

“Crime of poverty”:

Murambatsvina Part II

incorporating

“Hide and seek”:

**An account of finding the forcibly displaced
in rural Matabeleland, July – September 2005**

SOLIDARITY PEACE TRUST

19 October 2005

THE SOLIDARITY PEACE TRUST

The Solidarity Peace Trust is a non-governmental organisation, registered in South Africa. The Trustees of the Solidarity Peace Trust are church leaders of Southern Africa, who are all committed to human rights, freedom and democracy in their region.

The co-chairpersons are:

- Archbishop Pius A Ncube; Catholic Archbishop of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe
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The objectives of the Trust are:

To assist individuals, organisations, churches and affiliated organisations in southern Africa, to build solidarity in the pursuit of justice, peace and social equality and equity in Zimbabwe. It shall be the special concern of the Trust to assist victims of human rights abuses in their efforts to correct and end their situation of oppression.

“Operation Murambatsvina was heartless and needs to be condemned with the strongest words that we can use. We have spent seven weeks with these [displaced] people. They are traumatised, some are in depression, some of them are insane – and quite a number of people died because of this.... devastation could be an understatement.

This is not the way to deal with vulnerable members of your society – and their crime is poverty.”

[Rev Ray Motsi, Bulawayo, 23 July 2005]

Acknowledgement

The authors give thanks to the Combined Churches of Bulawayo, who have facilitated the authors’ access to their information about families, and whose courage and tenaciousness in the face of state harassment is greatly admired. Concerned church leadership has been working together with compassion, in ways that have overruled the boundaries of established church structures, such as the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), and the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishop’s Conference (ZCBC). The Bulawayo churches have led the nation in showing with deeds, how Zimbabweans should pull together regardless of denomination or formal affiliation, in the interests of the persecuted and destitute thousands.

As good shepherds should, they have gone out into the storm and have sought to find lost men, women and children forcibly hidden in the forests.

The opinions and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Combined Bulawayo Churches or any other party.

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Abbreviations

CHRA	Combined Harare Residents' Association
EFZ	Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe
EU	European Union
GMB	Grain Marketing Board
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IMC	Inter Ministerial Committee
IMF	International Monetary Fund
Lft-Col	Lieutenant Colonel
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NGO	Non governmental organisation
OG/HK	“Operation Garikai/ Hlalane Kuhle” – Shona and Ndebele for “Operation Live Well”
OM	“Operation Murambatsvina” – Shona for “Drive out the dirt”
SACC	South African Council of Churches
UN report	“Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Zimbabwe to assess the Scope and Impact of Operation Murambatsvina”, by Mrs Anna Tibaijuka, the “United Nations Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe”
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Education Fund
USA	United States of America
VOA	Voice of America
WFP	World Food Programme
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African Nationalist Union – Patriotic Front
ZBC-TV	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation – Television
ZCBC	Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference
ZRP	Zimbabwe Republican Police

Executive summary

I Background: “Operation Garikai” and food security

1. Introduction

The July UN report on the demolitions in Zimbabwe has become the definitive report on events between May and the end of June 2005. Other reports have covered in detail urban and peri-urban aspects of OM. Political analysis, assessment of the judiciary, and quantification of those affected are variously covered by other human rights reports released since July.

The current report is the first to systematically follow more than one hundred of the displaced into the rural contexts in which they now find themselves. This report focuses on events since the end of July in Matabeleland, notably Bulawayo and Victoria Falls.

Two issues of humanitarian relevance are explored in the report:

- whether “Operation Garikai /Hlalane Kuhle” will really offer relief to those displaced
- will humanitarian aid from other sources, including government, arrive any time soon?

- We provide information on current whereabouts of 1,400 IDPs.
- We summarise a number of cases from the 150 plus interviews conducted by the authors since July, to give a cross section of current situations of IDPs.
- We present findings from structured interviews with 100 IDPs.

Zimbabwe remains a nation on the move. Families interviewed have moved as many as seven times in the last few months and are still unsettled. Socio-economic conditions continue to deteriorate and people are still sliding from one situation to another – socially, economically, geographically and in terms of access to basic resources – they slide ever downwards.

2. “Operation Murambatsvina”: how many were affected?

The UN report estimated 700,000 were directly affected, based on government’s own figures for structures destroyed. Another 2,4 million were indirectly affected. The government continues to contest these figures and to maintain that there is no humanitarian crisis. One survey found only 6% of those affected had received any help in the first two months of demolitions. NGOs still have no clear idea of actual numbers, but it is hard to find a family not somehow affected by loss of housing or income within their community or family.

3. “Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle” – a revolutionary programme or mere window dressing?

Minister Stan Mudenge in late July challenged people to see and judge for themselves the successes of OG/HK - “Operation Live Well”; the authors take up this challenge. 25,000 houses were supposed to be built nationwide by the end of August. In July the government promised Z\$ 3 trillion for the rebuilding programme, which they claim was the real intention behind the demolitions. This was downwardly revised to 1 trillion, and only 300 billion has actually been financed during 2005. This amount has been drastically undermined by rampant inflation since July: in real terms less than 5% of the Z\$ 3 trillion promised has materialised.

Housing needs prior to OM

In Bulawayo, the housing lists prior to OM stood at 70,000 names. This has risen to 80,000 since the demolitions resulted in the loss of over 10,000 structures. Around 350,000 people are

needing housing – 30% of Bulawayo’s population. Inter Ministerial Committees headed by the army have taken over many city council roles, including building and allocating of houses.

Promises – and the reality

Bulawayo was repeatedly promised 1,003 houses and 41,000 stands by the end of August. At first 46, and then 10 vendors’ stalls were promised. By two weeks after the 31 August deadline, fewer than 200 houses were roofed, but not serviced. 532 stands were allocated and 4 vendors’ stands were partially constructed. Targets were dismally failed countrywide, and in some areas building was at a complete standstill. By mid October, 280 houses had been constructed in Bulawayo, but occupation of these is scheduled only for 2006. In any case, these houses, while welcome, will hardly dent the housing waiting lists.

Who will get the houses?

There is no answer to this question yet in Bulawayo, as by mid October, no houses had been allocated. The city council has given comprehensive long (80,000) and short lists to the IMC, as they have total control over who gets houses under OG/HK. The short list included those who have been on housing lists for years and who have been displaced under OM, as well as civil servants displaced under OM. The city council is clear that whoever gets the houses, will have to pay rates and water. This rules out many victims of OM, who now live in total poverty.

The status of the informal sector

An estimated 90,000 vendors have been affected by OM: 30,000 were arrested in May and June, and their stands razed. In Bulawayo, a high court decision ruled that the arrests and seizure of goods was illegal; arrests nonetheless continue to date. Almost no vendors’ stands have been built anywhere so far. “Operation Tsvairai”, begun in September, has enforced a policy of continued arrests countrywide of vendors, who have now been five months without regular income, in spite of tens of thousands countrywide being licensed by their local city councils.

Conclusion

OG/HK is window dressing. The authors believe that it is the government’s unconvincing alibi in the event of their being prosecuted for crimes against humanity; it maintains a façade for the theory that the demolitions reflected a desire, however misguided, to help the poor and honour the government’s “responsibility to protect”.

4. Starving with dignity

Food insecurity 2005

The government has been caught in an ambivalent situation in recent years, of simultaneously vilifying the west and yet battling to remain part of the international community. This is typified by the recent payment of US\$ 131 million to the IMF to avoid expulsion – from a body that Mugabe has continuously maligned. The government is increasingly resentful of having to accept aid from USA and Britain in particular, yet they have been the biggest donors of food aid in the last few years.

Zimbabwe is in a desperate situation as inflation soars to nearly 400%, there is a possible shortfall on seeds and a 60% shortfall on fertiliser needed this season - and 4,5 million people who may need food before the next harvest. The government recently mooted the policy of ‘targeted farming’, which may mean the few inputs go to the lucky chosen, which will not include the very poor. Another possibility is that a loan from South Africa of R 3 billion may be agreed upon and used to purchase food and inputs – but South Africa seems to be insisting on certain reforms in exchange and the Zimbabweans are refusing to agree to this.

Concern is growing as the government publicly continues to insist it does not need international food aid and that there is no looming crisis. International observers are not convinced the government has a comprehensive contingency plan in place, or the capacity to deliver. Mugabe recently caused outrage when he said Zimbabweans were too fussy and should eat potatoes or rice – both very expensive and scarce commodities.

The government has a track record of politically abusing food in recent years, yet Mugabe accused NGOs of doing so when at the UN recently. Mugabe said local chiefs – who have proved to be highly politicised - should be in charge of aid. NGOs have been increasingly restricted by government in their access to rural areas over the last few years, to reduce numbers of impartial eyes on the ground, who might observe and report human rights abuses. With senate elections due in late November, the authors predict that delivering food through NGOs will be problematic and that WFP food is likely to be abused politically during and after the elections.

Impact of UN report on Zimbabwe's dignity

The government received a body blow in the form of the highly critical UN report, which accused them of conducting a “disastrous venture” which was “indiscriminate and unjustified”. The UN report further recommended compensation and prosecution. It is therefore no surprise that the government has refused to sign a joint “flash appeal” for US\$30 million for victims. To sign would effectively be to admit guilt. Zimbabwean officials maintain that there is no humanitarian crisis and therefore no need for money. They have contended that it would be undignified to beg for help, and that the government will feed its own people by importing grain. The government, while refusing to officially appeal for aid, will ‘accept help from well wishers’. Yet even in this regard, obstructive behaviour has been observed.

A “common response plan” for US\$ 30 million was launched by the UN in September, without the signature of Zimbabwe. The crisis caused by OM has become subsumed by a bigger crisis of looming mass starvation. Even so, the official position of the government continues to be that they do not need aid; as recently as 5 October, the government was still claiming the ability to import enough food to feed people without international assistance – even as it is reported that government has in fact agreed to 450,000 tonnes of food from WFP this season.

It is reprehensible that government is not being transparent about the reality of how much food is, or is not, in the country, and about any agreement that may have been made with WFP.

5. The Responsibility to Protect

The UN report concluded that OG/HK indicated a recognition by the Zimbabwean government of its “responsibility to protect”, although it challenged the ability of the government to deliver more than a fraction of needed support to those affected by OM. The UN report furthermore noted that the “international community has a responsibility to protect those affected”. The authors ask what happens next, considering the government's intransigent refusal to allow the UN to put out an appeal for the needed aid.

Conclusion

There is an impasse in Zimbabwe right now. There is a crisis and the government continues to refuse to publicly acknowledge this. Starving with dignity is their preferred option – but it is not cabinet ministers making this choice who will starve, but the poor and displaced. Who will honour the responsibility to protect the citizens of Zimbabwe?

II Hiding – and seeking

1. Bulawayo's displaced

The UN report estimated 32,000 displaced in Bulawayo, while the city council estimated 45,000. This section of the report follows what has happened since displacement to the 1,500 people taken in by 16 Bulawayo churches after informal settlements were demolished in mid June. This figure is 3% of Bulawayo's total displaced, and 85% of those displaced from Killarney and Ngozi Mine. Many of these were abducted from the churches at night and dumped first in a holding camp and then in remote rural areas. They have been located across three provinces by the churches, after weeks of searching.

2. The churches in Bulawayo: temporary home for the displaced

The churches uniquely rose to the challenge and opened their halls to the displaced, providing food, shelter and health care for ten weeks. During this time, agreement was reached with the police that once a holding camp at Helensvale was suitably resourced, those among the displaced who wished to, would be relocated there for up to three months, with the churches having access. Skills training was planned. Some IDPs moved there in late July, together with one of the priests, as agreed. However, everything changed the day the Zimbabwe government received an advance copy of the UN report. Police in charge of the camp expelled the priest, and from this day, nobody was allowed access to Helensvale.

3. Midnight abductions: 21 July

By 21 July, the government had received the UN report. In a remarkable coincidence, on the night of 21st, the police swooped on the churches and abducted the remaining IDPs at gunpoint. Priests tried to stop this, but the sanctity of the church was not respected as babies, the elderly, women and children were bundled with belongings onto trucks in the dark and taken to Helensvale. A 55year old woman gives a detailed testimony; she recounts the abduction, the bullying at Helensvale, and the forced dumping of herself and others in Tsholotsho, from where she and her husband walked back to Bulawayo. It took them 2 and a half days without food or water to walk over 100 km to town. They feared being eaten by wild animals, and express concern about those too old, too young or too ill to walk back from where they were abandoned.

4. Messages from the wilderness

Those dumped in rural areas straggled back into town, or sent messages appealing for help. On occasions, the police phoned asking for help as they had no food or transport to move people on. Other police were aggressive and unhelpful when asked by the churches for information. In some districts, people were moved on again very quickly by police, making them hard to track.

5. Why were people abducted and dumped?

The timing of the abductions with the release of the UN report does not seem accidental, but a panicked attempt to finally 'get rid of the trash', to move IDPs to where the press, NGOs and the churches could no longer keep the international community informed on their condition. However, while many have now been dumped in rural areas, others never left town or have come back already. As the UN report points out, it is not possible to reverse the worldwide trend of rural to urban drift. People are living in dire circumstances in towns, in very congested and desperate conditions. The situation is reminiscent of colonial times: rural areas are once more the only 'permitted' homes for working class Zimbabweans, who now squat in terrible,

temporary housing conditions in urban centres, where they have no right of tenure. The liberation war was fought not just to claim farmland, but to claim the right of all Zimbabweans to an urban life. Gains in claiming the cities have been reversed by OM.

