodation for social service provision such as schools, libraries, houses, shops, industries and clinic in all the country's urban municipalities, Zimbabweans had become accustomed to, and coped with the problem of squatting. For example, in education, double sessions, popularly known as hot-sitting whereby two schools shared the same facilities between mornings and afternoons; secondary schools operating at primary schools; satellite schools operating from farm houses or tobacco buns after the 2000 fast track land reform; primary trained teachers teaching in sec-

ondary schools, the Zimbabwe Integrated Teachers Colleges (ZINTEC) whereby teachers were trained through distance learning being hosted by schools where they practised, universities like Chinhoyi, Bindura, Midlands State, Great Zimbabwe which were initiated from or took over infrastructure meant for teachers' or technical colleges were all manifestations of shortage of required accommodation in this social service sub-sector. In conventional universities like the University of Zimbabwe, unaccommodated students squatting in rooms of resident students became a common phenomenon to the extent that famous writer Dambudzo Marechera is known to have been a guest-lecturer while squatting on campus (Veit-Wild 1987, 1993). Likewise, in the urban housing sub-sector, due to shortages squatter camps, stand-by townships like Hatcliffe Extension and Porta Farm emerged. The government however, paid a blind eye to these informal settlements except when there were international events like the hosting of the non-alignment movement or the visit by Queen Elizabeth during which the government felt compelled to sweep some of its dirty linen under the carpet. Victims of *Murambatsvina* complained that they were ambushed after staying in the makeshift, squatter camps, backyards and cottages for as long as 30 years. One such victim claimed that he had been on the official housing list since the 1980s and his hopes for ever owning a house in Harare were all dashed by *Murambatsvina*, as he recounted that:

I could not afford the high rental charged for full houses so going for a cottage could help me save for my own home. I paid water and electricity bills to the municipality and Zesa (Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority). Why did they collect money from me if I was staying illegally? (Male high density tenant).

Another indicated that *Murambatsvina* changed the whole structure of his family after almost twenty years staying as a nucleated unity:

I had to sell some of my belongings cheaply to raise money for my wife and children to go to my rural home, so that I can rent a single room. My children were not used to rural life. It reminds me of what we read in history that only working men were allowed to stay in town during the Smith¹ regime (Displaced male worker).

From these statements, we concluded that the government of the day had not only abandoned its responsibility to provide opportuni-

ties for housing for all, but also failed to protect its citizens from the loss of the scarce habitation they had sacrificed for. In view of the estimated displacement of 700 000 to 2.4 million urban dwellers, we posit that the government's vision of housing for all by 2020 will remain another unfulfilled promise (Tibajuka 2005; Solidarity Peace Trust 2006; Mahoso 2008; Fontein 2009; Amnesty International 2010). Furthermore, since *Murambatsvina* displacements also led to children losing learning time due to school transfers necessitated by relocations or school dropout altogether could mean that, Zimbabwe which once had one of the best education systems in Africa, in terms of access and other variables, has lost its track towards the Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDG) targets of providing universal basic education by 2015.

***Murambatsvina* and the Reversal of Urbanisation Process**

There is no doubt that *Murambatsvina* only affected the black and largely low-income urban inhabitants of Zimbabwe (Tibajuka 2005). In her assessment of the impact of *Murambatsvina*, the UN special envoy indicated that "most of the victims were already among the most economically disadvantaged groups in society" who included the widows, single mothers, children, orphans, elderly and the disabled (Tibajuka 2005:45). Therefore, to most of its victims, the violent phenomenon reminded them of the racial implications of being black, which was equated to being dirt and therefore not allowed to enter certain places, be in the centre of town or consume wine or liquor. One of the more literate participants who had experienced both colonial and post-colonial rule had this to say in his reference to *Murambatsvina* as derogatory to black race:

As were being chased away from town to the rural areas, I was reminded of some places which had labels like "Right of entry reserved". Before independence that meant blacks are not allowed to enter such a hotel, bank or shop. I could not believe that our own black government would chase its own people from town back to the rural areas (Elderly male squatter).

