

CHAPTER 1: SOCIO-ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS OF URBAN HOUSING POVERTY: THE PROBLEM AND ITS CONTEXT

This study examines the in the low-income economic class neighbourhood of Chitungwiza in Harare, Zimbabwe. Chitungwiza is a dormitory town located 30km south of Harare, which was established in the 1970s to cater for African worker's housing needs during the colonial era of Rhodesia. Over time the population of Chitungwiza increased so significantly that there was soon a waiting list. The waiting list was a reflection that there was no correspondence between the numbers of residents and available housing. To this day the Chitungwiza housing waiting list continues to be a problem and in this situation woman are the most affected in terms of housing poverty. In Zimbabwe, the provision of housing is one of the most critical issues of government social policy especially after Independence in 1980. The government is confronted with keeping pace with the demand for low-income housing. To deal with this problem government introduced the low-income urban housing policy in 2013. This study examines the determinants and dimensions of the fragility of the claim of the poor to the right of housing from a gender perspective with emphasis on inadequate state funding and poverty. This study examines the various government policies and their implications on the urban poor of Zimbabwe. This Chapter presents the background to the study, the problem, the significance of the study and other related issues.

Domestic shelter is an important basic need in all societies. According to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (UNCHS, 2000), it is an essential component of the foundation needed by every individual to participate fully in society. In most urban areas in Zimbabwe, there is a critical shortage of housing and the backlog continues to increase with the most affected people being the low-

income earners (Kamete, 2006). This has given rise to illegal makeshift houses in urban areas. The demand for housing is but one aspect of the problem. A related and equally problematic issue is affordability. At Independence in 1980, the Zimbabwean government inherited, although it subsequently made minor adjustments to suit new policy orientations, an urban planning system which was drawn along racial lines (Chigara *et al.*, 2013). Whites lived in areas that were well-developed, with houses built and financed by the private sector while the blacks lived in areas with mostly public sector housing. Both the public and the private sectors can therefore be said to have contributed to the provision of housing in the country both before and after independence. However, before independence private sector involvement was primarily in the field of providing finance through building societies for individual purchase, and the construction of new housing was limited to the high-income group (Kamete, 2006). Drakakis-Smith (2000) states that during the colonial era blacks were only allowed in the urban areas on a temporary basis and this was enforced legally through the Land Apportionment Act (Number 30 of 1930) which divided the country into African (black) and European (White) areas. Blacks were obliged by circumstances to come to town only to work and then later retire to their rural homes. Indeed, the Urban Areas Accommodation and Registration Act (Number 6 of 1946) stipulated that only employed blacks could be allowed in towns and cities. This Act allowed the local authorities to set aside urban locations for working Africans and required that employers accommodate their workers within their premises (Musekiwa, 1995).

The type of housing provided initially was in the form of hostels or servants' quarters within the employer's residence. The lack of access to decent housing did not seem to have any significant bearing on the pace of urbanisation; people still migrated to the urban areas. This exacerbated the housing problem and thus led to tremendous pressure on the colonial government which found it increasingly difficult to

uphold these Acts. The major task of the post-independence government was to come up with specific policies and strategies to redress the inequalities in the provision of housing and satisfy the aspirations of the people in the urban areas.

Housing is a very crucial factor in development and as such, many issues have been raised on the subject (UNHABIT 2010). However, housing is not just the physical construction of dwelling units but it performs three important functions namely the material function in terms of shelter provision, symbolic function in terms of status or social class and the external function which refers to the strategic location of housing in geographical space (Owen, 2000; Griffin, 2001). This indicates that housing studies can take many dimensions. Shortage of housing is one area of study that has been debated extensively. Hall (2000) has revealed that the increase in the shortage of housing in Zimbabwe was due to the following:

- The removal of influx control laws in 1980 leading to families reuniting with migrant workers in town.
- Migration into urban areas due to perceived opportunities for income and employment
- The insecurity of landlessness and drought in rural areas, leading to migration to urban areas as a poverty alleviation strategy (Hall, 2000).