6. IDPs from the churches: where are they now?

Most of the 1,500 people abducted and dumped have now been located. Finding people deliberately dispersed far and wide was not easy, but the churches knew how impoverished they were, and that they had left precious belongings in the churches. Churches therefore pursued them in order to provide food and return belongings to families. People have been located in 23 different rural business or urban centres across the western half of Zimbabwe. Attempts are still being made to establish accurately the scale of need with regard to school fees, housing materials and food. A table indicates where people are currently located.

September: repeat demolitions

On 29 September, the police descended again on Killarney, where at least 20% of those displaced had returned and re-established shelter of varying kinds. 16 families had their homes destroyed for a second time, and live to date in the ruins of these structures.

Schooling

The authors challenge the UNICEF report that states that 90% of those affected by OM are still in school. This is not our observation, which is that most children have had their schooling disrupted. Even those who have continued with school have suffered set backs – anxiety, sleeplessness, inability to concentrate. It is tough to go to school when there is no home to come back to (see photo 6). It is complicated trying to get children back into school because they often owe fees at their previous school and letters of transfer are not easy to get. Case example: children displaced to Insuza now have to walk a return distance of 20 km to get to a poorly equipped junior school. The nearest high school is 30 km (60 km return) away. The very youngest children have dropped out of school, and high school children are not catered for.

Shelter

The biggest problem right now is shelter. Families who have been given places to settle need thatching and doors urgently. Grass is not always available in Matabeleland at this time of year. The rains are only weeks away.

Permanence of current situation

Most families do not seem to feel that their current situation is permanent. In such cases it is not sensible to invest hugely in building huts. On the other hand, what do people do? Even those who are not happy where they are do not have many options at this time. They know there are no accommodation possibilities in towns. How to facilitate people having the right to choose where they live is an issue the nation needs to deal with.

7. A reservation: giving priority treatment to a few in the midst of a humanitarian disaster.

Reservations have been expressed by both churches and recipients of church aid, of the ethics of singling out a few families for special treatment in a rural region where virtually every family is living below the poverty datum line, and where every family is battling on a daily basis for enough food to survive. The scale of general need is, on the other hand, far beyond the scope of Bulawayo churches to meet. They cannot feed the entire region.

Even in the Bulawayo context, those being benefited are a fraction of those who lost shelters – 1,400 out of possibly 45,000. Just providing help for this tiny fraction is a logistical headache for the under resourced churches. 97% of Bulawayo's displaced alone, are not receiving any help.

Bulawayo churches report that they regularly deliver to “their” displaced families what should be sufficient food to feed a family for three months, but these food supplies last days rather than weeks, because they are distributed among starving relatives and neighbours.

The churches are now doing quick assessments of who else may be in desperate need in the immediate vicinity of the “target” family. This *ad hoc* arrangement is the best that can be managed at the moment. Church resources and ability to procure and distribute food is limited, particularly considering fuel shortages. There is no obvious solution to this predicament, as to so many others that have arisen out of the disastrous OM.

8. Brief outline of situations of a range of IDPs: early September 2005

Situation one: Cowdray Park: 28 people, 17 of them children, are living in squalor and enforced isolation metres away from the much acclaimed OHK project. There is no access to water or sanitation, or health care.

Situation two: Matabeleland North, resettlement area: five “foreign national” families dumped here have found themselves in the middle of a land dispute.

Situation three: Matabeleland North, rural business centre: a family including a 3 month old baby have moved seven times in as many weeks and still have no clear tenure anywhere.

Situation four: Bulawayo urban, 15 year old rape victim: a girl turfed out of her home by OM was raped after accepting an “offer of help” from a man at a bus station.

Situation five: Matabeleland North, rural: two widows both with grandchildren dependents have been dumped where they have no family. One recounted how her daughter has just died in this strange place, while the other has been offered a collapsed hut and field for Z\$4 million – a fee way beyond her reach.

Situation six: Matabeleland South, informal mining settlement: six women and a man displaced from back yard structures in Bulawayo and forcibly dumped in a rural area, have found their way to this mining community. Life is harsh and the police raid often. They are now sleeping in the open or in tiny plastic shelters, cooking and vending to survive.

Situation seven: Midlands rural, Porta Farm family: a family of nine who lost their four roomed home, shop and traditional healer surgery in Porta Farm near Harare, have been forcibly returned to the Midlands to start again, in one ruined hut.

Situation eight: Ngozi mine, police brutality: two women recount police brutality against them when they tried to settle here after OM. One woman had her arm broken by the police.

Situation nine: Victoria Falls, mass relocations: 64% of housing was destroyed here under OM. Thousands continue to live in appalling conditions. The churches here are working with the police to relocate those who want to leave and around 4,000 will be moved.

Situation ten: Victoria Falls, child with severe burns: a two year old child fell into the ashes of a smouldering hut, received severe burns and is disabled.

Situation eleven: Victoria Falls, man and woman savaged by police dog: civilians displaced into the bush after losing their homes were deliberately savaged by a police dog to try to force them to move out of the area. Severe dog bites were inflicted on two people.

9. Preliminary findings of survey of 100 IDPs

100 heads of families were interviewed by the authors using a set questionnaire: all were living in Bulawayo prior to demolitions.¹ This sample of 100 families is far too small for any profound generalisations. However, the sample represents 30% of those who lost dwellings in Killarney or Ngozi during the demolitions. It is possible to assume results indicate trends and experiences of the displaced from these settlements.

Dependents plus interviewees : 425 IDPs
Current location of interviewees: Urban = 37% Rural = 63 %

Health: 37 families reported at least one family member with serious health problem
15 of these families reported loss of access to medication since relocation

Patients no longer accessing medication included patients with TB (2), high blood pressure (1), schizophrenia (2), epilepsy (1).

Most urgent needs: School fees (92); Food (88); Shelter (65); Transport to new place (27); Medication (15)

Income: Most notable is that the number of respondents who report having no independent source of income has almost quadrupled as a result of the demolitions. Previous to the demolitions, only 15% were without a source of income; this has soared to 56%.

Settled or not? Only 21% of respondents seem likely to stay where they have been currently placed. The other 79% expressed varying degrees of dissatisfaction with their current situation and indicated the need to move, either back to where they were, or somewhere new from either the past or the present.

This is hardly surprising: in the Zimbabwean context, those who have moved to rural areas have lost their source of income in a situation where rural areas are starving; those who have moved in with urban relatives know that this is a temporary and congested solution that cannot last, while those who have moved back to destroyed informal settlements know that they will receive further harassment and possible property loss if they remain there. Around 60% of respondents have said they are unhappy where they now are. Half of these do not see an immediate alternative.

Whatever reasons people had to leave rural areas and head to urban centres in the first place, those reasons still remain and have not disappeared as a result of the demolitions.

¹ See appendices for questionnaire.

Conclusions

As predicted by the UN team headed by Mrs Tibaijuka, the humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe is proving to be one that is beyond the capabilities of the Zimbabwean government to deal with. Five months after the demolitions began, the majority of people who lost homes and sources of livelihood have not been able to reconstruct their lives. During September, in Victoria Falls thousands were still sleeping in warehouses and in the open, while thousands more were being translocated in a massive exercise from town to rural areas. Across the nation, families are living in congested and appalling conditions in order to cling to their lives in the cities, or have had no option but to head back to poverty stricken and starving rural areas.

The government deliberately forced people out of holding camps, churches, and off the streets and dumped them in rural areas, and this exercise was stepped up in the immediate wake of the government receiving the highly critical UN report on the demolitions.

The process of being forced into rural areas has worked out for a fraction of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Out of one hundred families interviewed by the current authors, only 21 found their current situation acceptable enough that they were happy to stay where they now are. The other 79 families seem likely to move on at the first opportunity. On the other hand, the most common response from interviewees was that they are very unhappy where they now are, do not feel welcome there, but know that they cannot go back to their previous home as it no longer exists. They are in the ultimate state of “unbelonging”. *Many families have moved between five and seven times in 12 weeks, and remain unsettled and still on the move.*

Problems for families who were dumped back in rural areas include:

- lack of resources, including most critically food, shelter, and school fees, meaning that dumped families do not have security of even these most basic needs;
- loss of livelihood: before losing their shelter, 15% of people reported having no source of income. This figure rose to 56% after the demolitions – almost four-fold.
- lack of legitimate claims to be there and unlikelihood of being given land to farm or a place to build before the rains;
- in cases where people have been offered land, a lack of draught power, seeds, tools and thatch for housing before the rains – and a lack of inclination to farm;
- renewal of old family conflicts, which drove people out in the first place;
- lack of access to nearby medical care

There is very little humanitarian aid reaching those affected. Local NGOs and churches, in the Matabeleland region at least, are valiantly trying to do what they can, but much of this is ad hoc and is reaching arguably less than 5% of those affected by demolitions.

Operation Garikai /Hlalani Kuhle is not the solution to Operation Murambatsvina (OM).

As predicted, it has delivered a tiny number of houses. In Bulawayo, 280 houses had been built by October, in a city with 80,000 families - 350,000 people - on the housing lists. Occupancy of this handful of houses is currently scheduled only for 2006. The houses being built are clearly intended for income earners and not those rendered poverty stricken by OM.

The international community is at an impasse with the Zimbabwean government, which is refusing to formalise appeals for assistance at the time of writing of this report. Five months have passed, and the urgency of reaching people with assistance is intensifying as the rains

begin. People have nowhere to store their few salvaged belongings – or themselves – and need thatching or other roofing materials immediately. Children need school fees paid. The food crisis is also worsening, while government refuses to be transparent about the actual maize situation.

There are ethical and practical problems with the current attempts to help the displaced in Matabeleland. The churches are continuing to support the 1,500 people they housed in June and July, but these families are now in rural contexts of general poverty and need, and in any case represent around 3% of those displaced in Bulawayo alone. “Church” families being left with three months’ food supply are reporting that this food is lasting only days, as it is being shared with extended family and neighbours who are equally starving.

There is an urgent need for humanitarian relief on a national scale – only international agencies have the capacity and experience to deliver this. The international community needs to step up its pressure on the Zimbabwean government to honour its “responsibility to protect” its own citizens, in order to protect victims of OM from further suffering.

Recommendations

Within Zimbabwe

- Churches and national and international NGOs need to work systematically to account for the displaced, in both urban and rural settings
- Churches and NGOs need to systematically establish the scale of need in their regions, in relation to children out of school, families in need of shelter and access to health care, families and communities in need of emergency food relief.
- Relief needs to be sourced and urgently delivered through all available channels.
- In order to do this efficiently, there is a need to enhance organisational capacity, particularly in the case of churches, which are not ordinarily equipped to undertake documentation and humanitarian assistance on a large scale.

Internationally

- The United Nations and other international groups need to maintain pressure on the Zimbabwean government to allow the UN and others to implement a comprehensive package of aid as soon as possible to those victims of OM who remain in need.
- Southern African nations need to be encouraged to bring more pressure to bear on Zimbabwe, to support other efforts already taking place to persuade the government to sign aid appeals for OM victims.
- In the event of food or other aid being allowed into the country, distribution should remain in the hands of neutral parties, namely national and international NGOs, and *not* local political and traditional leadership, who have a proven history of abusing food.
- Churches in the region and internationally are encouraged to find ways of offering material and moral support to the efforts of churches in Zimbabwe to aid the thousands affected by the demolitions and by looming starvation.
- If the Zimbabwe government refuses to sign agreements for general aid to victims of OM, the UN will need to return to their acknowledgement that the **international community has a responsibility to protect those affected [by OM in Zimbabwe]**, and to consider what this means in practical terms, in order to prevent further great suffering by victims of OM, some of whom remain in mid October without food, housing, school fees and adequate access to health care.

I. Background

Operation Garikai/ Hlalane Kuhle

and

Starving with dignity

1. Introduction

On 22 July 2005, Mrs Anna Tibaijuka presented what is now widely considered as the definitive account of the events that took place in Zimbabwe between May and early July this year. “Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Zimbabwe to assess the Scope and Impact of Operation Murambatsvina”, was prepared in Mrs Tibaijuka’s capacity as the “United Nations Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe” (UN report). In this one hundred-page document, the “crash” demolitions undertaken by the government of Zimbabwe are outlined in devastating and meticulous detail. Reports since then, have unvaryingly used the figures and recommendations of the UN report as their primary reference point.²

Throughout the unfolding of the recent Zimbabwean “tsunami”, there has been a steadily growing number of human rights reports and press releases, all of which have expressed outrage and condemnation of the government of Zimbabwe. They have also variously provided: broad chronicles and overviews of events since May; political commentaries; assessment of the failure of the legal system and the judiciary; discussion of who is responsible and what their motives may be; recommendations and/or predictions of future scenarios; evaluation of numbers affected; anecdotes of victims.³

The reports published to date are focused on the immediate and overwhelming impact of OM on *high-density and peri-urban areas*. Most existing reports that refer to specific anecdotes and personal interviews deal either mainly, or exclusively, with events in Harare and Mutare.⁴ There has been little detailed information on events in the western half of Zimbabwe.

Zimbabweans are facing challenges on many fronts at the moment. The enormous issue of the constitutional amendment that has introduced a senate, undermined the judiciary and deprived those seen as a threat to ZANU PF of their right to travel, will impact on all facets of Zimbabwe

² See appendices for executive summary and recommendations.