A review of the colonial history of Zimbabwe indicates that there were constitutional frameworks that in deed designated human



Fig. 2. Debris of informal economic sector site after *Murambatsvina*

settlement on racial lines which were only done away with at independence. Examples of such racial separatist constitutional arrangements include the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and the Land Tenure Act of 1969 which effectively created reserves or Tribal Trust Lands (TTLs) for African settlement, and urban areas as exclusively for white-habitation (Beach 1994). The unemployed, who included children and women who visited their parents or husbands, were rounded up, fined for illegally staying in town and sent back to the TTs in a manner similar to the Pass Laws in apartheid South Africa. It was the evictions through the Land Apportionment Act which made the late liberation hero chief Rekaï Tangwena to join the armed struggle in the mid 1970s.

Murambatsvina therefore implied that the poor black people were the source of dirt which the government was cleaning from the urban areas. Moving people to the rural areas, some of whom had lost touch with was like 'removing dirty' from towns. One affected participant said

the following to illustrate the pain of relocating to the rural areas:

I left the rural home once I got a stable job and I thought since we are now independent, I had the right to permanently live in town. I no more had close relatives back home because we town people were accused of voting for the opposition. It was difficult to send my family back home but I had no choice (Former housing cooperative member).

Thus, *Murambatsvina* was like re-invoking the colonial policies of ruralisation of the poor black people by the post-colonial government, but this time more on the basis of social class than on racial lines.

Murambatsvina and the Reversal of Informal Economic Sub-sector and Indigenisation Policy

Black economic empowerment has always been cited as the main reason for the struggle against colonialism by the liberation and ruling Zanu (PF) party in Zimbabwe (Zanu (PF) Mani-

festos 1980; Mlambo 2008; Vambe 2008). Due to stringent procedures and access to capital, the informal economic sub-sector became the avenue through which most blacks, with government support, could start business ventures (Mlambo 2008; Vambe 2008; Colcart 2007). In the 1990s, the informal economic sub-sector was the one key means by which many urban dwellers cushioned themselves from the harsh economic measures brought about by the economic structural adjustment programme (ESAP) by operating back-yard industries, tuck-shops, emergence taxis and flee-markets. Figure 2, is one example of a site which was left after the destruction of what were alleged to be illegal business operations in 2005.

Most of the backyard industries were self-contained in that one would find a diversity of products being produced and sold at one centre, such that by 2004 it was formally acknowledged that the informal economic sub-sector constituted 40 per cent of the country's gross employment (Vambe 2008). It is in this regard that the destruction of the backyard industries, tuck-shops and flee-markets did not only result in decline in business, but loss of at least 40 per cent of the country's job market. *Murambatsvina* therefore will remain on record as one of the major contributions to the economic melt-down of Zimbabwe just as the Z\$50 000 impulsive compensation to each liberation war veteran in 1998 which resulted in plunging of the Zimbabwean currency to its lowest point since independence, the military involvement in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 1998 and the fast track land reform of 2000.

The Illusion of Operation *Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle*

One of the key guiding principles of the R2P is that nation states have the responsibility to re-build in the event of a humanitarian crisis that negatively affects its citizens (ICISS 2001). *Murambatsvina* was such a catastrophe in that it cause loss of shelter, property, employment and general economic livelihood, forced mass movement or displacement from urban to rural, as well as disease and loss of life throughout Zimbabwe. In line with the responsibility to build, the government launched an intervention scheme called operation *Garikai/Hlalani kuhle*, which was meant to compensate the losses in-

flicted through the clean-up operation (Bell 2011; Chari 2008; Mahoso 2008). Citing the Sunday Mail, a government mouthpiece Chari (2008:110) indicates that the main objective of *Garikai/Hlalani kuhle* was "to provide residential and business accommodation to deserving people under a comprehensive reconstruction programme".