The foregoing issues also affected Chitungwiza. Chitungwiza is the largest high-density suburb in Zimbabwe, it is popularly known for its hospital named the Chitungwiza Central Hospital which is in Zengeza 4. Chitungwiza came into existence in the late 1970s with most black people who stayed in oldest high-density towns like Mbare and Highfield migrating to Chitungwiza. Chitungwiza has several suburbs. The oldest of the suburbs is St Mary's which is divided into two sections, Manyame Park (New St Mary's) and Old St Mary's, St Mary's is popularly known for being the oldest suburb in what is colloquially

known as Chitown referring to Chitungwiza Town. There is Zengeza, which is divided into 5 sections i.e. Zengeza 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. Zengeza 4 being relatively the largest section. There is also Seke another suburb located in Chitown and it is divided into many sections i.e. Unit A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, J, K, L, M, N, O AND P. There is a shopping mall in Chitungwiza which is located between Seke (Unit D) and Zengeza (Zengeza 4) it is popularly known as Chitungwiza Town Centre. Some of the popular shopping centres in Chitungwiza include Makoni, Chikwanha, PaGomba, Pazvido, PaJambanja, Chigovanyika, Huruyadzo, PaDaddy, Unit J shopping centre, Zengeza 2 shopping centre.



Fig. 1.1 Chitungwiza Town Map (*Google Maps, 2016*)

Women from urban areas and low-income households in Zimbabwe, and especially Chitungwiza, are at the receiving end of housing poverty and the gender dimension to this crisis. Although men

undoubtedly dominate in housing development in Chitungwiza, some women do engage in the development. Conversely, many men and most of women do not participate in urban housing development. Engagement in urban housing development could, therefore, be influenced by several factors not least of which is gender although gender may singularly or in varying combinations interact with other socio-institutional phenomena such as marital status and age income, educational level and household structure in influencing the extent of men's and women's engagement in urban housing development. Similarly, gender and other socio-institutional phenomena may be critical in influencing men's and women's family connections, social contacts, economic capacities, culturally determined levels of support and political connections. The receiving end of housing poverty and the gender dimension to this crisis. Although men undoubtedly dominate in housing development in Chitungwiza, some women do engage in the development. Conversely, many men and most of women do not participate in urban housing development. Engagement in urban housing development could, therefore, be influenced by several factors not least of which is gender, although gender may singularly or in varying combinations interact with other socio-institutional phenomena such as marital status and age income, educational level and household structure in influencing the extent of men's and women's engagement in urban housing development. Similarly, gender and other socio-institutional phenomena may be critical in influencing men and women's family connections, social contacts, economic capacities, culturally determined levels of support and political connections.

The objectives of the study are to:

- 1) assess strategies to reduce the gender disparities in housing policy making to ensure good governance, gender balance and the participation of women in the distribution of housing;

- 2) examine the challenges that women facing accessing to housing as a key variable in women's gender empowerment;
- 3) assess the sources of influence on the decisions about the type of house people build or acquire
- 4) determine if gender equality is a key variable in the success or failure of housing initiatives; and
- 5) assess ways through which women cope with housing problems.

The research questions are:

- a) How is gender equality a key variable in the success or failure of housing initiatives?
- b) How is improved access to housing is a key variable in women's/gender empowerment?
- c) Who makes the decisions about the type of house to be acquired?
- d) How do women cope with housing challenges?
- e) What are the implications of current housing policies on gender equality?

The Basic Needs Approach is used as the theoretical framework for this study. This approach is usually considered to have been first formulated by a United Nations International Labour Organization (ILO) publication in 1976. While its exponents have varied in emphasis, there is a broad consensus among them that a key component of the strategy is the understanding of development as not only implying economic growth but also persistent and measurable social improvements for the poor and resource-weak groups in society (Preston, 1997). Principally, these must be improvements of the range of poverty associated symptoms listed in section ii above. Such improvements would constitute the provision of basic needs and help the poor to exit the vicious circle of poverty. The proponents of the BNS are generally agreed that, fundamentally, three sets of needs

qualify as basic. These are, firstly, the need for food, shelter, clothes and other necessities of daily life; secondly, access to public services such as drinking water, sanitation, health and education; and thirdly, participation in, and ability to exert influence on, community and national political decision making (Martinussen, 1997). These sets of needs were not all included in the ILO formulation but developed gradually. One addition to the initial ILO formulation was the Cocoyoc Declaration. And accepting the ILO definition of human basic needs, this declaration acknowledged the satisfaction of social, political and cultural needs as the purpose of development:

According to the Declaration, "Development should not be limited to the satisfaction of basic needs. There are other needs, other goals, and other values. Development includes freedom of expression and impression, the right to give and to receive ideas and stimulus. There is a deep social need to participate in shaping the basis of one's own existence, and to make some contribution to the fashioning of the world's future. Above all, development includes the right to work, by which we mean not simply having a job but finding self-realization in work, the right not to be alienated through production processes that use human beings simply as tools" (UN, 1974)

It seems to us then that the real value in the need to participate in, and influence, local community and national political decision making⁸ seems to be instrumental, in that the satisfaction of this need serves as a condition for the satisfaction of the other two needs. This is because the ability to influence decisions that affect one's livelihood is likely to address factors which work, in a mutually reinforcing manner, to keep people in the poverty trap. Martinussen (1997), lists three such factors. According to him, the poor remain thus trapped because firstly, they lack the necessary economic resources to change the mechanisms that keep them in extreme poverty. Secondly, in spite of their large numbers, they have very few opportunities to influence and affect decision making within the political system, even in a democracy, and have no access at all to the centres of power in the corporate world. Thirdly, the poor are divided into several distinct social groups. This

makes it difficult for them to act collectively and to organize themselves politically. In view of the above, most proponents of the BNS consider cooperation with the poor in development planning and implementation pivotal for the satisfaction of their basic needs (Martinussen, 1991).

According to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 1992, Agenda 21, section 7.6, the overall human settlement objective is to improve the social, economic and environmental quality of human settlements and the living and working environments of all people, in particular the urban and rural poor. Such improvement should be based on technical cooperation activities, partnerships among the public, private and community sectors and participation in the decision-making process by community groups and special interest groups such as women, indigenous people, the elderly and the disabled. These approaches should form the core principles of national settlement strategies. Shelter is a basic need hence the use of the Basic Needs Approach. This theory arose after the recognition that development is not all about economic growth. However, development was defined in terms of economic growth and development theories were centred on the economic factor and ignored the welfare of citizens. The emergence of the Basic Needs Approach theory was mainly premised on economic development only such as the modernization theory, neo-liberalist theory and the world systems approach to development which had left many people lacking the basics such as housing.

Stewart (1995) states that besides food, security and safety, people need adequate shelter as part of the physical needs that must be satisfied to ensure their healthy survival. Moreover, the Habitat Agenda, a global strategy on human settlements that was adopted by all national governments in Istanbul Turkey in 1996, recognises

housing as a basic need and human right (UNCHS, 2000). Therefore, housing is taken as a basic need and a human right in this study.

The importance of this study stems from its attempt to explore and contribute to the existing knowledge on the determinants and dimensions of urban housing poverty. The study is also critical because it is meant to enhance knowledge on urban housing poverty especially in the Zimbabwean context. The study is also likely to provide such information as will fill some existing knowledge gaps thereby contributing towards the generation of new insights that are defined socially, economically, politically and culturally and are situation-based and context-specific. This study explains the dimensions and determinants of housing poverty from a gender perspective with a view to producing convincing discourse which policy-makers, local municipal authorities, the private sector and the government and those in gender and community development can draw lessons. As well, this study, through the insights it produces, can also be of benefit the residents of Chitungwiza especially women, councillors and various other communities with similar challenges in Zimbabwe.

The assumptions of this study are that there is a gendered dimension to housing poverty in Zimbabwe's urban areas. The prevalence and dimension of urban poverty poses a major challenge to the public especially women and that, formulation, implementation and the follow-up of government policies and plans are desolate. An important trend during the last decade has been the increasing interest in housing cooperatives and other housing initiatives but these efforts were unsuccessful because the urban poor especially women had income levels too low to be able to participate in these initiatives and other factors such as access, control, conscientisation and welfare of women and girls.

Definition of Terms

Gender - Gender is not sex, it is not a biological difference. According to Longwe and Clark 1994, Gender is defined as a social construct, it is how society views and judges' men and women differently. Thus, gender is the different roles of men and women in society for instance their roles in the household, in the family, in the community, in society and within culture and expectations based on those roles.

Gender Equality - according to Teberg (2011), gender equality is commonly defined as a social order in which women and men share the same opportunities and enjoy full participation in the social, cultural, political, legal and economic arena, to include both the public and domestic realms. In other words, there are no limiting levels of participation, no constraints placed on either men or women due to socio-cultural constructs or expectations and no consequences for pursuing goals and ambitions in any other areas.

Gender Equity - it entails the steps, set of actions, attitudes and assumptions that provide equal opportunities in the progress towards gender equality.