³ On the same day as the UN report was officially released, Action Aid in collaboration with the Combined Harare Rate-payers Association (CHRA) released their own excellent report, assessing numbers affected in 26 wards in Harare. Within the last few weeks, there have been major reports by: the International Crisis Group, *Zimbabwe’s Operation Murambatsvina: the tipping point?*; the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, *Order out of chaos, or chaos out of order?* [June], and *The aftermath of a disastrous venture: a follow-up report on “Operation Murambatsvina”* [September]; Human Rights Watch, *“Clear the filth”: mass evictions and demolitions in Zimbabwe* [September] and International Security Studies, *Zimbabwe: increased securitisation of the State?* [September]. All of these have contributed to the emerging picture of still-unfolding events and their impact.

⁴ Reports have referred in passing or in a paragraph or two, to events in Bulawayo, Victoria Falls and elsewhere in Matabeleland. The HRW report has detailed anecdotal information on Mutare.

life. However, this issue is not looked at in this report as others have written on the subject.⁵

The current report

*The main focus of this report is what has happened **since July**, to families displaced primarily from greater Bulawayo or Victoria Falls. The findings of this report are based entirely on research conducted in Matabeleland North and South and parts of the Midlands, areas largely uncovered in specific detail in any reports published to date. **No reports published to date have systematically followed the displaced into the rural context in which many have been forced to try and rebuild their lives.***

Two issues of immediate humanitarian relevance are dealt with in the background section of this report –

- We summarise government's claims in relation to "Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle" or "Operation Live Well" over the last two months, and assess the success of the programme in helping victims of OM, by the end of the first phase on 31 August 2005.
- We comment on the crisis of looming mass starvation in Zimbabwe, and raise deep concern over the government's intransigent attitude towards the international donor community. The history of this stalemate is briefly discussed.

Matabeleland: seeking the hidden

- We provide general information on the current whereabouts of approximately 1,400 people who have been dumped in rural areas. This information is based on records kept by the Bulawayo churches.
- We summarise a number of cases based on in-depth interviews the authors in their own capacity conducted with around 150 individuals in the remote rural areas where they have been dumped. Some, but by no means all, of these families fall under the auspices of the Bulawayo church outreach. Cases have been selected to give a cross-sectional insight into a range of experiences among the displaced.
- We comment on preliminary findings from interviews with around 100 families using a set questionnaire; this group includes 63 families dumped in rural areas and 37 families who have already made their way back into the urban setting from where they were dumped, or who never left after their informal settlements were razed.

Background to current report

On the 27 June 2005, the Solidarity Peace Trust released an "Interim report on the Zimbabwean government's "urban cleansing" and forced eviction campaign May/June 2005", entitled "Discarding the Filth", along with a video of the same name. At the time these were produced, "Operation Murambatsvina" was still in full force, with houses and dwellings falling on a daily basis across the nation. Demolitions continued for more than a month after the release of "Discarding the Filth".⁶

The current report has been written in a situation that has still not stabilised; Zimbabwe remains a nation on the move. While it appears that demolitions have finally ceased, vendors who were arrested in their tens of thousands in May, are still being arrested daily countrywide. Thousands

⁵ see ICG and Human rights forum reports cited above .

⁶ This first report summarised the progress of the demolitions up to that point; government's declared intentions; undeclared intentions behind the exercise; legal context; history of evictions; case study of the Killarney displaced. It is available on www.solidaritypeacetrust.org.za

of those displaced remain in a state of flux – many families that the current authors interviewed have relocated more than five times in twice as many weeks, mostly because officials keep forcibly trans-locating them. Furthermore, there is growing hunger bordering on starvation in much of the country, so that the general atmosphere is increasingly one of desperation and hopelessness, with those “resettled” remaining largely “unsettled” and deeply worried about their very likelihood of survival. Families have been divided, the ill have been located where they cannot access medication, children where they cannot attend school. People live in appalling conditions, without access to basic ablutions, clean water or security for themselves and their possessions.

The UN report notes that, “Operation Restore Order took place at a time of persistent budget deficits, triple-digit inflation, critical food and fuel shortages and chronic shortages of foreign currency. It was implemented in a highly polarized political climate characterized by mistrust, fear and a lack of dialogue between Government and local authorities, and between the former and civil society.” The economic situation has deteriorated dramatically since the UN’s visit in June, as the cost of the demolitions impact on Zimbabwe. Inflation has soared from 140% in June to nearly 270% by the end of August, hundreds of thousands in the informal sector remain without their livelihoods, and essential goods including basic food items are scarce.

The current report is therefore once more an interim report in a fast changing situation, where most families we interviewed are still sliding from one situation into another in every sense – economically, socially, geographically, and in terms of access to basic resources including food, shelter, health and education. Their slide is ever downward.

2. “Operation Murambatsvina”(OM) – how many are affected?

The UN representative in Zimbabwe has failed to come up with the people affected by Operation Murambatsvina. He is admitting the figure 700,000 is fiction... there is no camp where you can find 700,000 people.

[Boniface Chidyausiku, UN Representative for Zimbabwe in New York.]⁷

Phase one of “Operation Murambatsvina”, resulted in hundreds of thousands of the poorest of Zimbabwe’s urban dwellers losing their homes and/or livelihoods.⁸ Trying to quantify numbers of people affected from May until the present is a continuing task, and a controversial one. The UN report estimated that as a result of the “disastrous”, “indiscriminate and unjustified” actions of their government, 700,000 people were directly affected by the exercise, with a further 2,4 million indirectly affected: this means approximately 25% of the total population had their lives changed for the worse by OM.⁹ In late July, Action Aid in collaboration with the Combined Harare Rate-payers Association (CHRA) released an excellent report, quantifying the impact of OM in 26 wards of Harare, based on interviews with over 14,000 respondents. They found that an astonishing 97% of family units interviewed had been directly affected, with 76% having lost shelter.¹⁰ This indicates the UN estimates may be conservative, for Harare at least.

⁷ Interview on Studio Seven, 1930 H, VOA, 13 September 2005.

⁸ This process is well documented elsewhere, particularly in the UN report and will be taken as given in this report.

⁹ In some towns, devastation was proportionally much worse: in Mutare, 34,000 backyard structures existed, compared to 27,000 recognised dwellings. In Victoria Falls, 64% of dwellings were illegal. UN report, page 26.

¹⁰ *A study on the impact of “Operation Murambatsvina/Restore Order” in 26 wards of Harare high density housing areas*, July 2005.

The government of Zimbabwe, on the other hand, continues to contest the findings of the UN report, including the figures, and to obstruct the implementation of UN recommendations on the grounds of this dispute. Zimbabwe officials claim around 200,000 were affected. Yet the UN report used the government's own figures for demolitions, to arrive at their estimates in the first place.¹¹

During the chaos of OM, humanitarian organisations and churches were overwhelmed with meeting immediate needs, and as the demolitions were continuing on a daily basis, those who were trying to offer help were in a state of perpetual crisis management. The vast majority of those affected by demolitions have never interacted with a humanitarian NGO – the Action Aid study found that 2 months after the demolitions began, a paltry 6% affected had had any help. From the time of the first demolitions, people have had to resort to a range of survival mechanisms, and leaving the city for rural areas was one – the very solution that the government was trying to impose. What this means is that those on urban NGO records are undoubtedly a tiny fraction of those in need of help. As time has passed, people have increasingly had to come up with their own meagre plans, or have had their destinies – at least in the immediate term – decided for them by forced government removals to rural areas.

Some would point out that it is hard to find a Zimbabwean family untouched by events, as those families who were not thrown out of accommodation and/or employment, have had to take in relatives, offer to pay school fees and generally provide for other family members left without resources; this extra financial burden in a nation where 80% of people live below the poverty datum line, has pushed extended families into deeper poverty. In some instances, impoverished rural communities have had to accept back distant and estranged relatives from town, or close relatives on whose income they were previously accustomed to depend. Some rural communities have had to accept total strangers into their midst, mainly urban Zimbabweans of foreign descent, after they were dumped by government vehicles.¹²

3. “Operation Garikai / Hlalani Kuhle” (OG/HK)¹³

- a revolutionary programme, or mere window dressing?

Go across the country to see for yourselves what has been achieved. We work in a revolutionary manner. We want you to follow and monitor the progress. What you see here is for real. By the end of August, real people who were staying in shacks are going to live in real houses. This is achievable. Please do not report falsely. Report what you see and touch with your own hands.

[Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, Stan Mudenge]¹⁴

The government of Zimbabwe has, since the day it became aware of the likelihood of a UN fact-finding mission, insisted that the demolitions were part of a bigger process of reconstruction - of the biggest housing scheme in the history of Africa. Claims were made of 300,000 housing units

¹¹ UN Report, page 32. Govt identified 133,534 households affected by dwellings destroyed – and their number for small, micro and medium-sized enterprises destroyed was 32,538. The UN then used the government census estimates from 2000, which found that the average number of people per dwelling in Zimbabwe is 4.2 persons. This formula leads to figures of approximately 570,000 people who lost shelter and 97,600 who lost livelihoods – a combined figure of around 700,000

¹² For examples of such cases, see ahead in this report.

¹³ “Garikai” is SiShona for “live well”, while “Hlalani Kuhle” means the same thing in SiNdebele.

¹⁴ *The Herald*, 26 July 2005, front page.

being built by the end of this year,¹⁵ and of 25,000 being built by the end of August. Government ministers have vociferously and daily supported this programme, and shouted down the sceptics who have claimed the exercise was a hasty form of window dressing.

Six weeks after the 31 August deadline for phase one, the authors decided to rise to the challenge posed by Minister Mudenge¹⁶ – to examine the claims over the weeks for OG/HK and compare these with what we can see and touch with our own hands, in the Matabeleland region at least.

It was the opinion of the UN team that OG/HK was belatedly arrived at; the Zimbabwe government was unable to present any documentary evidence to the contrary. It is not believable that a scheme to build 300,000 houses – or even 25,000 – could not be backed by extensive planning documents. It has further been the opinion of many commentators that the government could not possibly muster the resources necessary to implement such an ambitious programme. The UN report has as a key recommendation, the need for international support for the task of rebuilding Zimbabwe, pointing to the government's "limited capacity to fully address the needs of the affected populations".¹⁷ Minister of Finance, Herbert Murerwa confirmed the operation was not planned, by saying exactly this in parliament when presenting his supplementary budget on 16 August 2005.¹⁸ He asked for one trillion dollars to finance OG/HK this year – even though the recurring rhetoric by other government ministers including the President has referred to an amount of 3 trillion to be spent on the operation.¹⁹

Ultimately, only 300 billion has been made available for the programme this year²⁰ – 10% of what was promised to the nation during the UN mission. In the meantime, in the last three months, the cost of building materials has more than doubled,²¹ and that of fuel has trebled, reducing the delivery power of this 300 billion to less than 5% of what 3 trillion would have purchased in the first week of July....

Housing needs prior to OM

The following is a brief summary of housing needs for the city of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city. Information was supplied by city council officials in Bulawayo.²²

- prior to the demolitions, the Bulawayo housing list stood at around 70,000 families.
- the demolition of 10,595 backyard structures and informal settlements in Bulawayo's high density suburbs displaced in excess of 45,000 people in the city.
- Since the demolitions and new pressure on housing needs, waiting lists have risen to 80,000 families or 350,000 people – around 30% of the city's population.²³
- where 10,595 families (45,000 people) out of the backlog were previously housed in backyard or informal structures and were in a position, albeit not perfect, to wait perhaps

¹⁵ *The Chronicle*, 28 July, "UN Report opinionated", page 4.

¹⁶ See quote footnoted 14.

¹⁷ UN report, Recommendation 9, page 9.

¹⁸ *Supplementary Estimates for the year ending December 31, 2005*; presented by the Minister of Finance on Tuesday, August 16, 2005.

¹⁹ *The Chronicle*, 5 July, front page; 7 July, front page; 13 July, page 4, to mention a few. This amount of 3 trillion was repeatedly announced on ZTV during July and August.

²⁰ *Financial Gazette*, August 18-24, front page: *Zim govt broke, Murerwa admits*.

²¹ *Sunday News*, 11 September 2005, page 11: *Building material prices double*.

²² Interviews, 12 and 13 September 2005. AS with most city councils in Zimbabwe, the Bulawayo City Council is MDC led and dominated: OM was conducted without consulting city councils.

²³ Using the 2000 census figure of 4.2 per family, this estimate is arrived at.

years to purchase a low income house, these families are now entirely without acceptable accommodation in the city – and tragically, entirely without the prospect of any.

City council officials explained how OG/HK is implemented in terms of responsibility. Inter-Ministerial Committees (IMCs) have been set up in all towns and provinces, and they are all headed by high-ranking army officers – in Bulawayo by Lft-Col Matavire. This committee has effectively taken over many of the functions that would normally be the domain of local government, including allocation of stands and houses.²⁴ The IMC is in overall charge of the operation. The role of the city council has been to allocate stands, and they have made several thousand available for OG/HK. They have surveyed and pegged these. City council officials are offering technical assistance, and are ensuring buildings meet regulated safety criteria. The cost of stands has been worked out – approximately Z\$ 2 million per 200 square metres. To date the City council has not been paid for any of them by the IMC. The actual costs and mechanics of building, sourcing materials and labour, the speed with which targets are met – and allocating who gets the houses – is entirely in the hands of the IMC. The IMC is also responsible for servicing all houses they build - of connecting water and sewerage systems to those for the city.