On its face value, the programme looked noble, but participants of this study revealed some dimensions that rendered the major objective of the programme unattainable. First, evidence from study informants, as well as observations made at most of post-*Murambatsvina* reconstruction sites indicated that most of the housing units built as compensation were incomplete and of substandard, if valued against decent housing standards (see Fig. 4). Second, there were complaints that the houses were being allocated to undeserving people who had not been affected by the clean-up operation. The following were statements which indicated some irregularities in the manner in which the *Garikai/Hlalani kuhle* reconstruction programme was conducted:

Garikai to me was a fake to silence people. Up to now, five years afterwards, we are still not allocated houses. Maybe they are being given to their friends and relatives (Garikai/Hlalani kuhle Prospective house recipient 1).

If you are not a party supporter with a card, you can't get a house. We know it because those who allocate are party leaders. The government programme has been changed to a party politics. This is common in Zimbabwe, its corruption (Garikai/Hlalani kuhle Prospective house recipient 2).

At least I was lucky to get allocated this small house. But still there are no window panes, no doors. I can't complain because there are many who got nothing after losing a real house, not this match box (Garikai/Hlalani kuhle House recipient 1).

Ungarika sei (How can you' stay well) in such a small house? We were cheated; they should have built a house like the same that they destroyed. The government should be sued and prosecuted for this (Garikai/Hlalani kuhle House recipient 2).

To verify the claims made by some of the informants of this study, we present Figures 3, 4 and 5 and complementary evidences. Figure 3 is a sign post at one of the *Garikai/Hlalani kuhle*



Fig. 3. *Garikai/Hlalani kuhle*: A government or ruling party scheme?



Fig. 4. Uncompleted *Garikai/Hlalani kuhle* housing units



Fig. 5. The militarisation of *Garikai/Hlalani kuhle* housing scheme?

housing reconstruction projects. The photograph indicates two flags, namely the ruling Zanu (PF) flag to the left and the national flag of Zimbabwe to the right. Between the two flags is the picture of the late Joshua Nkomo, former president of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and vice president of ZANU (PF), who is used to whip-up support for the ruling party in the western part of the country. From the picture, it can be inferred that party politics could be mixed with government service provision in this regard. Given the fact that the ruling party is the major decision making body, the allegation that ruling party supporters had higher chances of benefitting from this post-*Murambatsvina* re-construction programme cannot be ruled out.

With regards to the quality of houses built to compensate the victims, Figures 4 and 5 serve to illustrate that the houses could be of inferior standards and were could have been allocated before completion. Figure 5 also reveals the irregularities in allocation of the housing units, that ruling party supporters, mostly in the military and police were most of the beneficiaries (Bell 2011). This is illustrated by the army officer

as well as the car parked behind the house, which has a white number plate, which is a government vehicle. This therefore casts some doubts as to whether the actual objectives of this scheme for reconstruction and compensation have remained on focus.

The Illusion of International Community's R2P

The visit for assessing the impact of operation *Murambatsvina* by the UN special envoy in June 2005 has been analysed and perceived from different angles: On the one hand it is perceived as a sign of UN humanitarian concern and international responsibility to protect. On the other hand Tibaijuka's visit is viewed with suspicion, that it was biased from the onset in order to put the Zimbabwean government to task by criminalising the clean-up operation before the UN Security Council (Mahoso 2008). During Tibaijuka's visit there were hopes that the UN would definitely intervene on the side of the affected people since the Zimbabwean catastrophe had been declared a humanitarian crisis by the UN Security Council (Mahoso 2008). How-

ever, narratives from this study indicated that the UN was another big disappointment due to its failure to protect the same victims its special envoy had described as the economically disadvantaged members of society such as widows, single mothers, children, orphans, elderly and the disabled (Tibaijuka 2005: 45). The following complains serve to illustrate how victims of *Murambatsvina* felt frustrated and left in the cold by the UN:

Why did Kofie Anan sent that Tanzanian women? She just wrote a report and went away without giving us any help. This was playing politics while people were dying (Male eye witness)

It was only when that woman sent by the UN was here that UNICEF was giving us tents, water and some food, but no help came afterwards. The government was left to continue burning and chasing away people to the rural areas (Former UN temporary shelter resident)

If the UN is a world government which can control all other governments, then it should have done something here. Maybe because Zimbabwe has no oil like Iraqi, that's why America and Britain did nothing (Male eye witness).

