

**IMPACT OF OPERATION MURAMBATSVINA (RESTORE ORDER) ON FLEA
MARKETS IN MUTARE: IMPLICATIONS FOR ACHIEVING MDG 1 AND
SUSTAINABLE URBAN LIVELIHOODS**

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Abstract

This study set out to assess the socio-economic impacts of ‘Operation Murambatsvina’ (Restore Order) on flea market operators in Mutare, and examine the implications of these impacts on achieving the first Millennium Development Goal and sustainable livelihoods among the urban poor. A questionnaire survey and interviews were used as complementary primary data collection methods. The main findings were that females dominate flea market trading and therefore were worst affected by Operation Restore Order. Lower income, poor infrastructure and services, high rentals and competition for customers were the main costs of Operation Restore Order. The null hypothesis was accepted that Operation Restore Order did not improve the life of flea market traders in Mutare, thereby posing serious challenges to the achievement of MDG 1 and sustainable urban livelihoods. There is need for the government to revise the outdated Regional Town and Country Planning Act and other retrogressive pieces of legislation, to align them with prevailing social, economic and cultural realities. It is therefore imperative that government and municipal authorities consider informal activities as important for poverty reduction and the achievement of sustainable urban livelihoods. Government should also demonstrate genuine political commitment to solving the unemployment problem. Relocation of traders to rural areas to engage in farming should not be viewed as a solution to reduce illegal informal market activities since it is simply a retrogressive measure going against global urbanization trends.

Background to the study

The concept of the informal sector has been debated since the emergence of informal sector activities in Africa in the early 1970s (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2002). The concept has continued to be used by many policy makers, labour

advocates, and researchers because it provides information on the workforce that remains outside full time, stable and protected employment. The informal sector is a universal phenomenon found in most if not all urban areas globally. Carr (1997) defines the informal sector as an economic activity where labour is unprotected, while Portes and Schauffler (1993) view it as a variety of insecure or unregistered employment found in urban areas of developing countries. Informal sector activities are often small in scale, use simple technology and are characterized by self employment (Moyo et al 1984; Mhone 1993, 1994).

There is agreement that informal trade is unprotected and unregulated. Mitullah (2003) views those working in the informal economy as operating in unregulated and unprotected environments that are not conducive to business. This view is shared by Chant (1999) who asserts that, the informal sector comprises income generating activities that are not regulated by the state in contexts where similar activities are so regulated. Matsebula (1996) also contends that the recognition of the urban informal sector in the developing world has become an important avenue towards the attainment of development goals since the 1970s. This view is in agreement with Mutizwa-Mangiza's (1986) comment that many governments in the less developed world now accept as inevitable the persistence and importance of the informal sector. ILO (2002) describes the informal sector as small unregistered or unincorporated enterprises including employers, employees, own account operators, and unpaid family workers in informal enterprises. ILO further describes informal sector as being segmented, that is, having a wide range of enterprises.

The urban informal sector in advanced economies has become a permanent, albeit subordinate and dependent feature of capitalist development. In both North America and Europe, production has been reorganized into small scale, decentralized, and more flexible units (ILO, 2002). Mass production is giving way to “flexible specialization” or in some contexts reverting to sweatshop production. These patterns of capitalist development have been associated with the informalization of employment relations, standard jobs being turned into non-standard jobs with hourly wages, but few benefits or into piece-rate jobs with no benefits, and sub-contracting the production of goods and services to small scale informal units and industrial outworkers [ibid].

In 1988, for example, in fifteen countries of the European Union (EU), non standard arrangements such as temporary employment, self employment in non agricultural industries and part-time employment represented one quarter of total employment. By 1998 the percentage had risen to 30% of the total employment (ILO, 2002). During this same period in the United States about 25 % of the workforce was in non-standard arrangements (ibid). Wolf (2001) estimates that more than half a million people display and sell their wares at flea markets in America, which provides an opportunity for entrepreneurship and self-employment. A significant portion of the merchandise sold at these venues is purchased from wholesalers and then retailed to customers (ibid).

The Informal Economy in Less Developed Countries

Whereas one cause of the growth of the informal sector in developed countries was mass production, in most developing countries, rural-urban migration contributed towards the accelerated growth of the informal economy. A large number of unemployed men and women migrating to cities earn a living through informal trade, mainly street

vending (Cohen et al., 2000). Todaro and Smith (2003) also state that rural-urban migration accelerates the growth of informal trade as people migrate to urban areas to seek economic opportunities. Self employment represents 70% of informal employment in sub-Saharan Africa and 62% in North Africa (ILO, 2002). In Sub-Saharan Africa 84% of women non-agricultural workers are informally employed, compared to 63% of male non-agricultural workers (ibid)

The definitions and characteristics of the informal sector highlighted above reveal the main features of informal activities as self-employment, low capital intensity, flexibility in hours of operation, small scale operations, non- separation of business inputs from household inputs and low division of labour. This makes informal sector activities most ideal for less developed countries in general and Zimbabwe in particular. ILO (2002) is very positive about the informal sector noting its efficiency, creativity and resilience. The phenomenon of the informal sector has received mixed views in development circles

Some commentators consider the informal sector as marginal or peripheral and not linked to the formal sector or to modern capitalist development (Bibangambah, 1992). He contends that it has become fashionable for commentators from rich industrialized and technically advanced countries to argue that the informal sector, characterized as unorganized and non institutional, is an important source of urban employment and economic activity in poor countries and hence its growth is part of the dynamics of development. Bibangambah, however, argues that the informal sector is not synonymous with the small scale sector; that the informal sector is heterogeneous and counter

productive and that it is a manifestation of socio-economic decay which is a facet of Africa's development crisis.

A series of studies agree that the informal sector is both large and a viable component to the formal sector, because it is labour intensive, uses simple technology, is less import dependent and creates cheap employment, (Moyo et al, 1984; Peters-Berries 1993; Mhone 1993, 1994). There is also consensus that women constitute the bulk of the informal sector. McPherson (1991) puts their share at 57% in Zimbabwe. Human Rights Watch (2005) reports that as part of the drive to empower women in the 1990s, the government of Zimbabwe encouraged widows and divorced women to build and rent out cabins in their backyards as a means of survival.