Promises – and the reality

The Chronicle, Bulawayo's government controlled daily paper, has since July referred to phase one of 'Hlalani Kuhle' being scheduled to supply:

- A whopping 1,003 houses to Bulawayo.²⁵
- OG/HK is also going to deliver 46 vending sites and 41,000 housing stands by the end of August.²⁶
- Bulawayo's share of the 3 trillion would be 200 billion.²⁷
- By 20 July, the number of vending sites has been reduced without explanation to 10, although 1,000 houses are still being promised.²⁸
- These same figures are promised again on 21 July.
- And again on 13 August, a promise of 1,000 houses – with only two weeks to go to the end of phase one.
- And on 18 August, "about 1,003 houses will be completed in the city under phase one before the end of the month".
- On 19th August, the number of houses has mysteriously been reduced to 700 to be done by the end of August – ten days away.
- In the same article, 1,400 houses are promised for phase two, between August and December.
- Bulawayo has received 28 billion dollars for OG/HK. It is admitted in the press for the first time that 1 trillion and not 3 trillion is available.
- The same article on 19 August, that promises 700 houses by the end of the month, and 1,400 more by December, announces that so far, there are 50 houses already roofed in the new suburb, with a further 66 in process of being built and 170 "at slab level".

²⁴ See *Discarding the filth*, op cit, by current authors for discussion of how OM has usurped control of local authorities in favour of central government. The UN report was highly critical of this trend, recommending decentralising of power to urban councils. The UN report was also highly sceptical of the appropriateness of having the army in charge of building schemes.

²⁵ *The Chronicle*, 5 July, front page; 13 July, page 4; 20 July, page 2; 21 July, front page; 13 August, front page; all of these articles refer to the 1,003 houses that will be completed by 31 August in Bulawayo.

²⁶ *The Chronicle*, 5 July 2005.

²⁷ *The Chronicle*, 13 July 2005.

²⁸ *The Chronicle*, 20 July 2005.

Incomprehensibly, with ten days to go, it is stated, “if we continue working like this there is no way that we will fail to meet the targets before moving on to the next phase.”

- On 27 August, *The Chronicle* publishes two pages with 532 names of people in housing co-operatives who have been allocated stands. It will be the responsibility of the cooperatives to build houses for their members.
- The stands are handed over on 29 August – the penultimate day of OG/HK phase one.
- This is announced as part of a drive to allocate 36,000 stands a year in the city. The new stand owners are referred to as the pioneers of the second phase of OG/HK.
- On 30 August: 118 houses have been roofed and the rest of the 700 houses are on course for completion within the specified period... (ie the following day!)

In summary: by 14 September (two weeks after deadline for phase one)

Promised

1,000 houses promised, downgraded to 700
700 houses to be allocated and occupied
41,000 stands to be allocated
46, then 10 vendors’ stalls promised

Delivered

fewer than 200 roofed, none serviced
none allocated or occupied
532 allocated
4 partially constructed

Bulawayo, so city council officials told the authors, is the best city in the nation in relation to OG/HK, and has come the nearest to meeting its targets.... This seems to be confirmed by press reports of housing outputs in some other provinces. Matabeleland South has done well, building to roof level 283 houses in 8 different rural centres, out of a target of 405 houses. However, this has to be set against housing waiting lists of 7,612 in Gwanda town alone. In Lupane, administrative capital of Matabeleland North, it is admitted that “projects at Lupane centre have ground to a halt”, and that because of sandy roads, no water, no diesel, late disbursement of funds, and no building materials, building has stopped entirely.²⁹

At the other end of the country, in Chinhoyi, the Minister of Local Government, Public Works and Urban Development, Ignatius Chombo is alleged to have threatened to deploy soldiers against those responsible for the fact that in Chinhoyi, not one single house is even at roof level by the end of phase one. He is going to “deal with” the culprits by handing them over to the army.³⁰ As usual, the British and Americans are somehow to blame for the programme’s slow progress.

An update: end of September

A major supplement in *The Chronicle* on 26 September states that 263 houses have been roofed, with another 700 in process. The target for 2005 is now 2,000 houses by year end, and Lft-Col Matavire who heads the IMC says that it will take until early next year to connect sewerage and water to the roofed houses. Occupancy of the first few hundred houses will take place early in 2006 – at least seven months after the demolitions began.³¹

Who will get the houses?

²⁹ *The Sunday News*, 4 September 2005, page 3.

³⁰ *The Standard*, 11 September, 2005, front page: “Chombo threatens military action”.

³¹ *The Chronicle*, 26 September 2005, Garikayi/Hlalani Kuhle: supplement to Chronicle: Housing project progressing well.

In Bulawayo, there is as yet no answer to this question, as none had been allocated by mid October. City council officials confirm that they have handed over their housing waiting lists to the IMC. In accordance with the continually stated policy that “priority in the allocation of the houses will be given to those who were affected by Operation Murambatsvina”,³² along with other policy statements that the houses should be for civil servants, the Bulawayo City Council has, in addition to the long list of 80,000, given a short list of those to whom they would allocate houses. This short list is a few thousand names long, and includes:

- 600 families displaced by OM, who had already in any case been on the housing backlist for many years
- civil servants, whose names have been on the housing backlist for many years
- ordinary residents, some of whom have had their names on the housing list for up to twenty years.

Council officials believe strongly that just because OG/HK is a “new” venture, the IMC should not be allowed to compose new lists, thus “queue-jumping” those families who have been waiting patiently for years for housing. There are, according to city council officials, hundreds of people on the backlog, who are not only displaced by OM, but who are also nurses or school teachers and who therefore meet multiple criteria for allocation under OM.

One aspect that the City Council is clear about – *whoever lives in these houses will be liable for paying rates and water bills like any other citizen*. The city quite literally cannot afford to provide services to thousands of families for free. This rules out immediately the very poor, who are the ones most affected by OM – unless part of government’s commitment is to pay these bills indefinitely on behalf of those whose homes they destroyed – and there has been no mention of this. In Gwanda, the head of the IMC there has already confirmed that the houses will go to ‘low income earners’, not to the destitute.³³

Bulawayo City Council officials have their own records of whom they have recommended, and will now wait with interest to see who actually gets the houses – those on their short lists, or others?

The status of the informal sector

The first people to suffer the hammer blow of OM, were an estimated 90,000 vendors countrywide, including thousands of licensed and legally operating vendors. Over 30,000 were arrested and thousands of vending stands were razed. Yet in direct contrast to its promises, OG/HK has resoundingly failed to deliver the hundreds of promised vendors stands and factory shells nationwide. Even government officials are acknowledging almost no progress in this area.³⁴ No new marts for vendors have been completed under OG/HK in Bulawayo, and although the Minister for Small and Medium Enterprises has announced the registration of 10,000 temporary licenses for vendors, and has authorised them to operate from the four incomplete sites, Bulawayo city council officials and vendors themselves confirm there is no clear instruction yet to the city to this effect.³⁵

³² *The Chronicle*, 6 August 2005, page 2; 16 August, front page, 17 August, page 2, to cite a few articles giving this policy.

³³ *The Chronicle*, 1 September, 2005, front page.

³⁴ *The Chronicle*, 1 September, front page, quoted Lft-Col Matavire commenting on very little progress on vending marts and factory shells, and again on 4 September – “I am not seeing anything being done for small to medium scale shops”.

³⁵ *Sunday News*, 11 September 2005.

To make matters worse, nationwide, vendors, street kids and beggars continue to face arrest.³⁶ In spite of a High Court ruling in Bulawayo that the arrest and confiscation of vendors' goods on the streets of Bulawayo was illegal, and in spite of this same ruling saying that vendors who are licensed should be allowed to trade again – the police in Bulawayo continue to date to arrest vendors on a daily basis. Thousands of families in Bulawayo and elsewhere across the nation have, for five consecutive months, been left without any income, in a time of hyperinflation, total impoverishment and crisis.

In late September, the Zimbabwean police launched “Operation Ts vairai”, or “Operation Go Forward”, aimed at maintaining the “gains” made during the “clean up”. *The Herald* in Harare proudly announced in early October that under this operation, 14,000 vendors had been arrested, in order to prevent them returning to the streets.³⁷

Health and education to pay for OG/HK

It was recently announced that the budgets for the Ministries of Health and Education were to be substantially trimmed in order to fund the building of houses under OG/HK. This move must be strongly condemned: to deplete two essential ministries that are already on the brink of total collapse in order to quite literally pay for the destruction wreaked by government is to compound one crime with another. To undermine delivery of health and education in a time when thousands have already been deprived of their homes and sources of income, is to drive people even deeper into the cycle of poverty.

Conclusion

OG/HK is little more than window dressing – only a few hundred houses countrywide are materialising out of the tens of thousands promised – and even if all those promised materialised, this would scarcely scratch the surface of the existing housing backlogs, never mind cater for the hundreds of thousands displaced during OM.³⁸ *In any case, the houses being built are clearly not intended for those worst affected – who are too poor to qualify for any scheme that requires paying off such houses, or paying rates and water.*

OM was a reactionary, cruel and devastating process, the effects of which will be lived with for decades to come. Attempts to present OG/HK as somehow a revolutionary event that will expose the “bad press” around the demolitions, will convince no serious analyst. It seems apparent that the rhetoric around the operation is a blatant attempt to show that the government is aware of its “Responsibility to Protect”, in order to pre-empt the international community stating otherwise.³⁹ The Zimbabwe government too has read the UN assessment of the likelihood of an Article 7 prosecution finding the government responsible for crimes against humanity, and the existence of OG/HK is, and will continue to be, their alibi, albeit an unconvincing one, that the entire exercise was really about uplifting the poor.

³⁶ ZBC-TV news report on 15 August laments the return of children, women and beggars to the streets of Harare, but announces gleefully that hundreds of youth militia are being deployed to round them up.

³⁷ *The Herald*, 2 October 2005.

³⁸ In Bulawayo for example, if 700 houses are built within the next few months, this represents less than 1% of the housing backlog.

³⁹ In our previous report, released in June, we raised the issue of the failure of the govt of Zimbabwe to protect its citizens, and the fact that if a govt fails to honour its “responsibility to protect”, then it falls to the international community to intervene. Failure to intervene in Rwanda, for example, led to 800,000 murders. See also next section of this report which raises the issue in more detail.

The authors wish to inform Minister Mudenge – we have “seen and touched with our own hands”, and what we see are thousands of families without homes in our region alone; on 14 October 2005, six weeks after the deadline you gave, we do not see a single family who lost their informal structure three months ago, now living in a “real” house of your government’s providing – not even one.

4. Starving with dignity

“Government will not surrender control to sinister interests which seek surreptitiously to advance themselves under cover of humanitarian involvement.”

[Pres R.G Mugabe]⁴⁰

Zimbabwe has in the last five years increasingly occupied a “paradoxical position of isolation and dependence, of simultaneous exclusion and inclusion from the dominant regime of international governance”.⁴¹ Even while arrogantly insisting that Zimbabwe can go it alone, the government clings to opportunities to remain in the international domain. No country is an island, and even the Zimbabwean government has had to acknowledge this. Observers have commented recently, for example, on the alacrity with which Zimbabwe has sacrificed other important priorities in order to pay out US\$ 131 million in order not to be expelled from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), yet this is the very institute that Mugabe has vilified on countless occasions. Much of the criticism of IMF policy and its adverse impact in the Third World is totally justified. That is not the issue here – it is the paradox of simultaneously loathing the institute and yet cow-towing to it, and the ambivalence of this experience.

Zimbabwe is considered a pariah state in the West – cast outside of the Commonwealth, barely clinging to membership of the IMF, with the ZANU PF leadership unable to travel to most Western nations because of targeted sanctions. While heaping scorn on the power of these travel sanctions to affect him, Mugabe nonetheless seized the opportunity offered by the Pope’s death to rush to the Vatican – which is outside of the EU embargo – and then tricked Britain’s Prince Charles into shaking his hand. The government has made trade and investment overtures to other pariah states, such as Libya, and also to the East, notably Malaysia and China, but these nations are not major donors of humanitarian aid, which is what Zimbabwe now needs. It is from the USA and Britain that Zimbabwe has received the biggest food donations in the last few years – the very nations it hates most; the outrage from these nations over the land invasions, the passing of repressive legislation and the repression of ordinary Zimbabweans, has been angrily rejected by the government as an attempt to recolonise Zimbabwe.

“While Zimbabwe accepts drought-related assistance from the international community, we remain quite wary of countries and organisations which seek to take advantage of our hour of need to attenuate our sovereignty or even reverse those vital policies we have adopted as a sovereign people.”⁴²

Note that in Mugabe’s speech, Zimbabwe is not “asking for”, but “accepting” aid, and people are not “starving”, but in need of “drought-related assistance”. ZANU PF fought its 2005 election campaign on an “anti-Blair” basis, in which to support the opposition Movement for

⁴⁰ Speech on the third opening of the fifth parliament of Zimbabwe, July 2002.

⁴¹ Eric Worby: “The end of modernity in Zimbabwe?” in *Zimbabwe’s unfinished business: rethinking Land, State and Nation in the Context of Crisis*, Hammmar, Raftopoulos and Jensen, Weaver Press, Harare, 2002.

⁴² Speech on the third opening of the fifth parliament of Zimbabwe, July 2002: cited by Worby, page 50, *ibid*.

Democratic Change (MDC) was to support the British.⁴³ Mugabe's anti Bush and Blair stand resonates in much of the world, in the wake of the Iraq war, and much of the criticism of British-American aggression and selfish interests would find sympathy across the political spectrum in Zimbabwe, as elsewhere. However, Mugabe is literally biting the hand that feeds him. To have to acknowledge you need the help of your "enemies" is humiliating, and if some Zimbabweans have to die in order to preserve national dignity and sovereignty, then it seems as if this may tragically turn out to be a choice Zimbabwe's leadership is prepared to make.