It is the contention of this paper that operation *Murambatsvina*, having been declared a humanitarian security issue by the UN security council, and having taken place after the UN declaration of national governments' and the international community's responsibility to intervene in events that threaten human life, Zimbabwe presented a clear test case for invoking the R2P by the UN. In the end Tabaijuka's largely negative report on Zimbabwe's widely condemned operation *Murambatsvina* has only remained an academic paper presentation for no more than scholarship purpose. The failure of the UN in its R2P is reflected by its very objective in sending the UN envoy "to assess the magnitude of the UN-organised assistance required by 700, 000 to 2,400,000 people allegedly displaced or affected by the operation" (Mahoso 2008:160). Thus, if rendering assistance was the overall object of the UN special envoy, the UN could have done whatever it deemed necessary as a form of assistance to the victims. In this regard, both the UN and the Zimbabwean government were equally to blame with respect to the R2P principles of protection and rebuilding where human security is under threat.

CONCLUSION

The post-colonial government in Zimbabwe has presented itself to the Zimbabwean people and the world as being pro-poor. In the early years of independence, the government actually claimed to be guided by socialist principles. Consequently, national and local government policies aimed for emancipation of the ordinary people through provision of education, housing and health for all by 2000. With regard to achieving housing for all, several home ownership schemes for low income groups emerged, but proved to be unsustainable in meeting the increasing need for urban houses throughout the country. Given this background, the destruction of urban structures during operation *Murambatsvina* did not only reverse the gains that had been realised with respect to the urbanisation process, but were also a contradiction to, and a destabilisation of the national policies and processes on education and health for all. Because *Murambatsvina* caused population movement largely from urban to rural and displacement of people from urban settlements, it reversed the urbanisation process for black people, who had no full rights for urban settlement during the colonial era. Since *Murambatsvina* resulted in loss of business in the informal sector through destruction of tuck-shops and backyard industries, it therefore reversed the indigenous economic empowerment process which the government had embraced and embarked on since 1980. With regards to health and education, *Murambatsvina* shifted school children from their conventional schools. Added to disrupting children's education, it also negatively impacted on the health care system, for example, by moving people long distances away from the clinics where they had usually been getting health care services.

Narrative and photographic data from this study revealed the weaknesses of both the national government of Zimbabwe and the United Nations to apply the principles of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) to avert human suffering. We posit that Zimbabwe's operation *Murambatsvina* was a perfect test case for the application of R2P, but the UN Security Council did not do enough to prevent human suffering after declaring the event as a human security issue, by rebuilding what had been lost by the affected victims. The government of Zimbabwe on the other

hand, by instituting operation *Garikai/Hlalani kuhle*, showed its realisation of acting irresponsibly, but this study revealed that this rebuilding programme which aimed to compensate the victims of operation *Murambatsvina* was an unfulfilled promise. The houses that were meant for compensation were not completed and were described by victims to be inferior to those destroyed. While operation *Murambatsvina* affected urban inhabitants in Zimbabwe irrespective of political affiliation, it seems from this study that the allocation and beneficiaries of *Garikai/Hlalani kuhle* had some political partisan criteria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, we recommend that just like the concerns and controversies of *Gukurahwindi* which led to the loss of human life in the western provinces of Zimbabwe, operation *Murambatsvina* should be put on the national agenda because of the human suffering, economic and social consequences it inflicted upon about 2.4 million people in the country. There should be open debate on the crisis with the view of making government take the responsibility to identify and equitably compensate all the affected victims. The UN, as the umbrella body for ensuring that the R2P is applied where human security is threatened, should be involved in this process by providing technical and financial support.

NOTE

1. Smith regime is generally used to refer to the colonial era in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), which was ruled by Ian Smith from 1965 to 1980.

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