Like the developed countries, most less developed countries experienced an increase in the informal sector but due partly to neo-liberal policies such as the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). Many employees were retrenched and the public sector downsized. This stoked inflation and as a result, economic hardships. Many people engaged in informal sector trading are women constituting the greater percentage (Tekere 2001). Zimbabwe is one such country where the informal sector trade owes its rise to economic structural adjustment (ibid).

In this research, focus was on flea market traders among the wide range of informal activities. Flea markets lower consumers' cost of obtaining goods and services because they are an inexpensive way for people to market their wares in a friendly but competitive business environment (Wolf, 2001). In Africa flea markets have mainly traded in imported second hand textiles, sandals, kitchenware and jewelry. Flea markets, however, have been viewed as problematic in cities because they are associated with

disorder and criminal activities, a prime reason given by the Zimbabwe government for the implementation of Operation Restore Order in Zimbabwe, in May 2005.

The Informal Sector in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe increased insecurity during the liberation war in the 1970s and the removal of legal restrictions on population movement at independence in 1980, led to an unprecedented population drift to the major cities in Zimbabwe, resulting in rapid population increases (UN-Habitat, 2005). Zimbabwe's urban population rose rapidly from 23% in 1982 to 30% of total national population by the 1990s (ibid). The introduction of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes [ESAP] and its successor program, the Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST) in the 1990s, marked a major negative economic turning point. The austerity measures imposed by ESAP and ZIMPREST led to, inter alia, the massive retrenchment of skilled and unskilled labour due to the downsizing of the civil service and either the restructuring or closure of many industrial and commercial enterprises; general price increases and the deterioration of social services. These factors, combined with the liberalization of the economy, led to the gradual but systematic decline of the formal economy and to the rapid growth of the informal sector, especially in the rapidly growing towns and cities. Figures of those employed in the informal sector rose from 10% in 1980 to 40% of total employment in 2004 (UN Habitat, 2005). The informal economy was effectively becoming the mainstay for the majority of Zimbabweans (ibid). International Labour Organization (ILO) (2005) as quoted by The Zimbabwean (2005), however, reported that 3 to 4 million Zimbabweans earned their living through informal sector employment, supporting another 5 million people, while formal sector employed

about 1.3 million people (ibid). Most local authorities derive substantial revenues from fees levied from informal sector activities.

Three political factors deepened the economic crisis in the 1990s, that is, unbudgeted cash handouts to war veterans in 1997 and military intervention in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the “Fast Track” land reform program in 2000, (UN Habitat, 2005). These developments triggered an inflationary spiral in the economy which has persisted to date.

During ESAP the government supported the ascendance of the informal sector through a series of policies. Women were the main beneficiaries of these policies. Flea markets sprouted everywhere in the cities. One of the direct outcomes of trade liberalization was the upsurge in informal cross-border trade, mainly involving the unemployed. This trend spurred the growth of flea markets in Zimbabwe. Due to the deepening harsh economic conditions it is no longer the unemployed alone who engage in this form of trade but those who are formally employed as well. Despite their active contribution to the urban economy, informal traders rarely pay taxes or fees in direct proportion to the services they receive. This has led to declining municipal revenues and expenditures in per capita terms, making town planning and urban governance difficult.

The informal sector in Zimbabwe has both positively and negatively impacted the national economy. It has created direct employment and also indirectly through a chain of other service providers such as transport and commuter operators. In addition the informal economy also enhances household incomes (Tevera, 1993; Tekere, 2001; Ncube and Phillip, 2006). Through increased incomes and importation of some foods, flea market traders have improved food security for urban households (Tekere, 2001).

Furthermore and with reference to flea market traders, since they cross borders to import products they reduce pressure on foreign exchange resources by selling local products such as hand crafts, and then use the proceeds to buy imports for sale locally. Informal trade is also a source of economic empowerment to a large number of Zimbabwean women who cannot be absorbed in the formal labour market (ibid).

Ncube and Phillip (2006) maintain that the informal sector is the lifeblood of the nation. Their argument is premised on the fact that with formal unemployment standing at over 80% and with over 80% of the population below the poverty datum line, the informal sector was in 2005 estimated to contribute as much as 60% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It can therefore be considered as playing a crucial role in poverty alleviation.

However, there are negative aspects of the informal economy. Much of the money generated through informal sector activities never passes through the formal banking system or tax department. The informal sector has engendered a thriving parallel foreign currency market. It has been estimated that 90% of money earned in the Diaspora and sent home to Zimbabweans was also not passing through the Reserve Bank (ibid). Another drawback of the informal sector is that government has lost much revenue through traders who evade tax and duty at borders. In addition the role of the informal economy in alleviating poverty can be contested and counter productive. A thriving informal sector may lead to winding up of big textile and kitchen ware firms as what has happened over the past 7 years in Zimbabwe, resulting in many employees being laid off.

Empirical studies have shown that the urban poor face barriers which restrict their entry into a variety of legitimate informal sector occupations such as street hawking and

petty commodity production. For example, Davies (1978) has suggested that the requirement by authorities for licenses provides a means to control and limit entry into the informal sector in Zimbabwe. In spite of recent policy shifts and advances in supporting the informal sector, official attitudes in Zimbabwe have remained largely hostile; also in spite of the mounting problems of unemployment and the inability of urban authorities to cope with the demand for social facilities (Mutizwa- Mangiza, 1986, Ncube, 1998; UN Habitat, 2005). The role of the informal sector in Zimbabwe lacks consistent official recognition and support.