Food insecurity 2005 ⁴⁴

The government insisted until after the March parliamentary elections that there was plenty of food in Zimbabwe for everyone and that nobody would die of hunger. Immediately after the elections, government finally admitted that the harvests would leave the nation with a massive food deficit of more than 50%, and said that they would import 1,2 million tonnes before the end of 2005 to feed everyone: between April and August 460,000 tonnes were imported by government. The World Food Programme (WFP) has warned that up to 4,5 million people will need food aid this year in Zimbabwe. Even before OM, hunger was widespread in rural areas, and yet the government has quite deliberately exacerbated the food security situation by a declared policy of trying to force people out of the towns into these same starving rural areas.

The country is entirely bankrupt, with gross domestic product having shrunk by over 30% in the last five years, and the agricultural sector having collapsed. In addition, Zimbabwe paid out US\$ 131 million in September and a further US\$ 15 million in October to avoid expulsion from the IMF. Zimbabwe heads into the next growing season with no foreign exchange to buy all the inputs required to purchase and/or distribute seed and fertiliser. While belated seed imports in September may have covered a reported 50% shortfall, Sable Chemicals, the major fertiliser factory in the country has insufficient imports to produce more than 40% of fertiliser needed.⁴⁵

Targeted farming?

This points to a season that is disastrous before the rain has even begun to fall: without seed and fertiliser, rain is immaterial. It seems the government is not unaware of this crisis, although little is reported in the state media. However, on 21 September, *The Chronicle* refers to the looming implementation of a policy of "Targeted farming". Minister of Economic Development, Rugare Gumbo says the concept of targeted farming would "do away with indiscriminate distribution of inputs and confine it to those who would produce at a maximum level... We will be choosing people who can produce to a certain level that we want". While this might seem practical, it is feared that under this policy, there will be no farming inputs targeted at the poorest and hungriest of Zimbabweans. In an agricultural sector riddled with corruption and lack of

⁴³ This is a nonsensical position: MDC is a broad-based, people driven party that arose directly in Zimbabwe; this report will not dwell in depth on this issue as it is covered elsewhere – see *Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition* election report, for example.

⁴⁴ The UN currently estimates that as many as 4,5 million Zimbabweans, or 40% of the population, may be in need of donor food before the end of 2005. This report will not dwell in great detail on the causes and current status of the food shortage, as this information is available elsewhere. The fact that Zimbabwe faces a food crisis and the contributing reasons, such as land reform and bad rains, are taken as understood. For the history of recent food deficits, see, for example, Amnesty International, *Zimbabwe: power and hunger – violations of the right to food*, October 2004.

⁴⁵ *The Chronicle*, 21 September: "a portfolio committee meeting on Lands Resettlement, Agriculture and Water, on 6 Sept revealed that a shortage of foreign currency was curtailing fertiliser production." The producers require US\$ 30 million to produce at capacity and received less than US\$ 2 million this year. US\$ 61,9 million is required for imports of ammonia and spare parts. This same article refers to only 26,000 tonnes of seed available for planting this season. In late September, some forex allocations to chemicals will still leave a 60% fertiliser deficit.

transparency, there is a danger that Cabinet Ministers and their cronies who grabbed farms, will grab the few inputs available under any such policy.

South African loan to purchase food?

The press has been full of speculation and commentary on negotiations between the Zimbabwean government and the South Africans for a loan of up to R 3 billion, to buy maize and fuel. Allegedly South Africa is insisting on economic and political reform before they will release money, and Zimbabwe is refusing to agree to this.⁴⁶ Currently, it seems there is a stalemate – but it appears very clear that the money to import food on the scale needed is just not there at the moment.

EU Food Security analyst, Pierre-Luc Vanhaeverbeke has commented, “The government says it has plans to procure maize, but so far it has not backed up where they would source the funds to pay for these imports... we are all wondering how true the information is.”⁴⁷ He has furthermore expressed the anxiety increasingly felt by the entire national and international humanitarian sector that government may not have a real action plan to save people from hunger this year, bearing in mind the limited availability of diesel to distribute, among other things:

The task to get so much food across the country is not an easy one – and extremely expensive – so one would hope that the government has a comprehensive plan in place that takes all of these factors into consideration.

Let them eat potatoes

*“Why do I get the impression that I have to beg you to feed your people?”*⁴⁸ Increasingly, this frustrated cry by Tony Hall of the WFP in late 2002 is being echoed, as Zimbabwe’s government stubbornly refuses to agree to terms of international support to millions of the most vulnerable who already live daily with great hunger, and to those thousands more, devastated by OM and left without homes or incomes.

Throughout September and into October, the Zimbabwean government has continued to present a stubborn position of refusing to ask formally for aid of any kind. At the 60th General Assembly of the United Nations, Mugabe made a speech in which he once more categorically claimed there was no humanitarian disaster and no need for aid, saying “detractors and ill wishers have projected a false picture”.⁴⁹ More shockingly, Mugabe was quoted by a journalist as saying:

“The problem is Zimbabweans rely too much on maize. But it doesn’t mean we haven’t other things to eat. We have heaps of potatoes but people are not potato eaters. They have rice but they’re not attracted (to it).”⁵⁰

In Zimbabwe, the following table illustrates food costs, for the information of the President:⁵¹

2 kg of potatoes:	\$106,000	enough for one small meal
2 kg of rice:	\$150,000	enough for 2 days for a family
10 kg mealie meal:	\$ 20,000 [controlled price]	enough for a week for a family

⁴⁶ For example, *Zimbabwe Independent*, 22-28 July: *Zimbabwe begs SA for R6,5 billion loan*.

⁴⁷ Quoted in *The Financial Gazette*, 22-28 July 2005.

⁴⁸ Tony Hall, the special US Ambassador to the World Food Program stated that he had asked July Moyo, the Minister responsible for the food aid program in Zimbabwe, this question in mid-October 2002.

⁴⁹ Quoted in *The Chronicle*, 19 September 2005.

⁵⁰ *The Financial Gazette*, September 22-28, 2005: “Let them eat potatoes”.

⁵¹ Rice and potatoes priced at TM Bradfield in Bulawayo on 7 October 2005 – mealie meal was unavailable. There were extremely limited supplies of rice and potatoes on the shelf.

10 kg mealie meal: \$ 60,000 [black market]

The minimum wage is Z\$ 1 million a month: if a family spent all their earnings on potatoes, they could afford about one week's supply a month. The monthly "basket" of basic commodities for a family of six is reported by Zimbabwe's Consumer Council as now costing nearly Z\$10 million, up by 30% in one month,⁵² and way beyond the reach of even those in regular employment, such as teachers, nurses and doctors in government service, who earn between Z\$3 and Z\$ 6 million a month....

An indication of the food and money crisis that has beset the country are reports that the Zimbabwe National Army has allegedly had to send thousands of soldiers home on long leave because they allegedly can no longer afford to feed them in barracks.⁵³

Political abuse of food: antagonism to NGOs

The government would prefer to import and distribute food itself rather than have donors do this, in order to control food as a strategic resource. Political abuse of food is rife where distribution of government-controlled Grain Marketing Board (GMB) maize sales are concerned.⁵⁴ Such reports have been verified by the authors throughout 2005, although at this stage the greatest problem is that there is no maize available in rural areas for anyone.

It is therefore ironic that at the UN, Mugabe stated: "What we do not want is for the UN to give grain to NGOs so that they make politics out of it. ... those [NGOs] with political missions had the problem of politicising food aid". Mugabe went on to recommend the UN used chiefs to oversee distribution of food aid.⁵⁵ Chiefs and other traditional leaders are in fact the primary implementers of political abuse of food in rural areas, as has been well documented.⁵⁶

Reports in mid October were that the UN and government have reached an agreement that WFP can import and distribute 450,000 tonnes of food aid during the current season, and that NGOs will be the channel used.⁵⁷ This is encouraging, but the longstanding antagonism between NGOs, the international community and the Zimbabwean authorities cannot be ignored: difficulties are foreseen in the process, as the nation grows hungrier.

Donor food distribution in rural areas will mean massive deployment of "neutral" NGO eyes and ears on the ground in rural areas, and this, too the government will be very uneasy about. There has been a concerted effort in the last five years to limit access of NGOs to rural areas, to prevent accounts of human rights abuses in these remote areas, including abuse of food, from reaching the public forum. Such abuses always climax during election campaigns: with senate elections looming in late November, ZANU PF is extremely unlikely to open up all rural areas to NGOs distributing food in the next two months, unless they feel they can control and capitalise on this politically themselves. The WFP will need to guard very carefully against their food becoming a political football ahead of these elections, and afterwards.

⁵² *Zimbabwe Independent*, October 7-13, 2005; "Is this what we were promised?"

⁵³ BBC World Service news bulletin, 6 am, 6 October 2005. Corroboration of the allegation is being sought, but information on affairs affecting the army is hard to ascertain.

⁵⁴ Several NGO reports on the 2005 elections cited abuse of GMB maize to coerce voters. See Solidarity Peace Trust, *Out for the count*, May 2005 in report and video format; ZESN election report, 2005; Human Rights NGO Forum election report, 2005.

⁵⁵ *The Chronicle*, 26 September 2005.

⁵⁶ See AI, 2004, op cit for detailed examples.

⁵⁷ A journalist reported to the authors on 14 October that Kevin Farrell of WFP has confirmed that the stepping up of WFP food aid in Zimbabwe was now imminent.

Since OM, it is anticipated that this closure of access to rural areas will intensify to prevent stories of the plight of the displaced being known. It is interesting to note that the vast majority of victims of OM interviewed by the current authors reported that when police were knocking down their backyard structures, or when they were in Helensvale holding camp, they were threatened again and again with dire consequences if they should talk to NGOs, churches or journalists. This is simultaneously an acknowledgement of wrong-doing, and an attempt to repress knowledge of it by others.

Impact of UN report on Zimbabwe's dignity

The government's intransigence on the issue of foreign aid has become heightened since their national pride received a body blow in the form of the UN report, which found the government of Zimbabwe directly responsible for a "disastrous venture" carried out "in an indiscriminate and unjustified manner, with indifference to human suffering". The UN report further recommended both compensation to the affected, and prosecution of those responsible. It is really no surprise that for the three months since the UN report recommended and offered US\$30 million in international aid to be raised through a "flash appeal", Zimbabwe government officials have stubbornly refused to agree on the wording of such an appeal. *For them to agree to an appeal, is to agree that the government was indeed somehow responsible for causing suffering on such a scale that others have to step in and repair the damage.* This they will not do - or at least not until and unless the UN has agreed to obfuscate the number of victims, and therefore reduce or fudge the measure of guilt to be apportioned.⁵⁸

In early September, UN Under-Secretary General Jan Egeland therefore had to address a press conference by saying: "It is with regret that I confirm today that I cannot launch an agreed appeal for these people evicted in May, June and July...." In response, Zimbabwe ambassador to the UN Boniface Chidyausiku complained that the flash appeal would seek money from "the countries that are very vocal in trying to bring a regime-change to Zimbabwe.... If they gave any money to Zimbabwe, it's for a political purpose and political gain". He said people were welcome to address the housing issue instead.⁵⁹

It seems it is less insulting to Zimbabwe's dignity to "accept" money for building materials for the much-hyped housing scheme, than to "accept" the same money to pay for food, blankets, medicine and school fees for families left destitute after their livelihoods and homes were destroyed. However, even accepting help with building houses is to be avoided if possible – Minister of Public Services, Labour and Social Welfare Nicholas Goche, recently admired new houses in Bulawayo and said, "*What is encouraging is the fact that the project is being undertaken without foreign donor assistance.*"⁶⁰

While the government repeatedly says that it is "happy to accept help from well wishers", but will not formally appeal for aid, it has actively obstructed just such offers. A glaring example is the 37 tonnes of food donated by the SACC that was tied up in red tape from 1 August until 11 September, before it could proceed to Zimbabwe for distribution. The obstructive official attitude resulted from outspoken statements after SACC officials visited the notorious Caledonia transit camp and were horrified at conditions. Tony Hall of the WFP, in August raised with Minister Goche the issue of 10,000 tonnes of food aid held up in South Africa due to

⁵⁸ On 14 September on Studio 7, VOA, a UN spokesperson was quoted saying "consultations continue", but Zimbabwe's ambassador to the UN, Boniface Chidyausiku was on air the same day saying there will be no such thing as a flash appeal, as there is no disaster to appeal on behalf of.

⁵⁹ Cited in *Zimbabwe Independent*, 2-8 September, 2005.

⁶⁰ *The Chronicle*, 26 August, 2005.

bureaucratic hurdles and a second delivery of 15,000 tonnes awaiting government permission to be handed out in Zimbabwe. “We oftentimes go into situations where the government is difficult,” said Hall. “This is one of them, I have not seen anything like this.”⁶¹

While the WFP reported less obstructive behaviour from government by mid October - at which time they were anticipating stepping up food distribution through NGO channels - it remains to be seen if their intended programme is able to proceed without hitches, considering the ambivalent attitude of government to accepting aid, as outlined in this report.

September: “Common Response Plan”

It was reported to the authors in mid October that some kind of agreement that did not include the formal signing of an international appeal, will nonetheless result in WFP importing 450,000 tonnes of food aid into Zimbabwe during this season.⁶² However, this agreement seems to be only for food, not for comprehensive support to victims of OM. During September, a “Common Response Plan” for aid to Zimbabwe was sent to UN ambassadors seeking to raise funds for 300,000 people displaced during OM, for aid including shelter, health supplies, water, sanitation and medication. This appeal has gone ahead without a formal request from the Zimbabwean government. Jan Egeland, the UN relief chief, is quoted as saying that the “crisis” relating to those evicted from their homes “was now a smaller part of a bigger one” - the WFP estimates that four million Zimbabweans out of a population of 13 million need food aid.⁶³

October: We don’t need food aid

In spite of the “Common Response Plan” and the alleged agreement reached with the WFP to import 450,000 tonnes, and in spite of increasing recognition in the government press of a crisis ahead, in October the government was still publicly insisting in October that there is no need for an international appeal for food aid.⁶⁴ Mr Mhishi, Director of social Welfare, is reported saying that “Government did not make an appeal for food aid because the number of households that needed food assistance did not warrant an international appeal for food aid.”