Poverty - poverty is a multidimensional social phenomenon and its causes vary by gender, age, culture, and other social and economic contexts. Armatyr Sen defined poverty as the lack of what one needs to live within a society. In the broadest sense, it means survival but also contribution and participation to social daily activities.

Housing poverty - Listokin *et al.* (2007) have defined housing as a permanent structure for human habitation. It is also referred to as the house and defined as a home, building or structure that is a dwelling or place for habitation by human beings. The term "house" includes many kinds of dwellings, ranging from rudimentary huts to free standing individual structures. Williams (2007) refers to it as a dwelling place, constructed as a home for one or more persons.

Housing Policy - A policy is a principle or rule to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes. It may also refer to the process of making important organizational decisions, including the identification of different alternatives such as programs or spending priorities, and choosing among them on the basis of the impact they will have. Policies can be understood as political, management, financial, and administrative mechanisms arranged to reach explicit goals. Agbola and Alabi (2000) also defined it as a plan of action, a statement of aim and ideas. Housing policy is thus a guideline provided by government which is aimed at meeting the housing need and demand of the people through a set of appropriate strategies including fiscal, institutional, legal and regulatory frameworks (Agbola, 1998).

Sustainable Development - The term "Sustainable development" has been given some prominence by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), in its 1987 report entitled, "Our Common future". The Commission defined it as "the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs".

Urban Governance - The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has defined governance as:

"The exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences".

In another contribution, Aluko (2010) defines governance as the act or process of governing a nation, state, or legal entity. It is the activity of governing a country, controlling, ruling, managing, regulating, influencing, or directing a place. Governance recognizes that power exists inside and outside the formal authority and institutions of government.

This study is only delimited to a Gendered Perspective on Housing Poverty in Zimbabwe using the Longwe Method/Women's Empowerment analytical framework. This framework helps to think through what women's empowerment and equality between women and men means in practice, and the extent to which an intervention is supporting women's empowerment (Longwe and Clark, 1994).

The Longwe framework focuses on identifying women's special needs, women's gender concerns (gender gaps, gender discrimination, and gender subordination), categorised as welfare (basic needs), access (to resources), conscience (what people think and feel), participation (Longwe and Clark 1994). This study focuses on Chitungwiza in Harare, Zimbabwe. The choice of this study sites was largely determined by the fact that it is a central position, where people converge from all corners of Zimbabwe. It follows that a population sample from Chitungwiza will also be a representative sample of the whole of Zimbabwe to some extent. The selection of the Chitungwiza a study site was also determined by the fact that, the researcher has easy

access to the town hence easy access to respondents is guaranteed given that most people in this community are subject to housing poverty.

This study is only delimited to a Gendered Perspective on Housing Poverty in Zimbabwe. This study focuses on Chitungwiza in Harare, Zimbabwe. The choice of site for this study was largely determined by the fact that it is a central position, where people converge from all corners of Zimbabwe. To an extent Chitungwiza is a microcosm of Zimbabwe. Therefore, a population sample from Chitungwiza is a credible representative sample of the whole of Zimbabwe. The selection of Chitungwiza as a study site was also determined by the fact that, the researcher has easy access to the town. In addition, easy access to respondents is guaranteed by the numbers of people subject to housing poverty in this community.

The study encountered the following limitations:

- The researcher had no ample time to interview the respondents since the student is a fulltime employee at the University of Zimbabwe. However, the researcher countered the limitation by conducting the interviews during weekends.
- During data gathering views of both men and women in the community, were that gender is not clearly understood but is stigmatised as women's issues and problems and due to a strong patriarchal society and culture. The researcher used her communication and public relations skills and observing the culture of the community to encourage the men to participate.
- Respondents were not comfortable to discuss issues on housing since it has been a hot issue which has been politicised. However, the researcher had to be tactical in interviewing the respondents by use of communication skills, thus leading the respondents into discussing the issues without raising any alarm.

- The respondents were not keen on using the English language since they would find it difficult to answer the questions adequately, hence the need to elaborate and use of the local Shona language had to be done by the researcher.

The chapter highlighted aspects of the background of the study, statement of the problem, significance analysis of the study's assumptions in relation to the research topic and examined the gendered perspective on housing poverty in Zimbabwe, a case study of from Chitungwiza. The next chapter will focus on literature review.