Against this background of policy ambivalence amid a thriving informal economy, the government implemented 'Operation Murambatsvina' ('Operation Restore Order') in May 2005. The "insecurity" in streets and flea market places is sometimes used as an excuse to evict vendors. In Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe, sites for vending are often viewed by urban authorities as dens for thieves and robbers (Mitullah, 2003). It was in this vein that Operation Restore Order was undertaken in Zimbabwe. The government of Zimbabwe gave the following reasons as justification for the operation : arresting disorderly or chaotic urbanization, including its health consequences; stopping illegal, parallel market transactions, especially foreign currency dealing and hoarding of consumer commodities in short supply; and reversing damage caused by inappropriate urban agricultural practices (UN Habitat, 2005). The term 'Operation Tsunami' was also popular with local people because of the speed and ferocity of the exercise, which resulted in the destruction of houses, business premises and vending sites in Zimbabwe's towns and cities.

'Murambatsvina' targeted first and foremost the informal sector and illegal structures in general and flea market traders (most of whom happened to be women) in particular (UN Habitat 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2005; Ncube and Phillip, 2006). While some activities in the informal sector could be legitimately described as illegal, such as foreign currency dealing, much of the informal activities involve ordinary people trying to make a meager living from buying and selling fruit and vegetables, clothes, shoes and other goods at a slight mark up. Prior to Operation Restore Order flea markets had become the mainstay of women and the urban poor, many of whom had licenses and properly allocated bays. They had managed to sustain a living, but all of a sudden life became very difficult for the victims of the Operation and their dependents (Ncube and Phillip, 2006). There is also a general agreement among researchers that Operation Murambatsvina was carried out without warning, and in the event people lost a lot of valuables and some suffered from the trauma of losing their source of livelihood overnight.

Traders were moved out from town centers into designated vending markets on the outskirts of cities. An estimated 90 000 vendors had their bays demolished (Ncube and Phillip, 2006). A total of 92 460 housing structures were demolished, directly affecting 133,534 households. At the same time 32 538 premises/structures of small, micro and medium size enterprises were demolished as per government figures released on 7 July 2005. The UN Special Envoy, however, put the total figure of those who lost homes and businesses at 650 000 to 700 000 people and a total of 2.4 million people who were directly or indirectly affected by Operation Murambatsvina (UN Habitat, 2005; Ncube and Phillip 2006). Operation Murambatsvina aroused the anger and condemnation

of the international community (UN Habitat, 2005), local civic and rights groups, as well as informal sector players in Zimbabwe. Media reports indicate widespread anger with the timing and methods of the operation in spite of various attempts by the government to justify the exercise.

In Mutare, in a report made by the then mayor of the City to the UN-Special Envoy, it was revealed that the clean up exercise brought misery to thousands of Mutare residents and foreigners from neighboring Mozambique, who were left homeless and were living in the open (Manica Post 8-14 July 2005). The Manica Post (17-23 June 2005) also reported the demolition of Murahwa Green Market resulting in hundreds of informal traders being stranded. Mutare had many illegal flea markets removed from high density suburbs (Manica Post, 3-9 June 2005). Operation Murambatsvina also found many illegal vendors in the city who were dealing in basic commodities like cooking oil, sugar, bread, mealie-meal and maize being arrested and prosecuted. The Asian business community was cited in the Manica Post (27 May-2 June 2005) as being responsible for fuelling the black market. Besides illegal vending sites, the Operation also destroyed illegal informal residential structures (paper, plastic, wood and scrap metal shacks) which had become a characteristic feature of Mutare's Sakubva high density suburb, due to an acute housing shortage. A total of 32 000 dwellings were demolished resulting in about 50 000 people sleeping in the open (UN Habitat, 2005). The Manica Post (3-9 June 2005) reported that illegal accommodation structures or shacks, tuck shops, flea market structures and barber shops were razed. The paper claimed that the shacks "were giving refuge to criminal elements, prostitutes and other social miscreants". The same paper (3-

9 June) also claimed a decline of 50% in the crime rate. In addition illegal foreign citizens were arrested and deported (Manica Post, 27 May-2 June 2005).

Urban-rural migration was another result of the operation throughout the country. The Manica Post and UN Habitat (2005) revealed that thousands of people drifted to rural areas. These people had no means to start a new life in the urban areas. Human Rights Watch (2005) contends that women were the worst affected since they did not own properties in rural areas and depended on flea market trading in urban areas for their livelihood.

After Operation Restore Order flea market traders and vendors in Mutare were allocated alternative places to operate from, on condition that they acquired hawkers' licenses and paid levies to the local authority. Meikles Park, Sakubva Stadium and Green Market were designated as the legal flea market sites. It was, however, revealed that after the 'clean up' under cover dealers resurfaced at street corners, in front of shops, at robots and many other viable sites (Manica Post 22-28 July 2005).

This study, therefore, sought to assess the socio-economic impacts of Operation Murambatsvina on Mutare flea market operators. The research also explored the implications of Operation Restore Order on the achievement of the United Nations Millennium Development Goal 1, which aims to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger (UN, 2000a). Two of its three targets are to halve the proportion of people earning less than US\$1/day and those who suffer hunger by the year 2015 (ibid). 'Operation Murambatsvina' directly negatively impacted the livelihoods of an estimated 90 000 vendors and indirectly adversely affected the livelihoods of a further (estimated) 2,4 million Zimbabweans (Phillip and Ncube, 2006). Local, foreign print and electronic

media reported on the plight of the flea market operators. The operation resulted in either a total income loss or a lowering of income, making it difficult to survive in Zimbabwe's harsh economic climate. Since 'Operation Murambatsvina' affected all towns and cities in Zimbabwe it negatively impacted the livelihoods of the urban poor. Therefore the research also sought to examine the effects of the operation on sustainable urban livelihoods. The concept of 'livelihood' is defined as capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living (De Satge et al. 2002). A 'sustainable livelihood is one that can cope with and recover from shocks and stresses as well as maintain and enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future (ibid). To try and measure the effects of Operation Restore Order on urban poverty and livelihoods the following hypotheses were tested.