Maize shortages: already a reality

In the meantime, food availability is already critical. Permanent Secretary for Agriculture, Simon Pazvakavambwa announced in September to the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries that there was only three weeks food supply left in the country. This was immediately denied by other government officials, who stated that 15,000 tonnes a week were being imported. But as the country needs 100,000 tonnes per month for human consumption and stock feed, imports of 60,000 tonnes a month are not entirely reassuring! Even on the black market, maize was utterly unavailable in Bulawayo in mid October. Unconfirmed reports are that maize is currently being transported daily by train into Zimbabwe, but what quantities and how much is government-purchased and how much is WFP has not been ascertained. Massive problems with fuel are causing major delays in shifting this maize around the country efficiently, and this is going to remain an overriding factor in food reaching people in time in the critical months ahead.

The most reprehensible aspect of the food situation in Zimbabwe right now is the lack of transparency by government around actual food availability. Nobody actually knows how much maize is in the country, as government refuses to give even WFP accurate figures. And to date,

⁶¹ *Financial Gazette*, August 18-24 2005.

⁶² Confidential source, 13 August, 2005: apparently Kevin Farrell of WFP said this.

⁶³ Information in this paragraph is from *Financial Gazette*, September 29- October 5, 2005: “Mugabe rejects US\$ 30 mln assistance”.

⁶⁴ On 5 October, *The Chronicle* reports that the government is going to “chip in and import 222,000 tonnes so that nobody starves.”

the ordinary Zimbabwean is being kept in the dark by government about whether or not, and if so how much, food aid has been agreed to with WFP and others.

5. The responsibility to protect

The previous report on OM released by the current authors, asked whether events in Zimbabwe did not amount to a failure on the part of the Zimbabwe government to honour the international principle of the “responsibility to protect” its citizens. The UN report points out that this responsibility is three-fold: responsibility to react; responsibility to prevent; responsibility to rebuild after the event.⁶⁵

The UN report finds that the Zimbabwe government does recognise their responsibility to protect, and point to OG/HK as evidence for this. However, they raise concerns about “whether the government is able to offer effective assistance to its people in practical terms”, and conclude that “the problem is too large and exceeds the present ability of the government to address the basic needs of those affected by Operation Restore Order.”

The UN report goes on to state:

“The international community has a responsibility to protect those affected. The impact will not be easy to redress and requires immediate and large-scale and unconditional humanitarian assistance to protect those in need.” (authors’ emphasis).

What remains very unclear is what can be done in a situation such as that we now have, where the Zimbabwe government is stubbornly refusing to sign formal appeals for such help for OM.

A further concern is that in the event of a deal being agreed to, government could effectively obstruct access to OM victims, particularly in rural areas, and find bureaucratic reasons to delay emergency supplies entering the county, as they have in fact already done recently. Another possibility is redirecting resources away from victims altogether, and towards the ruling party faithful, by interfering with the aid delivery process as they have done in the past.

In the current situation, how does the UN intend to stand by their own acknowledgement that the “international community has a responsibility to protect those affected”?

Conclusion

There is an impasse in Zimbabwe right now. The government is publicly stating that they do not accept that there is a human catastrophe. They repeatedly state that there are not 700,000 affected people from OM, and claim that those displaced have been absorbed by the rest of the community in a way that makes humanitarian support unnecessary. The government acknowledges there is hunger, but continues to publicly deny the situation is more than it can handle – even though other sources report they have in fact agreed to 450,000 tonnes of food aid. The government would sooner borrow R 3 billion from South Africa to purchase food and fuel, even though they are entirely broke and could never repay such a loan, than openly appeal for support from the UN for support to OM victims: so far they have refused to sign any such appeal. It is unclear how the government can back down from this hard-line position now without losing considerable face – the very thing they are trying to preserve.

⁶⁵ UN report, page 64, also for quotes following.

Starvation with dignity is the government's choice – but unfortunately it is not the government ministers making these decisions who will face great hunger and possibly death – it is the poorest and most destitute of Zimbabweans, including small children and the ill and the old, who remain in desperate need of shelter, health care and other support after OM, and many of whom have been hidden away in remote rural areas, out of the eyes of those in the cities.

II. Hiding – and seeking

This section of the report describes the cruel game that thousands of Zimbabweans have been forced to take part in over recent months. Bearing in mind that in Zimbabwe the rules can change at any time - as the winner is pre-determined – the basic intention in this game is for the authorities to destroy people's livelihoods, destroy their shelter, and then to forcibly move people on and on, trying to ensure that they cannot be accessed or found, in case their being found should become evidence of the authorities' gross crimes against fellow human beings. In short, the idea is not just to drive away the "trash", but to keep doing so. The "other side", whose numbers amount to scores compared to the authorities' tens of thousands, must against all odds try and seek those being hidden, and try to render what small assistance their resources allow.

This is an exhausting and desperate game, and one that has already cost innocent lives. The terrible fear of the current authors is that if an immediate halt is not brought to this process, innocent people will be ground relentlessly down into ever more desperate poverty, as, for the destitute who have been cast away without resources, hunger turns to starvation.

1. Bulawayo's displaced

It is not the intention in this report to re-evaluate total numbers of displaced in Bulawayo. The UN report, using government figures, estimated 7,800 dwellings destroyed – around 32,000 people displaced. The City of Bulawayo, which may have fairly accurate figures for destroyed structures, as they were going street by street in the wake of the demolitions, estimated 10,595 structures destroyed – around 45,000 displaced.⁶⁶ The intention of this part of the report is to record what happened to a limited number of the displaced, and to illustrate the immense logistical undertaking of trying to locate them. 1,400 have been tracked to their current living situations. While these are a small sample, around 3% of the total displaced in Bulawayo, they represent the majority of people who lost homes in the two informal settlements of Killarney and Ngozi Mine – around 85% of the estimated 1,600 who lived in these settlements. The churches knew for certain that these precise people existed, yet in a matter of days, they had been so thoroughly relocated in such remote places by the police, that it took weeks to rediscover some of them. How, then, will it be possible to follow up the other tens of thousands who have vanished and who were never accounted for in the first instance? This would take resources on a

⁶⁶ Interview with city council officials, September 2005.

massive scale, going homestead by homestead throughout the nation, including rural areas – an undertaking on the magnitude of a UN-driven exercise.

2. The churches in Bulawayo: temporary home for the displaced

11 June - 20 July

The Bulawayo churches have played a unique role in relation to the plight of the evicted in their city. From the very minute that homes went up in flames in Killarney and Ngozi Mine squatter camps, pastors and parishioners from all denominations were there with trucks to ferry people into church halls. For the next 7 weeks, all those who were displaced and needed a place to stay were accommodated in 16 different church parishes of all affiliations in the Bulawayo region. These included church halls in both low density and high density suburbs. In the churches, people were fed, and had access to medical attention, and were sleeping under cover, even if in very crowded conditions. Pastors arranged daily transport from some parishes to get displaced children back to their schools.

The priests and pastors had to cope with aggressive visits from the police, who objected to the displaced being taken in, and who wanted to vet them for criminal records. The churches were accused of making the government look bad. The police were very uneasy about large concentrations of the displaced in readily accessible, visible places.

In the first month, there was no Bulawayo equivalent of Harare's Caledonia Farm (where up to 5,000 of the Harare displaced were kept in appalling conditions under police guard), but by the end of June, the authorities talked of moving all the displaced to Helensvale Farm, 27 km north of Bulawayo. By this time, the local church leaders had loosely affiliated themselves into a group known as the "Combined Bulawayo Churches", a grouping that cuts across all the pre-existing affiliations and represents members of the ZCC, the EFZ and the ZCBC. This grouping arose spontaneously, based on who was out there offering practical help.

This church grouping met with local police and political leaders, and negotiated an agreement that those in the churches would be left where they were for the time being. It was agreed that once the Zimbabwe Red Cross, UNICEF and World Vision, working together with local government authorities, had set up and equipped Helensvale Farm to a point that the pastors were happy with, then the displaced could be transported there. It was further agreed that the pastor who had worked with the Killarney community for years, would be allowed to go and live at Helensvale Farm along with his "flock" to ensure that everything was running smoothly and to minister to people. This pastor had his church burnt down in Killarney during the demolitions.

The authorities led the pastors to believe that people would be able to stay at Helensvale Farm for *three months*.⁶⁷ The pastors therefore began organising skills training for those who would be on the farm, with the idea that this would provide an ideal opportunity to empower with a skill, such as welding, carpentry, sewing, farming or small business management, those who were about to be moved who-knows-where. This length of time would also provide the possibility of longer-term accommodation being sorted out, perhaps in the Bulawayo region.

On 15 July, the pastors agreed that the camp was sufficiently set up with tents and ablutions to offer reasonable accommodation for the displaced, and some of the displaced voluntarily opted to move out there, mostly those who claimed to have no rural home to go to, and who were

⁶⁷ This time span for Helensvale was confirmed by the head of Bulawayo's IMC, Lt Col Matavire who is quoted in *The Chronicle* on 13 July, saying people would be resident there for 3 months.

therefore needing longer term accommodation. As agreed, their pastor moved out there with them.

However, everything changed on Tuesday 20 July. The police in charge of the camp expelled the pastor from Helensvale, and announced very aggressively that “these are government people now, these are no longer church people”. From this Tuesday, everyone was denied access to the farm and to the people there, including World Vision.

3. Midnight abductions: 21 July

By 21 July, the government of Zimbabwe had received an advance copy of the UN report, due to be released world wide on Friday 23 July at 5 pm Zimbabwe-time.⁶⁸ In what seems a remarkable coincidence, on the night of 21 July, all those displaced persons who still remained in the churches, were literally abducted at gunpoint during the night. On hearing the abductions were taking place, five priests gathered at around midnight and drove over to Agape Mission in the high density suburbs, to try and prevent this. They found the place overrun with what appeared to be youth militia, as well as support unit, with rifles and truncheons. Old people and young, the very ill and tiny babies – all were forced onto trucks at gunpoint. Police were hurling luggage and sundry building materials onto trucks along with people. A three-week old baby was taken from its mother and thrown onto bags on the truck, to force the mother aboard as she was objecting. *This small baby tragically died a few weeks later, after contracting pneumonia as a result of four days and nights of exposure to winter weather at Helensvale and in a rural business centre.*

The priests tried to intervene, voicing strong objections to the sanctity of the church being violated in this way, but to no avail. One priest was in fact arrested and detained after police suspected him of taking photographs of what was happening.

Once in Helensvale camp, those abducted were subjected to aggressive haranguing, and were repeatedly told that everyone had to be moved to the rural areas, and that the camp must be empty by “five o’clock on Friday”. In fact, owing to the sheer numbers of people there, and transport problems, many people remained in the camp by Friday evening and it took another week to empty the camp entirely. *However, the idea that the camp was intended to be empty by the time the UN report was officially released is a revealing one!*

It was not possible to argue that you had no rural home. Those who insisted on this, were told that they would then be taken to a “prison”, called Tongogara. This was a reference to a refugee camp. Others were threatened with Chikurubi prison. Some were told by the police that if they kept saying their parents were from Zambia or Malawi then they would be dumped in the Zambezi river. Displaced families started to choose rural destinations that they thought were reasonably close to Bulawayo, so that they could perhaps walk back. For this reason, a lot of people ended up in Tsholotsho, about 120 km away.

By Friday morning, 23 July, the first groups of people who had been dumped around rural Matabeleland were already sending messages back to the churches, appealing for help. The first “run-aways” were straggling back into town.

⁶⁸*The Chronicle*, 22 July page 3: *Govt receives UN report on clean-up*: Ms Maria Okabe, spokesperson for UN Sec Gen: “The Zimbabwean Government had been given 48 hours to study the report before it was released.” The report went to the Government of Zimbabwe on 20 July.

One such returnee gives the following very vivid account of being “thrown away in the wilderness” by “Satan”.

Interview with AB done 27 July 2005

AB is a 55-year-old woman who had her home destroyed on 11 June 2005 at Killarney. She and her husband were taken and housed at Agape missions church in Nketa before being abducted at midnight on 21 July to Helensvale transit camp and then dumped in Tsholotsho. They walked for two and half days from Tsholotsho to get back to Bulawayo. The interview was conducted 4 days after she came back to Bulawayo together with her husband who is a Malawian. They are employed as maid and gardener in Bulawayo.

They said that every one should wake up and go with them and that no one was supposed to sleep in church on that night. They were wearing their black boots and their black uniform and their ZRP caps. We got up and started packing and people were forced into the trucks. They said no one should remain behind and asked why we were in church. I do not know if there was anyone who ran away because they surrounded the whole place. Even if you wanted to go to the toilet, I tried to go to the toilet and I saw them there. They had surrounded the whole place. Before they got to the gate I think they jumped and surrounded the whole place so that no one escaped. No one escaped. Others went up and guarded from the top. We were like prisoners.

[Experiences in Helensvale camp]

No one escaped. Everyone got into the trucks. We travelled at night not even knowing where we were going. We were taken to the tents and we slept outside in the cold weather. In the morning we woke up very cold as though we had cold water poured on us. There was no food or anything.

