

**CITY CONSULTATION REPORT ON URBAN POVERTY AND  
GOVERNANCE: HARARE CITY COUNCIL**



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**On Behalf of  
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## **Overall Summary and Recommendations**

### ***Engaging with Stakeholders from the NGO Sector on Poverty Issues***

HCC could benefit from engaging further with stakeholders in the NGO sector. For example participation in the Poverty Reduction Forum, hosted by the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Zimbabwe, would provide a useful "think tank" to assist HCC in developing strategy. The Forum is comprised of members from UNDP, Swedish Embassy, Netherlands Embassy, European Commission, Danish Embassy, World Bank, Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, UNICEF, NANGO and various NGOs and CBOs concerned with poverty reduction. The Forum aims to facilitate the networking process with many diverse groups and organisations concerned with poverty alleviation. Activities have included seminars on Vision 2020, PASS Preliminary Results, discussions with the World Bank President for Africa, the land issue, and health issues. One of the current major activities of the Poverty Reduction Forum is the production of the Zimbabwe Human Development Report, which will provide a comprehensive overview of the status of poverty in Zimbabwe later during 1998.

While there may be no obvious immediate benefits from membership of this Forum, it does allow Council the opportunity to network and provides a wider context for consideration of policy issues. The Poverty Forum could be encouraged to undertake research into poverty in Harare, through development of a suitable research proposal and soliciting of donor funding. Representation of the Council could be through one or two of the existing Task Force members, assuming this body is to continue. The private sector needs to be brought on board in poverty alleviation programmes.

### ***Promoting the Informal Sector***

Despite the lifting of some regulations inhibiting the operation of the informal sector, it is clear that they (particularly the hawkers and vendors) still face many serious problems and feel they are still being harassed by the municipal police. Yet they are a dynamic and vital part of the city landscape, with an estimated 1 000 hawkers and vendors in Harare and 280

in the CBD. The informal sector is a dynamic sector and one which is able to make a direct contribution to poverty alleviation. From the vendor's point of view, the regulations and by-laws of the City Council are preventing them from engaging in an honest living and causing them considerable hardship. Even if the existing by-laws remain, they feel that the Council could assist them by providing decent stalls and other facilities which should accompany the official vending sites. Clearly this is an area that requires further review and exploration.

In addition to the "official" informal sector, there is the less socially accepted, but useful survival strategy carried out by other members of the urban poor. An example of this would be scavenging at the municipal dumps, which as Tevera (1995) has outlined, plays a vital and indispensable role in the waste-recycling process in Harare. He suggests that it is imperative for the government, the local municipal authority and the recycling companies to improve the scavengers' earnings and working conditions, for example by formally employing them on a regular basis in order to provide them with a steady income and by providing them with protective clothing and improved sanitary facilities at the dump.

### ***Role of Departments in Poverty Alleviation***

While most of the Departments surveyed can be seen to have some role with regard to poverty alleviation, this is not central to their work. The Housing and Community Services Department is perhaps the key Department in this regard, with a responsibility for the provision of housing and community services, such as early childhood development centres, literacy promotion, skills training, urban agriculture and employment creation strategies. HCC could increase the scope and mandate of this Department through extending income-generating projects, training and marketing. Other projects aimed at employment-generation, such as guarded car parks in the high density areas, will need further exploration. Social housing projects, such as co-operative housing, in partnership with financial institutions such as the Zimbabwe Building Society, is already being

successfully utilised within the city and can cater for low-income earners; further enabling the development of coops.

Another key player with regard to poverty alleviation is the Department of Health Services. As noted previously, a recent survey indicated that 74,5% of households in Mbare earn incomes below the Harare Food Poverty Line, while 90% have incomes below the Harare Total Consumption Poverty Line. The Department is engaged in offering free services to the urban poor and training of health promoters; its overall philosophy is guided by the WHO Healthy Cities approach which places emphasis on preventive campaigns and a clean environment. This approach seems very positive and to be encouraged by the Council.