Statement of Hypotheses

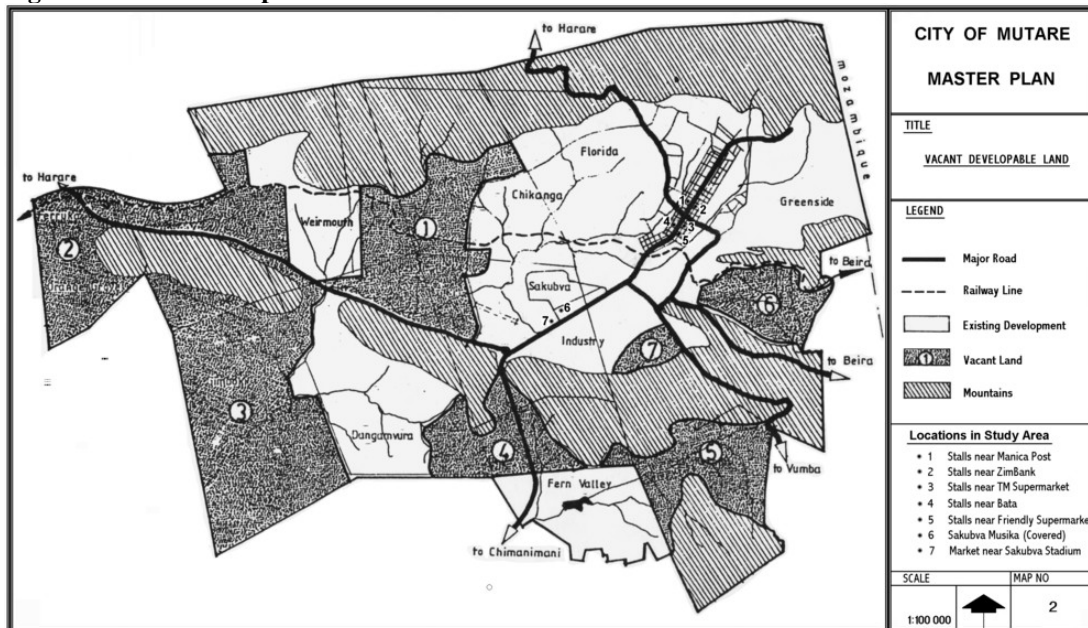
- Ho: Operation Murambatsvina has not improved the socio-economic status of flea market operators in Mutare
- H1: Operation Murambatsvina' has improved the socio-economic status of flea market operators in Mutare.

Description of the Study Area

Mutare is Zimbabwe's third largest city, after Harare-Chitungwiza and Bulawayo. It is also the provincial capital of the Eastern Province of Manicaland. The city is located 262 km by road and rail from Harare. The two major flea market sites remaining after Operation Murambatsvina, one close to Sakubva Stadium in Sakubva high density suburb and the other at Meikles Park in the city center were the main focus of the study.

Sakubva Stadium flea market is located in Sakubva high density suburb, Mutare's oldest high density or low income suburb. It is 5km from the city center. Meikles Park flea market is in the city centre (Figure1).It operates from the Meikles Car Park during weekends and public holidays only. Makeshift structures are erected during these trading days. The area is smarter than the Sakubva Stadium flea market. Since the park is paved, the wares can be laid on the ground. Being in the city center, it is strategically located because that is where most customers converge from all corners of the province.

Figure 1: Location Map of Mutare.



Source: Mutare City Council

Research Methodology

A descriptive survey approach relying on questionnaires and interviews was used.

Most questions on the questionnaire were closed to ensure precision in responding within a limited time frame, and to reduce interviewee training time as well as the survey period. The bias of closed questions was neutralized by the use of open-ended questions. However, these were limited to minimize disruption of flea market traders'

operations. The questionnaire instrument was pilot tested at Green Market Flea Market for refinement, using 10 respondents.

The target population had 250 subjects drawn from the two main flea market sites at Meikles Park and Sakubva Stadium. A smaller flea market site found at Green Market used during weekdays was not part of the study. The simple random sampling method was used to draw a sample. To achieve this, 200 names were obtained from Sakubva Stadium, the larger of the two flea markets, and 50 names from Meikles Park. The flea market committees provided the list of names of all flea market traders at the two sites. In order to come up with a manageable sample for the study, 20 percent of the target population was sampled using the gold fish bowl method where drawing was done without replacement. Therefore 20 percent of 250 traders yielded 50 traders: 40 from Sakubva Stadium flea market and 10 from Meikles Park. These were the 50 respondents served with questionnaires in December 2006. Questionnaires were hand distributed to flea market traders and collected soon after completion to avoid losses and delays.

Non-structured interviews were used to complement the questionnaire. Officials from Mutare City Council and the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises were interviewed as key informants because they were directly involved in administering Operation Restore Order and mapping out future plans for the flea market traders in Mutare.

Results and Discussion

Survey and interview results were analyzed to establish the socio-economic impacts of Operation Restore Order on flea market operators in Mutare. This would enable an assessment of the implications of these effects on the achievement firstly of

Millennium Development Goal 1, Targets 1 and 2, and secondly sustainable livelihoods for Mutare's urban poor.

Sex, Age and Educational Levels

While females constituted 72% of the respondents, 28% were males. These results confirm observations made by Mitullah (2003) and McPherson (1991) who assert that females dominate informal sector activities such as vending and petty commercial trading.

Fifty six percent of the sampled flea market operators were aged below thirty years with a further 26% aged below forty years. The data collected on age gave a mean age of the flea market operators as 31.7 years. The flea markets are therefore dominated by young female traders who may be involved in flea market trading as a stop-gap measure, as Tevera (1993) and UN-Habitat (2005) suggest.

Table 1: Level of education attained

Level of Education	Frequency	%
Below Grade 7 (Std 6)	0	0
Grade 7	4	8
Form 2	8	16
'O' level	29	58
'A' level	9	18
Other	0	0
Total	50	100

The majority of respondents (76%) had an 'O' level education or better (Table 1). The bulk of this group has failed to secure formal employment due initially to the negative impacts of ESAP and ZIMPREST (Tekere, 2001), but now also as a result of the relentless shrinking of the Zimbabwean economy in the wake of the controversial 2000

fast track land reform program. This explains the dominance of this group in flea market activities.