In the morning they said that we should come to have our names registered so that we would be given some food. They were lying to us. They were harassing us. We were made to queue here and there in the cold. Children had been exposed to the cold by having to sleep out. They were asking what we were doing in church. What exactly were we doing in the churches? Those who were already there when we arrived said that they had been given sorghum meal. People were going hungry. That we were told that people had enough to eat was not true. People were suffering. Those who had been healthy when they left [from the churches the previous week, voluntarily] were now very thin and their complexion changed. On this particular day, the police said we should come and register as they were going to take everyone to their homes.

If one is a Malawian, they will be taken there, if anyone came from Mozambique, they will also be taken there. There is nothing like that [taking people to Malawi], it is not true, it is clear-cut lies. They wanted to dump people in the bush. They said that they do not want anyone going to town. Everyone has got a home. We really suffered and were hungry too. We last ate in church on Wednesday. On Thursday we spent the day on empty stomachs. They said that everyone has got a home. Those who said that they did not have any homes were going to be taken to Chikurubi prison where they would stay for ages working for the government.

No one could claim that they had no home. I pondered on where I would be going. I no longer have relatives. My relatives were people who came from far away, so where

would I go? They were saying that this does not matter. I was going to find some place to go. No one is going back to town. What were we doing in the churches? It was very tough and I had to just mention some place and after that, the trucks came at night.

[Dumped in Tsholotsho]

Those trucks travel at night. When they arrived, we got into the trucks after they had said that the Tsholotsho trucks should prepare to pick us up. They went and dumped us in Tsholotsho where there is no one that I know there. They dropped us and went back. We slept there. The police at Tsholotsho were asking why we were being dumped there. Those who had taken us there said that we were going to find our way on from there.

At dawn I told my husband that we should be on our way. If we remained there, we would see more problems from these people. We then left Tsholotsho on foot. We occasionally stopped to rest. I would also go to the bush to give a prayer asking God to lead the way, as he is the one who knows everything. My prayers were heard. If you ask God whenever you are in trouble, he hears your prayers. We continued to walk and our luggage would fall as we went. We would pick it up and continue. We also got thirsty but there was no water. We did not even know the place. We left at around 4.00am. We stopped over to ask where Nyamandlovu was and were told that the distance from Tsholotsho that we had covered was insignificant.

We slept on the way with our luggage. I was very thirsty and my lips were very dry. I was not able to speak. We got up and proceeded. *We walked for 2 and half days without food or anything.* We were hopeful we would eventually get here. This is the problem that we faced after we had been taken to the wilderness.

What made you come from Tsholotsho to Bulawayo?

I came because I had no relative there, who was I going to stay with? The end is that you are exposed to dangerous animals.⁶⁹ Even those who had said they have homes in Tsholotsho were dropped at the business centre, but when they took them from the camps, they said they were going to leave them at their homes. I wonder how people are going to make it with that luggage especially if their homes are very far away. How does one manage that? The end is that you lose all your belongings. There is also the problem of hunger and people can die from it. That is why I said I do not know how others are....

They [the churches] were taking care of us there. They were preparing to take us to our places, but Satan came in no time and did terrible things. He took people and threw them in the wilderness so that lions will eat them.

People are suffering, those with children. If I remember some old men and women who are older than myself who were no longer able to walk, I wonder where they are. It was even terrible for me to walk from Tsholotsho, I was almost dying on the way. *Where will they go, the old men and women?* They were just dumped on the way to find their own way. How does one manage that?

⁶⁹ Tsholotsho is a huge rural district that stretches for hundreds of km in all directions, and borders on Hwange National Park in places. People left at the business centre could well have been 60 or 70 km away from whatever homestead they may have had in mind to go to.

When they took us they said they were taking us to our relatives, but now they were leaving us to be devoured by vultures. This is very cruel. It is a sin to God. This is the hardship that I encountered. As it is, my feet are painful, all the way from Tsholotsho....

We hear that the Government is building houses for the people.

I do not know if those houses are there. They are not there. I do not think they are there....

4. Messages from the wilderness

Over the course of the next few days, individuals straggled into town and came to the churches seeking help, often a lone representative of six or seven families abandoned with luggage and small children in some business centre, unable to move on from there. No plans had been made by the police for people to be fed. Some families, which included small children, went for five days with almost no food at all, apart from what they had rescued prior to abduction.

Police reaction

The reaction of the rural police varied considerably. In some cases, it was the police who phoned in to the churches and asked for help. They appealed for food on behalf of dumped families, and also for transport to move them on to their rural relatives, as they clearly did not know what else to do. These police were landed with the problem of sometimes scores of people in front of their district offices hundreds of km from Bulawayo, with no particular warning or logistical backup.

In other instances, police and district administrators were obstructive, and would not respond to church inquiries as to whether anyone had been “trans-located” in their areas, or if anyone was in need of food and transport.

Moved – and moved again

From Gwanda, a church employee in Bulawayo got a phone message on Sunday 25 July to say that 30+ people had been dumped in front of the District Administrator’s office. But by 9 am on Monday, when a vehicle went out from Bulawayo to check on the situation 120 km away, everyone had been hurriedly trucked onwards into remote rural Gwanda. It took several more weeks of extensive wandering around and putting out inquiries to locate these families.

5. Why were people abducted and dumped?

.... We don’t recognise there is a humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe... It is fiction that there are people living in the open.

[Boniface Chidyausiku, UN Representative for Zimbabwe in New York.]⁷⁰

The coinciding of the abductions and dumping of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) with the timing of the release of the UN report has already been highlighted. The rhetoric of government officials, such as the quote above, further points to the thesis that people had to be removed from wherever they were massed after the demolitions to try to disprove the claims in the UN report that large numbers of people had suffered because of the exercise.

⁷⁰ Interview on Studio Seven, VOA, 13 September 2005.

It was very important to the authorities to remove people from the public domain, where journalists and diplomats and NGO employees might speak to them, thus keeping the story alive and providing further evidence of how people had been affected. The leaking to the international media of terrible images of the demolitions and living conditions of those displaced, had raised the ire of the government. The availability of the displaced to speak to the UN team was also probably recognised as a strategic error after their report – one which government wanted to rectify by getting rid of them.⁷¹ Government has consistently challenged the UN's figures. The government has invited UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to visit, and needs the evidence of OM gone in the event of this happening, in order to say – “Look, you see? She got it wrong.”⁷² The UN has however made it clear that any visit by Annan would not be to “check up” on the Tibajuka report, but would be conditional on aid being freely distributed to the affected.⁷³

From the day the Zimbabwe government received the UN report and realised its serious implications and unequivocal judgment of government actions, authorities have done everything they can to hide the evidence – including the people. People around the country who had backyard structures demolished have been ordered to get rid of the rubble, or face huge fines within tight deadlines. People have been trying to dig deep pits in their yards, to hide the debris. Caledonia camp near Harare was also closed to coincide with the release of the report, with some people being dumped back on the very sites they had been forcibly removed from, and others being dumped in rural areas. Some were removed to a new camp at Hopley Farm on the outskirts of Harare, where security remains tight, and access close to impossible.

What happened in the Bulawayo churches was thus part of a concerted national effort to really and truly “get rid of the trash”. Of course, government spokesperson Boniface Chidyausiku is correct in that there is “no camp with 700,000 people” – nor was there ever, probably anywhere on earth. The vast majority of people displaced by the demolitions around the country have been taken in by family, neighbours, and landlords, as the Action Aid/CHRA survey has shown. However, in Zimbabwe's desperate economic environment, this can only be a temporary arrangement. Where three families were maybe occupying three structures on one property, now they are occupying one structure, the core house. In September in Victoria Falls, for example, up to ten people are living in two-roomed houses, with up to a further fifteen sleeping outside the house at night.⁷⁴ In many instances, hosting families and the displaced have all lost their sources of income in the informal sector. In other words, people are living in dire circumstances, equivalent to refugee conditions, even though they may not be visibly gathered in refugee camps.

Back to the colonial era – towns as dormitories

In Bulawayo, the authors were told that landlords have offered to keep in town those in employment, while other family members have had to be sent back to rural areas, simply because a dozen or more people cannot live indefinitely in one house. This means that a husband who was previously living in a backyard structure with his wife and children, has been reduced to living with several other men in somebody's living room, while the rest of his family is sent back to a rural area.

⁷¹ The majority of displaced the authors spoke to mentioned that at some point or another they had been cautioned by police that under no circumstances were they to speak to NGOs, churches, or journalists. A priest was arrested and handcuffed in Bulawayo when it was wrongly suspected that he was filming the abductions on 21 July.

⁷² Such a visit seems very unlikely at this time, as it would be conditional on cooperation of the government with the UN on getting humanitarian support to people, among other preconditions which seem unlikely to be met.

⁷³ *The Financial Gazette*, September 22-28, 2005: “Annan sticks to conditions for Zim visit”.

⁷⁴ See “situation reports” ahead for details on Victoria Falls.

This is how things were in colonial times – men could come into the cities to work, but their families had to stay in rural areas. The rural area was the “permitted” home, the town a dormitory to provide cheap labour for capitalist business, but there was no urban security of tenure for black Zimbabweans. As mentioned in our last report, the liberation war was fought not only to claim the farmland in Zimbabwe, but also to claim the right of all Zimbabweans to live in the cities and have access to the resources of urban life. OM has once more taken away the right of freedom to choose where you live.

6. IDPs from the churches: where are they now?

In the course of the last three months since the dumping of people in rural Matabeleland, church personnel have renewed contact with the vast majority of the approximately 1,500 whom they housed during June/July.⁷⁵ This has been no easy task, but knowing that people were destitute, and also that many had been forced to leave behind what few building materials and furniture they salvaged during the process of abduction and hurried onward removal, the churches felt obligated to follow up on people’s status. This has involved pursuing leads the length and breadth of Matabeleland, from Binga, 550 km to the north of Bulawayo, to Gwanda district that runs all the way to the Botswana border, 300 km south. Plumtree, 100 km west and Lower Gweru, 200km to the east, have also turned out to have IDPs from Bulawayo. Some days, church trucks returned back full of food undelivered after failure to locate families that had last been seen in one or another small business centre, reportedly starving and in need of every sort of assistance. One church employee reported spending time in Lupane, a densely forested and remote area that is a maze of tiny dirt roads, where he was given regular information about “sightings” of the families he was looking for – “yes, three days ago we saw a tractor pulling a trailer full of strangers with bits and pieces of furniture heading that way - ” but by the end of two days, after having cumulatively travelled hundreds of km, he had to give up and come back into town, without locating them. The fuel shortage has been hugely inhibiting and costly.

As a result of requests for help and information by those who have already returned to Bulawayo on their own, 1370 people who were on the church IDP records are now located. Tsholotsho and Mbembesi to the north of Bulawayo have the greatest numbers, but people are truly scattered the length and breadth of the region, as shown in the table.

The churches are continuing to try to assess the current status and needs of families. World Vision has placed church IDPs who meet their criteria onto their feeding lists where possible, but they do not have programmes in all the rural centres that IDP families are now in. In these cases, the churches are trying to deliver food when they have managed to source some – hence the route records.

The reference to “Route” in this table is to indicate the districts that church transport must visit when they do a food run, delivering resources to IDPs in need. ie Kezi and Matobo both lie south west of Bulawayo, Esigodini, Filabusi and Gwanda to the south east, and so on. There are 7 rural routes, with routes 8 to 11 being Bulawayo urban or peri-urban.

⁷⁵ The number was not static as people came and went of their own accord.

Route list

No	Route	Area	# people	# fam.
1		1Kezi	86	26
2		1Matobo	25	0
3		2Esigodini	74	20
4		2Filabusi	12	4
5		2Gwanda	36	14
6		3Nyamandlovu	16	4
7		3Tsholotsho	198	130
8		4Nkayi	65	19
9		4Nyathi	62	24
10		5Howe Mine	13	2
11		5Mbembesi	103	24
12		5Ntabazinduna	0	0
13		5Sigola	56	17
14		6Binga	5	1
15		6Dete	5	1
17		6Gwaai	43	8
18		6Insuza	14	4
19		6Lupane	96	32
20		7Plumtree	72	14
21		8Cowdray Park	29	8
22		8Umguza	30	6
23		9Siphezini	44	9
24		10Killarney	280	50
25		11Ngozi Mine		
		Midlands	6	2
		Total	1370	419

Route lists for Bulawayo churches

September: repeat demolitions

Within weeks of the total destruction of Killarney informal settlement on 11 June 2005, people displaced from here began to trickle back. *By mid September more than 20% of people had either returned to, or never left, Killarney.*⁷⁶ This serves to underline the fact that OM has been a costly exercise that has impoverished thousands of the very poor, but it will not ultimately prove to have reversed rural to urban drift. The reasons people had for leaving rural areas in the first place still remain. The reason they had lived in Killarney in the first place is that they had nowhere else to go. A large proportion of residents here were of “foreign” descent and genuinely have no rural ties in Zimbabwe.

People who returned have been living there “clandestinely” – leaving the area by day and returning at night, to live in discreet huts or erect overnight shelter that is dismantled by day. Over time, dwellings have become more permanent.

⁷⁶ See table above: 288 people were back in Killarney by mid September.

On 29 September, the police returned to Killarney and once more razed one of the three villages, totally demolishing 16 houses and leaving 35 people once more without any shelter. These families continue to date to live in the ruins of their homes – demolished for the second time in a few months [see photos 4 and 6].