The Department of Works is involved in the provision of infrastructure, vending sites, provision of amenities and other services to Harare citizens. Further dialogue is required with stakeholders and a review of planning procedures governing home industries, vending sites and regulations governing the informal sector is required. Stakeholders should naturally include those who have an interest in the facilities, i.e., representatives of the informal sector operators. More facilities like flea markets, home industries and other services should be provided.

More vocational training centres need to be opened up. This will enable the retrenched workers and school-leavers to acquire skills which they can use to earn a living. There is also need to review the curricula at these centres to include a broad range of other skills which currently are not being catered for.

The Finance Department is operating a deficit budget and is likely to do so for the foreseeable future. With 13 000 employees, the City Council may be overmanned (it could shrink to 9 000 with no appreciable impact on services), but in its own way is providing a

social service and poverty-alleviating role through employment. However the long-term sustainability of this situation is questionable. An extension of the grant-in-aid programme is necessary to assist certain NGOs/CBOs that are assisting the urban poor, such as the Harare Street Children's Organisation.

There is need to lobby government to review the \$400 for free services. This figure was arrived at a long time back. It has been grossly eroded by inflation and there is a serious need to review it.

### ***Street Children***

Some general recommendations can be made at this stage in order to facilitate further discussion of how best to address this problem:

#### **A comprehensive family-based approach**

An holistic view should be taken rather than only focusing on the "problem" of street children. As noted earlier, most of the street children have existing families who are facing difficulties in coping with economic exigencies. This requires that a long-term, preventive approach be initiated that encourages community-based poverty alleviation projects which reflect the needs of impoverished communities.

### Re-uniting of children with their families

The policy currently being undertaken by Harare City Council of using personnel to assist in identifying the families of the street children and then trying to re-unite them with their families is a useful approach. Avoiding institutionalisation of the children wherever possible seems the best course. However this policy needs to be carried out and needs to be supported through provision of practical and other assistance to the families concerned.

### Support to existing and future "drop-in" Centres/Shelters

The Department of Housing & Community Services has been assisting the Harare Street Children's Organisation with an officer tasked to try to link children with families; and with some logistical support; since it started HSCO has assisted more than 623 children. However apart from provision of the shelter in Luck Street, the HSCO receives no direct funding from the City and has to depend entirely on well-wishers and the Mayors Christmas Cheer Fund. However HCC should consider taking on more responsibility with this problem. The Executive Mayor in 1997 hosted a Workshop on Street Children, opened by the First Lady; although concern was expressed by the key speakers and participants, no tangible assistance has been provided to organisations which provide this assistance to street children. In fact the HSCO has been under threat of eviction by the Council from their premises for many months. Stakeholders appear to be frustrated at the lack of progress in dealing with this problem and the once-monthly meeting of the HSCO (held at Town House) does not seem to be satisfactory and some other method of stakeholder consultation should be devised. Ways of assistance to HSCO could include provision of "grant-in-aid" funds and more help in relocating children back home. Increased dialogue with stakeholders on a multi-sectoral level could take place. Many are willing to help HCC, but this needs co-ordination. A response from the NGO Streets Ahead illustrates this:

"Streets Ahead are willing to support the City Council through discussions and training

programmes, ways of identifying the potential of communities in resource development and management of this problem, not only for the children, but everyone."

Harare has taken a positive initiative with the Luck Street Centre, but the Centre faces serious financial problems. A particular issue of concern is that staff do not receive adequate allowances, and have little to subsist on. While the Centre receives some partial sponsorship from the City Council (through the Xmas Cheer Fund) and relies mainly on donations from the public, it requires more secure and regular funding. This situation has been aggravated by the fact that the Department of Social Welfare has not been able to meet school fees. Methods of achieving this are through provision of a larger grant through the City Council, lobbying for funds from the Ministry of Finance to enable the Department of Social Welfare to fund the Centre, or through a more aggressive solicitation of funds from the private sector.

Increased financial assistance would also allow the Harare Street Children Organisation to sustain the programmes offered to children through other organisations e.g., NODED and Northcot, Ponesai Vanhu, etc (particularly school fees, clothing and food). As most of the children are not formally committed they do not receive grants from government, so financial assistance is necessary. Delays in payments are also a problem. At present the Centre needs at least \$15000 a month to function.