Citizenship, Marital Status and Number of Dependents

All the sampled traders were Zimbabwean by birth. This could be due to the fact that Operation Restore Order had forced flea market traders of foreign origin to leave Mutare. When the shacks and boards where most of them resided were demolished, they could not afford the expensive rentals in conventional housing and therefore decided to go back to their countries of origin. During the survey, however traders who spoke a Mozambican dialect were encountered at Sakubva Flea Market but these traders insisted that they were Zimbabweans.

Table 2: Respondents by marital status

Marital Status	No. of respondents	%
Single	18	36
Married	14	28
Divorced	7	14
Separated	1	2
Widowed	10	20
Total	50	100

While 36% of the sample were single, 28% were married, 20% widowed and 14% divorced (Table 2). The preponderance of the single traders re-enforces the dominance of youthful traders in flea market activities. The relatively high percentage of married traders is indicative of the need to augment family incomes in a highly inflationary environment with limited formal sector job opportunities, as also maintained by Mitullah (2003). That there are many widows in the sampled population might be a reflection of the negative impacts of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Zimbabwe which is

forcing more women to assume the role of bread winner. These findings are in agreement with those of Tevera (1993) and the Human Rights Watch (2005).

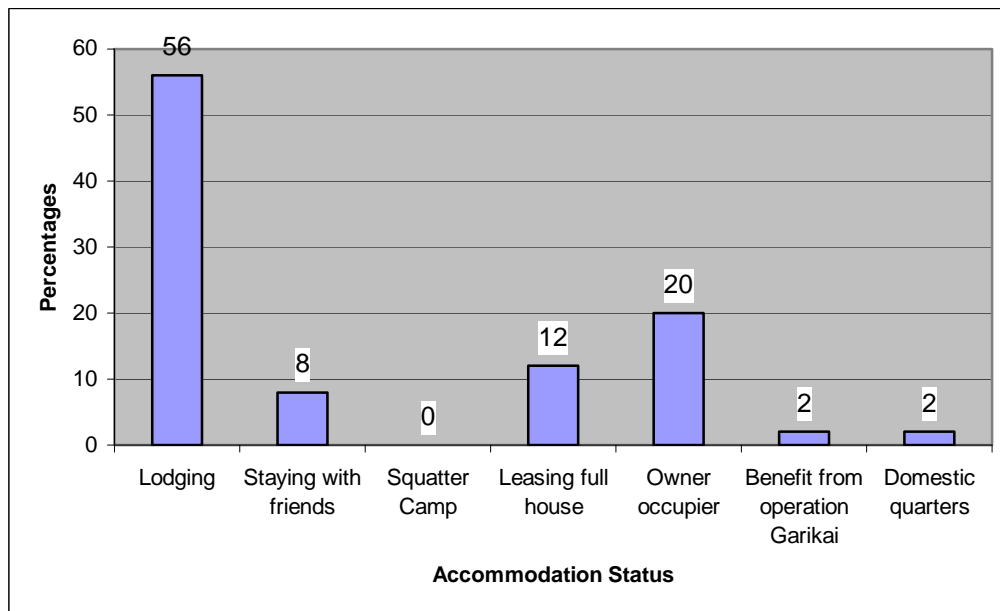
Table 3: Number of dependents

Number of dependents	Frequency	%
None	2	4
Less than 3	4	8
3-4	16	32
5-6	22	44
7-8	5	10
9 and above	1	2
Total	50	100

Eighty-six percent of the flea market operators had 3-8 dependents with forty-four percent having 5-6 dependents, while 32% had 3-4 dependents (Table 3). This is a high dependency load which affects issues of poverty and sustainable urban livelihoods. Another interesting aspect of the results is that although single traders outnumber other categories, they too have dependents.

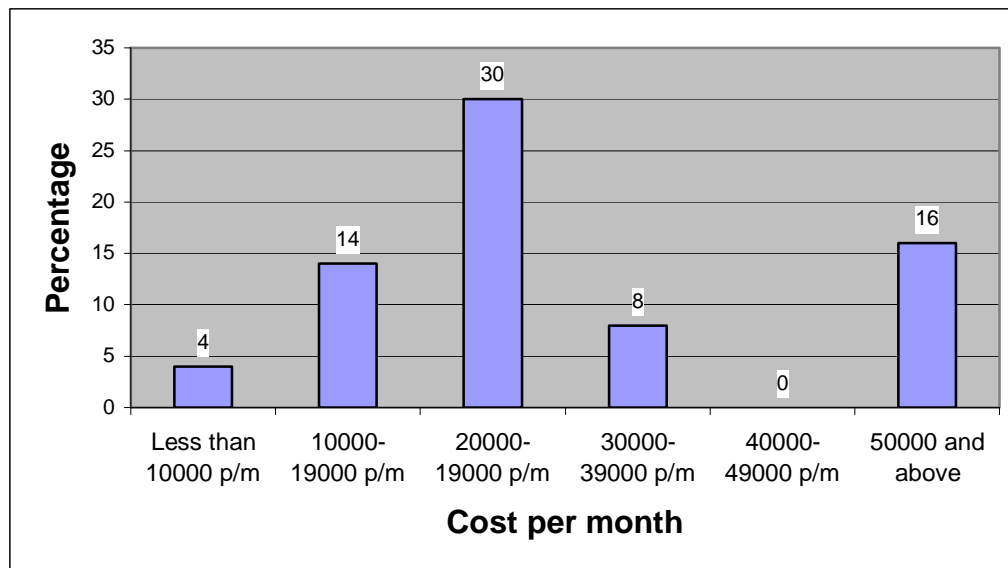
Accommodation Status and Duration of Stay in Mutare:

Figure 2: Accommodation status



Fifty-six percent of the traders were lodging in one or more rooms while 20% were owner occupiers (Figure 2). Twelve percent of the traders were leasing full houses while 8% were staying with friends. Only 2% have benefited from ‘Operation Garikai’, a government funded housing scheme purportedly targeting victims of Operation Restore Order. Another 2% stay in domestic quarters since they are also employed as domestic servants. The high number of lodgers partly indicates that most of the flea market traders are from the urban poor and partly points towards the level of the housing problem in the city.

Figure 3: Monthly rentals



The majority (30%) paid rentals in the Z\$20 000-29 000 category while 16% paid Z\$50 000 and above and another 14% paid Z\$10 000-19 000 per month (Figure 3). Eight percent paid Z\$30 000-39 000. Only 4% pay less than Z\$10 000 per month. Most of the respondents paid Z\$20 000-29 000 indicating that they were lodging in one or two rooms. Those who paid above Z\$50 000 were leasing full houses and have other sources of income such as a spouse’s income from formal employment. It must be pointed out that

the amounts shown above would be much higher. At the end of 2005 the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe slashed three zeros from the Z\$ because the hyperinflationary environment had devalued the local currency to a level where the money supply situation had become unmanageable.

Table 4 : Duration of stay in Mutare

Duration of stay (years)	Frequency	%
Below 5	2	4
5-10	10	20
11-15	12	24
16-20	17	34
20 and above	9	18
Total	50	100

Most of the flea market traders, 34%, have stayed in Mutare for 16-20 years while 24% have stayed for 11 to 15 years and 20% for 5-10 years, with 18% having stayed in the city for 20 years or more (Table 4). These findings contradict the general trend in cities of the South where informal traders are drawn from the recent migrants from rural areas (Cohen et al, 2000; Todaro and Smith, 2003). The flea market traders were drawn from the ranks of the well entrenched urban poor. The findings echo those of Brand (1986) who observed that more than 50% of the informal sector operators at Magaba informal industrial estate in Mbare, Harare, had lived in the city for at least 15 years. One likely explanation is that recent rural-urban migrants to the city dominate those informal sector activities that require little capital, like fruit and vegetable vending, while those who have been in the city for a longer period engage in activities requiring greater capital outlay. Another reason is that Zimbabwe's deepening economic crisis has accelerated the shrinking of formal sector employment, compelling many urban residents to resort to informal sector activities like flea market trade.

Socio-Economic Aspects of Flea Market Operators

Length of Time as a Flea Market Trader:

Table 5 Length of time as a flea market operator

Length of time (years)	Frequency	%
Less than 1	4	8
1-6	24	48
7-12	16	32
13-18	6	12
Total	50	100

The majority of the sampled traders (48%) had been in the trade for 1-6 years, while 32% had spent 7-12 years (Table 5). Some 12% had been flea market traders for 13-18 years while 8% had less than one year in the trade. That 92% of the sample have engaged in flea market trade for 1 to 18 years is evidence of the adverse effects of structural adjustment programs; ill conceived government policies which included cash handouts to ex-combatants in 1997 and military intervention in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and the poorly planned fast track land reform program, as argued earlier (Tekere, 2001; UN-Habitat, 2005; ILO, 2005; Ncube and Phillip, 2006).

Area of Operation before Operation Restore Order

Thirty percent of the traders operated from Meikles Park while 20% were at Sakubva Stadium before Operation Restore Order. Another 16% used to trade from the Roundabout followed by 8% at Mudzviti Bus Terminus. Those who operated from along roads and the Green Market were 4% each. The rest used to operate from home, Harare, Zvishavane and South Africa. The findings confirm the strategic position of Sakubva Stadium and Meikles Park in terms of customer base. The results also reveal a significant shift of flea market trade from the city centre and areas near it to Sakubva. Sakubva is in the oldest suburb of Mutare with possibly the highest population density, while Meikles Park is right in the city centre flanked by major chain stores such as OK, TM and Spar.

Views on New Trading Sites after Operation Restore Order

The majority of respondents, 52%, were unhappy with the new areas designated for flea markets after Operation Restore Order, whereas 48% were happy. The group that was dissatisfied came mostly from flea market traders who operate at Green Market during weekdays. They complained of lack of clientele and that the area was mainly an industrial area where customers who are young would rarely visit preferring the city centre instead. The greatest number of those who were happy with the new sites was drawn from Sakubva flea market. These traders were not affected much by Operation Restore Order in terms of relocation because their previous areas of operation were in and around Sakubva, therefore they benefited from getting an authorized trading site. It was, however, pointed out by most flea market traders at Sakubva that the new area lacked basic services and facilities such as electricity, water, toilets and trading bays. When City Council officials were interviewed, they regarded current flea market sites as temporary and indicated that the Council was still trying to identify suitable areas for traders. City Council officials pointed out that there were no prospects of locating the markets in the city centre, because this would disturb the business of clothing shops.

Type and Source of Merchandise

The most important items sold by the sampled flea market traders included second hand clothes, new clothes, footwear and bags. Most flea market traders are involved in the sale of second hand clothes because Mutare is adjacent to Mozambique which is the chief source of second hand clothes. Bales of used clothes can easily enter the country legally or illegally from Mozambique. Many arrests of illegal cross-border traders in second hand clothes have been made according to the Manica Post (6-12 October 2006).

New clothes and other items are cheaply acquired from Harare, now flooded with new and second hand items from China, Dubai, South Africa and Botswana; and directly from South Africa. Other direct sources of merchandise include Botswana and Zambia, especially for footwear. These findings agree with those of Tekere (2001) who says that Zimbabwean informal sector traders have widened their coverage to include countries in the Southern African region, as well as Dubai, for their merchandise.

Flea Market Working Conditions

Table 6: Working days per week

Days	Frequency	Percentage
7	29	58
6	16	32
5	3	6
4	0	0
3	0	0
2	2	4
Total	50	100

Most of the sampled traders (90%) work for 6 to 7 day per week, (58% on a 7 day and a further 32% on a 6 day week) (Table 6). The few who operated a two or five day week could be traders who are employed elsewhere during the week and they use weekends and a few weekdays to sell their goods.