Another cause for concern is the fact that financial assistance which has been promised at high levels for the Centre has not materialised.

### "The Firm Fatherly Approach"

The Harare Street Children Organisation has recommended that a "firm fatherly approach" be adopted to ensure that children do not remain on the street and that they be encouraged to re-unite with families or live within institutions. In order to implement this the HSCO had set up a Task Force to investigate the modalities of ensuring that the streets do not remain an attractive venue for street children. While this may be desirable it must be noted that a consistent approach is also necessary to develop ongoing programmes (rather than the irregular "clean-ups") that provide realistic alternatives for the children. Of particular importance is the need for follow-ups and professional social work support to ensure that children do not abandon or abscond from the homes or institutions where they have been placed. It is also clear that the "young person" street child (aged between 14 and 18) is not receiving the same assistance as offered to the younger age group and that some supportive service needs to be developed for this group.

### Co-ordination of Approaches

There are many actors involved in assisting street children and this requires some kind of co-ordination as the situation is somewhat chaotic and "ad hoc." Presently Streets Ahead, the National Organisation for the Development of the Disadvantaged (NODED), Presbyterian Children's' Club, NEST, the Department of Social Welfare and others are involved in providing services to street children. Following the recommendation of the Acting Town Clerk, it is suggested that there be a permanent unit to attend to the problems of children in need of care, co-ordinated through the Executive Mayor's office, with budgetary provision for this (Mutongwizo, 1997).



### Involvement of Neighbouring Local Authorities

As many children apparently have arrived in Harare from other local authorities, it is important to share experiences between the authorities, relevant government ministries and NGOs in order to develop a co-ordinated approach.

### **Final note**

Overall it appears that HCC has a fragmented approach to poverty alleviation, although some useful services are being provided throughout the city. However a more co-ordinated and inter-departmental approach is required; this could be provided through incorporation of poverty alleviation concerns in the formulation of the strategic plan which is currently under consideration. The traditional operational set-up of local authorities, based as it is on departmental areas of responsibility, does not make it easy for them to address cross-cutting issues such as poverty and governance. However Harare City Council is involved in a number of areas in attempting to improve the circumstances of its residents and rate-payers and it is hoped that through this commitment, with the support of the Municipal Development Programme, certain key projects may be identified to improve this situation even further.

Whilst the various departments have some critical roles to play in poverty alleviation, it has to be borne in mind that poverty is a cross-cutting issue. To this end, it is imperative that Harare City Council thinks in terms of a holistic approach to poverty which goes beyond departments. The idea of setting up an interdepartmental task force to spearhead poverty alleviation is very appealing.

Poverty has several dimensions and the HCC needs to put it at the top of its agenda. It should influence the processes in the provision of services and how they impact on the community. The structures within HCC should enable it to be

responsive to the needs of the community. This involves analysing the current processes within HCC and how they impact on the community. This will help councillors and officials deal with issues.

## **Plan of Action**

9. There is need to urgently review the structures of the HCC with a view to making them more responsive to the needs of the poor. Poverty is cross-cutting and this is not reflected in the structures and processes of HCC.
10. The Strategic Plan is an important document and should be produced as a matter of urgency. Poverty issues should be seriously taken on board by the plan.
11. Projects on poverty alleviation need to be properly identified and prioritised. All councillors need to identify projects which can be implemented to alleviate poverty.
12. HCC needs to lobby government urgently to review the \$400 cut-off for those eligible for free services.
13. Research should be carried out to establish how the private sector organizations and NGOs can interact with HCC and take responsibility to support or contribute towards poverty alleviation in the city.
14. A consultative study identifying the prevalence of income generating projects and self-help activities within the city should be undertaken with a view to developing a more coordinated and strategic approval by the city in this area. This could, for example, be undertaken together with the Hawkers and Vendors Association of Zimbabwe.

15. An inter-departmental Task Force on poverty alleviation should be set up.

16. A consultation study could be conducted to identify how existing linkages between HCC and community groups/associations could be strengthened and promoted, with the aim of building communal participation in poverty alleviation initiatives.