Table 7: Working hours per day

Hours	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 4	0	0
4-6	8	16
7-9	35	70
10 and above	7	14
Total	50	100

Seventy percent of the flea market traders work 7-9 hours per day, 16% for 4-6 hours while 14% work 10 hours and above per day (Table 7). No one works for less than 4 hours. The majority of the flea market traders are therefore working both a long week and day. Due to the melt down of Zimbabwe's economy, flea market traders are operating in a very hostile economic climate where incomes are constantly eroded by the runaway inflation. Therefore they have to utilize all the time that comes their way, because losing a day may result in insufficient income for survival. Working flat out throughout the week also indicates that their profits are marginal, a finding also made by Ncube and Phillip (2006). Those working less than 6 days a week and less than 7 hours per day usually have gainful employment elsewhere and use flea market trading to supplement their income.

Table 8: Weekly earnings of flea market traders

Weekly earnings (Z\$)	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 10000	0	0
10000-15000	4	8
15001-20000	3	6
20001-25000	3	6
25001-30000	1	2
30001-35000	6	12
35000 and above	33	66
Total	50	100

Sixty-six percent of the respondents had gross earnings of above Z\$35 000 per week (Table 8). Most of the traders indicated that their average gross weekly earnings were ranging from Z\$70 000 up to as much as Z\$500 000 per week. This made it difficult to assess the average earnings because they are constantly changing due to the rampant inflation. Therefore flea market traders ended up giving figures based on earnings

obtained during recent weeks. Twelve percent of the respondents earned Z\$30 001-35 000, 8% got Z\$10000-15 000 while 6% earned Z\$15 001 to \$25 000 per week. There was no one in the less than \$10 000 category. As explained earlier, these figures would be much higher were it not for the recent 'revaluation' of the Zimbabwean currency.

The majority of flea market traders managed to be gainfully employed and earn an income to meet basic household needs in the current difficult economic conditions. This finding is in agreement with findings by Tekere (2001) and Tevera (1993) who assert that informal sector employment increases purchasing levels.

Running Costs of Flea Market Operations

All the sampled flea market traders indicated that they paid Z\$1000-00 per day rent for using Mutare City Council premises. Although City Council employees come physically to the flea market sites to collect the levies, the City Council is not strict about levy collection. Traders are given room to negotiate the method and time of payment. This is a weakness on the part of the City Council as they cannot rely on this income and plan for the future needs of flea market sites. Though flea market traders indicated gross weekly earnings of between Z\$70000-Z\$500000 they still cannot manage to pay on time because these amounts are gross earnings. Due to the harsh economic conditions business can be very sluggish resulting in low daily takings. In addition, traders pay an overnight storage charge of Z\$20000-00 per bag at premises where they leave their goods for the night

All the flea market traders were not paying anything for water, refuse and electricity at flea market sites. This is yet another weakness in the management aspect by

the City Council since it is losing much revenue. Flea market traders access these services from the nearest points at no cost.

Table 9: Transport costs to and from the flea market

Amount (Z\$)	Frequency	Percentage
None	7	14
250-500	1	2
501-1000	2	4
1001-1500	6	12
Above 1500	34	68
Total	50	100

Most respondents (68%) paid more than Z\$1500-00 per journey, while 14% of the total respondents did not incur any transport costs (Table 9). Twelve percent of respondents fell into the category of those who pay Z\$1001-Z\$1500. Residents of Danganvura and Chikanga high density suburbs paid Z\$3000-00 for a return journey while residents of Sakubva incurred no transport costs.

Costs and Benefits of Operation Restore Order to Flea Market Traders

Table 10: Benefits of Operation Restore Order to flea market traders

Benefits	Frequency	Percentage
Order and Security	8	16
Source of income	19	38
Empowerment of women	11	22
Employment	12	24
Total	50	100

The majority of respondents, 38%, regarded source of income as the greatest benefit while 24% indicated that employment at legitimate sites was a benefit of Operation Restore Order (Table 10). This is critical for meeting household basic needs and ensuring sustainable urban livelihoods. Empowerment of women ranked third with 22% and lastly, order and security with 16% of the total respondents. It is interesting to note the stated government aim in undertaking Operation Restore Order, restoring order

and sanity to informal sector activities was ranked lowest by the sampled population. However, flea market traders were assured of security of tenure because they were provided with authorized trading areas. They acknowledged that they were trading without fear of arrest and harassment by the police. That empowerment of women ranked third is a reflection of the dominance of women in flea market trade as discussed earlier (Human Rights Watch, 2005; UN Habitat, 2005; Ncube and Phillip, 2006). The informal sector is a means of economic empowerment to a large number of women who cannot be absorbed into the formal sector. Instead of many women staying at home as housewives, they have strengthened their economic positions by becoming breadwinners for their families through engaging in flea market trade.

Table 11: Costs of Operation Restore Order to Flea Market traders.

Costs	Frequency	Percentage
Lower sources of income	22	44
Poor infrastructure and services	18	36
High rentals	6	12
Competition	4	8
Total	50	100

The major costs associated with Operation Restore Order were lower incomes (44%) due to a smaller client base, and lack of infrastructure and services (36%) at the new sites (Table 11). For Sakubva Flea Market, products sold at lower prices than they did in town during weekends, therefore affecting weekly incomes. Traders pointed out that their operations were hampered by lack of water, toilets, electricity and selling bays at all designated areas. The spaces allocated for trading were small and did not allow proper display of wares. The designated areas also lacked refuse collection services and became very filthy especially in wet weather. The Sakubva Flea Market became very

muddy during wet weather because it is not paved. Lack of storage for their goods at the new sites meant that flea market traders incurred extra costs for off-site overnight storage.

Additional costs of lesser importance included higher rentals both at flea market and residential places, as well as stiffer competition for customers. The traders pointed out that Operation Restore Order resulted in an acute housing shortage due to the demolition of informal residential structures, leading to the hiking of accommodation rentals in the city. All their profits are swallowed up by rentals either for accommodation or for storage facilities. Some of the traders argued that operating from a few sites increased competition for customers. Customer competition often forces traders to lower prices and in turn lowering projected earnings.

Views on whether Operation Restore Order improved the life of flea market traders in Mutare

The views of flea market traders on whether or not Operation Restore Order has improved the lives of flea market traders were recorded according to the sex of respondents and are shown in Table 12. These views provided the basis for testing the research hypotheses.

Table 12: Respondents by sex

Sex	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Male	2	2	3	0	7	14
Female	7	6	4	3	16	36
Total	9	8	7	3	23	50

Ho: Operation Murambatsvina has not improved the socio-economic status of flea market operators in Mutare.

H1: Operation Murambatsvina has improved the socio economic status of flea market operators in Mutare

The null hypothesis was tested at 5% level of significance.

Contingency table showing expected frequencies

Sex	SA	A	NS	D	SD	Total
M	$\frac{14 \times 9}{50} = 25,2$	$\frac{14 \times 8}{50} = 2.24$	$\frac{14 \times 7}{50} = 1.96$	$\frac{14 \times 3}{50} = 0.84$	$\frac{14 \times 23}{50} = 6.44$	14
F	$\frac{36 \times 9}{50} = 6.48$	$\frac{36 \times 8}{50} = 5.76$	$\frac{36 \times 7}{7} = 5.04$	$\frac{36 \times 3}{50} = 2.16$	$\frac{36 \times 23}{50} = 16.56$	36
Total	<u>9</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>23</u>	50

Testing at 5% level of significance = 0.05

Degrees of freedom = (c-1) (r-1)

C = Number of columns

R = number of rows

D.O.F = (5-1)(2-1)

= 4 x 1

= 4

Using the Chi square statistic X^2

X^2 to get the critical value = 9

$$X^2 \text{ calculated} = \frac{(2-2.52)^2}{2.52} + \frac{(2-2.24)^2}{2.24} + \frac{(3-1.96)^2}{1.96} + \frac{(0-0.84)^2}{0.84} + \frac{(7-6.44)^2}{6.44}$$

$$= 0,1073 + 0,0257 + 0,5518 + 0.84$$

$$+ 0.0487$$

$$= 1,5735$$

Decision Rule:

Reject H_0 if $x^2_{\text{calculated}} > X^2_{\text{critical}}$

From the calculations $X^2_{\text{cal}} = 1,5735$ and $X^2_{\text{critical}} = 9$

We accept H_0 at 5% level of significance and conclude that Operation Murambatsvina has not improved the socio-economic status of flea market operators in Mutare.

Operation Restore Order therefore negatively impacted the informal sector in general and flea market operators in particular. Those flea market traders who could neither afford the new operation costs nor the higher competition have not only gone under, but have lost a means of livelihood. Flea market traders who are still in business

are earning less, not just as a result of the higher operational costs and the stiffer competition, but also because of the deepening economic crisis Zimbabwe is experiencing. It is therefore argued that Operation Restore Order worsened urban poverty and compromised the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 1. With 2015 just around the corner and the continued melt down of Zimbabwe's economy, it is difficult to envisage how the proportion of the urban poor living on US\$1 a day, and those suffering hunger can be halved by the year 2015. Achieving sustainable urban livelihoods will therefore continue to be elusive, at least for the near future in Zimbabwe.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Several conclusions can be drawn from the findings of the research:

- Flea market trading is an important source of income and employment to the urban poor. Flea market trading provides an opportunity that minimizes the impact of social exclusion for many operators.
- The view that illegal flea market traders and other informal sector traders should be relocated to rural areas for farming, as implied by Operation Restore Order, is an erroneous one since it implies that the cities are only for the wealthy, and that poor people have no right to live there or that the position of the poor will improve if they went back to rural areas.
- Flea market traders work in a hostile environment with escalating operational costs and without basic infrastructure and services, although the traders pay operation levies to the City Council.
- The flea market traders face both market and investment problems. Operation Restore Order resulted in overcrowding, dwindling sales due to poor location and

the low purchasing power of customers due to the prevailing economic hardships in Zimbabwe. Flea market traders have no access to formal finance and largely rely on their own savings and on finances from friends and relatives, hence a problem especially after being displaced by Operation Restore Order. Therefore they are forced to work long hours for the whole week.

- Many flea market traders are unaware of the existence of by-laws that affect their operations and have no access to them, for instance those that require the City Council to provide basic services at legal sites; while others know about their existence but they ignore them.
- Many flea market traders consider trading as a viable source of income especially in the light of current economic hardships due to the shrinking economy.
- The City Council is inefficient in administering flea market operations, as evidenced by the absence of proper infrastructure and services and lax levy collection, implying that it does not seem to consider flea markets as an important component of the urban economy.

In the light of the above conclusions, it is recommended that:

- There is need for the government, through the local authorities, to improve policies and regulations on flea market trading in particular and informal sector activities in general to fully integrate these activities in the urban economy. In order to ensure formulation of relevant policies and laws governing the informal economy, governments must be committed to change and be progressive.
- There is, therefore, an immediate need for the government to revise the outdated Regional Town and Country Planning Act and other retrogressive pieces of

legislation, to align the substance and procedures of these acts with the current social, economic and cultural realities facing the traders who mainly fall into the category of the urban poor.

- Government must also create effective communication channels for exchanging information between flea market traders, urban authorities and other development partners.
- An association of informal sector and flea market organizations is a pre-requisite for the success of informal sector and flea market operations. Organized entities can contribute to effective management of informal sector activities as is happening in countries such as South Africa. It will also be easier for such associations to get investment finance from banks.
- Flea market trading and other informal sector activities are a survival response by the urban poor due to the lack of employment opportunities as a result of the drawn out harsh economic conditions. It is therefore imperative that government and the local municipal authority consider these activities as important for poverty reduction and the achievement of sustainable urban livelihoods.
- Many urban dwellers in Zimbabwe have turned to informal activities including flea market trading as a source of livelihood, due to the persisting economic hardships. Government should therefore demonstrate genuine political commitment to solving the unemployment problem.
- Urban authorities should provide proper infrastructure and services at all officially designated sites.

- Flea market traders should be the main beneficiaries of Operation Garikai since most of them were displaced by Operation Restore Order and the majority does not own houses in town.
- Relocation of traders to rural areas to engage in farming should not be viewed as a solution to reduce illegal informal market activities since it is simply a retrogressive move going against global urbanization trends.

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