Schooling

We challenge a UNICEF press release on 22 August that blandly claims that “up to 90% of children have remained in school” in spite of OM. There is an urgent need for UNICEF to clarify their research methods and to define their sample groups. It is dangerous and unhelpful to have these sorts of statements at a time in Zimbabwe when there are clearly thousands of children out of school, or suffering serious disruption to their education in various ways, and needing NGO support including from UNICEF.⁷⁷

A major concern among the churches in Bulawayo at the moment is whether displaced children are in school or not. There are several hundred school children among “their” displaced, and the school term began nearly two months ago in early September. This information is still being gathered, but the situation is complicated. Many children had outstanding fees at their urban school, and cannot get a certificate of transfer until these are paid, in addition to the current fees at the new school. Many families lost all their school records and receipts when their homes were burnt down, including birth certificates. It has taken a long time to locate families, and the first concern was food. Information on schooling is now being collected as fast as possible, and efforts have been made to raise the fees to try and prevent children effectively losing out on a school year, although this is looking increasingly bleak.

Some rural headmasters are trying to be accommodative, on the understanding that fees may be regularised in due course. There are reports of sightings of children in “funny uniforms” in schools across rural Matabeleland. Good-will may buy these few pupils a little time, but reports also indicate that others are out of school at this stage. As the information is unclear and often anecdotal, it is not possible to estimate percentages in or out of school a few weeks after the beginning of the term, but the situation will begin to clarify within the month.

More to education than sitting in a classroom

Individual children interviewed in detail have indicated that their schooling has been severely disrupted. Most have been out of school for at least some weeks since June. There is also more to schooling than sitting in a classroom. Those children lucky enough to have had at least some schooling since the June demolitions have reported being very upset and unable to concentrate, being worried that by the time they got home, their parents would have been arrested or taken away. They have reported falling grades, and failure to do homework because of living in crowded and distressing environments since losing their homes.

One child, illegally back in Killarney and back in school in September when she was interviewed, reported that she worried every night about having her tiny little shack knocked down again. Sleep is disrupted, she is anxious, and reports that she used to be first in class but has fallen behind considerably now. *Her shack was in fact knocked down again in early October: what the future holds for this child now is entirely uncertain and gloomy.⁷⁸*

⁷⁷ UNICEF: “Against the odds: Zimbabweans keep their children in school”, Harare; 22 August 2005.

⁷⁸ See previous section describing renewed demolitions in Killarney.

Quality of and access to education

Children displaced to rural areas are having to adjust to new schools - those lucky enough to be in school. This means new classmates, and inevitably in an urban to rural move, reduced resources; many rural schools have limited desks, books and under qualified teachers. Children in high school could find themselves with no high school in their area at all. In Matabeleland North, for example, there is only one rural government school that offers A level science, in an area with a population of one million.

Case example: 4 families recently displaced from Killarney to an area in Insuza were visited; among many problems they raised is the fact that the nearest junior school is now 10 km away – if the children take the short cut through the bush. Their children now have to walk from before sunrise and return after sunset on very little food, and as a result of the 20 km return daily walk, the younger children have now dropped out of school, as they are not strong enough to cope.

The nearest high school to this area is 30 km away: several of the children are in grade six and seven. Finishing junior school will clearly mean the end of their schooling, as they cannot walk 30km daily each way to school. Yet when they were based in Killarney, they were receiving a good education merely by walking across the road to Glengarry. The forced displacement of these families has ended the educational opportunities for the very young, who cannot make the walk, and for those children who would have progressed to high school in the urban setting.

Some children are being kept out of school by their parents, who consider their current situations temporary. Reports have been received by the authors that in one village in Nkayi and another in Tsholotsho, around 16 schoolchildren are out of school. This is because the families dumped here were told by police that *as long as they remained where they had been dumped, then any day soon the police would return to take the families back to occupy houses built under OG/HK*. This is obviously not true – it was confirmed that these 6 families are not even on the Bulawayo city council housing lists, having never made formal application. This was a ploy to try and prevent these families from heading back into town, but the outcome is that children are out of school, as the families were convinced by the police that their current location is temporary.

Shelter

The biggest concern of displaced families in the immediate term is shelter. Families have been offered a range of accommodation in rural areas, from virgin bush with no structures, to dilapidated huts with no thatch or doors, to squashing in with families into existing structures.⁷⁹ Thatching is one of the biggest problems, as much of Matabeleland is totally bare, without a blade of grass at this time of year. Families have somehow transported precious wardrobes, mattresses and other things through as many as seven moves – now the rains are coming, and families are looking at their few salvaged possessions and wondering how to save them from ruin – not to mention dreading the prospect of sleeping in the rain themselves.

Permanence of current situation

Before families are helped to build huts, a major issue is whether families even want to stay where they now find themselves. In many instances they do not.⁸⁰ And if they do not, what is the solution? Many people have reported being unhappy where they now are and have expressed a desire to come back to town, for employment and schooling purposes, but are well

⁷⁹ See photos in this report for some examples of rural housing for IDPs.

⁸⁰ See the next sections of this report for case examples.

aware that there is no accommodation prospect for them there. They are concerned about rebuilding illegal dwellings, only to have them destroyed again.

The churches accommodated IDPs in June in the context of emergency, but are not really in a position to deliberately transport hundreds of people hundreds of km back into town to live in highly unsuitable and once more temporary situations in church halls.

How to facilitate people having the right to choose where they live is not primarily the churches' problem – this is an issue for the nation.

7. A reservation: giving priority treatment to a few in the midst of a humanitarian disaster

Reservations have been expressed by both churches and recipients of church aid, of the ethics of singling out a few families for special treatment in a rural region where virtually every family is living below the poverty datum line, and where every family is battling on a daily basis for enough food to survive. The scale of general need is, on the other hand, far beyond the scope of Bulawayo churches to meet. They cannot feed the entire region. It needs the intervention of a large-scale WFP programme – see previous section of this report!

Bulawayo churches report that they regularly deliver to “their” displaced families what should be sufficient food to feed a family for three months, but that these food supplies sometimes last days rather than weeks, because they are of necessity distributed among starving relatives, neighbours and whoever else is in need.

Displaced families who are being singled out for special treatment, who have trucks arriving looking specifically for them, and handing over blankets and food, also report that this is creating problems and suspicions in their very impoverished neighbourhoods, where they are often trying to build relationships in places where they are in any case not very welcome. One woman cried with anxiety on being asked if she wanted food delivered to her new rural situation. She is finding herself and her seven children very unwelcome back in a rural community of distant relatives, and is desperate not to seem privileged. On the other hand, she has no food and no other resources. She asked for food to be delivered to the local priest some distance away, so that she could carry the food herself back home and make up some story as to where it had come from. The difficulties and uncomfortable interest being generated by the “special” food deliveries have even been a contributing factor in at least one family leaving the rural home that OM left them dumped in – see “Situation Three” ahead.

Those receiving aid from churches, are on the lists by virtue of having suffered great losses, often all they possessed, and by having been brought to the attention of Bulawayo churches during June. Even in the Bulawayo context, those being benefited are a fraction of those who lost shelters – 1,400 out of possibly 45,000, and just providing help for, and keeping track of needs for school fees and building materials for this tiny fraction is a logistical headache for this under resourced group.

97% of Bulawayo’s displaced alone, are not receiving any help, and the current authors came across IDPs who have made their way back to rural areas after backyard structures were destroyed, and who are not receiving help from anyone – see “situation reports” in next section for examples.

The churches are now somehow supporting entire villages wherever they have an IDP, and are doing quick assessments of who else may be in desperate need in the immediate family and vicinity of the “target” family. This very *ad hoc* arrangement is the best that can be managed at the moment – until hopefully some WFP-driven programme takes over feeding. Church resources and ability to procure and distribute food is limited, particularly considering fuel shortages. There is no obvious solution to this predicament, as to so many others that have arisen out of the disastrous OM.

8. Brief outline of current situations of a range of IDPs: early September 2005

All people interviewed for this section of the report gave authors permission to take photographs and to use their stories to highlight the plight of the displaced. They were taking huge risks by so doing, as there have been unconfirmed reports of reprisals against those who have talked to the press or the UN team. In spite of the permissions, we have therefore kept location of IDPs general rather than specific, with the exception of Situation One, and have masked most adult identities in order to protect informants. The cases used are a small representation of more than 150 interviews conducted in the field between mid August and mid September.

Situation one

**Cowdray Park, Bulawayo urban:
A community of 28 IDPs, 17 children and 11 adults.
Originally from Killarney informal settlement
Interviews: August, and early September 2005**

These eight families reported to the authors that they are originally from Killarney and their homes were destroyed on 11 June. They were in the churches, and then at Helensvale. When everybody was being moved out of the camp, the police finally had to accept that they really had nowhere rural to go. They were the very last group left at Helensvale. They are all foreign nationals by descent, born in Zimbabwe. They were brought back into town and left in an undeveloped area near Cowdray Park - the centre of Bulawayo’s Operation G/HK.

Five Red Cross tents have been set up, but there are eight families, so families have to share tents. The group is under very strict instructions not to talk to the churches, journalists or anyone else. The tents are set way off the main road, so that the community is not easily seen. The soldiers who are building the new houses are keeping an eye on them to make sure they don’t talk to the wrong people. We can confirm that it is very difficult to access this group without drawing attention. It is necessary to approach obliquely.

There is one temporary latrine servicing 28 people. They are receiving no support of any sort from the police, social welfare or anyone else apart from a local church who brings them food. There is no clean water source, so families are drinking, washing and cooking from a muddy, polluted stream nearby. Sometimes they source water from the building site bowsers. The adults mostly go into Bulawayo during the day to try and vend or raise a little money one way or another, to buy food. A few of them have been given construction work under OG/HK.

One of the women had just given birth and had returned to the camp a few days earlier, with her baby, less than a week old [see photo]. The conditions in the camp are unhygienic and unsuitable for anyone, never mind such a vulnerable child – and for a post partum mother.

One of the men in this settlement is very ill. He is too ill to stand, never mind to walk to the clinic. He was receiving no medical help whatsoever but the local church has now asked Medicin Sans Frontier to provide medical care for him.

Two weeks into the new school term, we were told that not one of the thirteen school-age children in this camp was in school: they have all been out of school since June [see photo]. A phone call to the headmaster of the nearest school, a short walk away from this camp, confirmed that he did not have them in the school. By October, as a result of church intervention, the children were finally back in school.

The conditions in this camp are appalling, and people are clearly destitute. Yet this camp has been set up and effectively abandoned by the authorities. It is ironic that these families are being forced to live in such squalor a stone's throw away from the much-acclaimed "Operation Hlalani Kuhle" suburb going up in Cowdray Park.

Situation two

Resettlement area: Matabeleland North

Five families: approx 17 people.

Originally from Killarney informal settlement

All of these families are foreign nationals, descended from Malawian or Zambian parents, but born themselves in Zimbabwe. They have no rural homes. They were therefore dumped on this resettlement area by the police, directly from Helensvale, and the local community leader had allocated them plots. However, it then turned out that these plots had already been allocated twice over to other families. The first families who had been allocated them, had then had them taken away by the community leader for failure to develop the land. After this, some families took over this now vacated land, but without being given clear permission by the community to do so. These families have now been told they must leave these plots so that the five Killarney families can have them. This has caused widespread anger and the local families who had begun developing the plots are fighting for their right to the land. The displaced families are not yet sure whether they will finally get these plots or not.

They are in the middle of a difficult land dispute not of their own making. The families are also concerned about the fact that the area where they are is very far from basic resources. There is no clinic or hospital nearby, and one of the children needs frequent medical attention. The families have no start up equipment to develop the plots, should ownership be resolved any time soon. This means they may lose the plots for failure to develop them, as that seems to be the local policy. They are entirely dependent on what they are getting from the churches in terms of food. Some of them are already talking about needing to return to town to look for employment.

Attached to this group of families, is a mentally challenged man. They have "adopted" him, as he has nobody to look after him, and has somehow travelled through all the recent moves with them from Killarney, even though he is no relative.

These families have lived in seven locations in two months : Killarney -> Methodist church -> Helensvale -> one rural business centre -> another rural business centre -> resettlement area -> 'own' plots. They are not yet settled, and some at least seem likely to move back to town at the first opportunity.

Situation three

Rural business centre, Matabeleland North

A family of five IDPs: 3 adults and two children, aged 3 months and 7 years

Originally from Ngozi Mine informal settlement

Interviews: late June, mid August, again in September, each time in a new area

This family of five lost their home when Ngozi Mine was razed. The family consists of a husband and wife, the wife's sister, a seven year-old child and a three-month old baby, who was two weeks old at the time of the destruction of the family home. The baby is obviously ill, with runny eyes and a bad cold. The man is sharing a blanket with his wife and sister-in-law. The family commented that they knew this was inappropriate but they had no option.

The informants on this case came across them at 5 am on a very cold morning in mid August, sleeping on an open veranda in front of a rural store. They had been there for four days. This was their fifth move since losing their home – and clearly not their last. They had gone initially to the churches, and from there had been abducted to Helensvale Farm, where they had had to sleep in the open, as the tents were full. At Helensvale, the police had insisted on everyone choosing a rural destination. They were moved to a rural business centre on the second day (Friday 23 July), after spending two days with no food at Helensvale. They named a rural district based on the fact that the wife's sister is married in that area.

They were dumped at the business centre, and had to make their own way to the sister's home. In this area, their relatives took them in and fed them. However, it soon became clear that there was not going to be any land available for them there. They were newcomers with no real claim, and were told that any available land had already been identified as belonging to children who had grown up in that community. Once food arrived for them from the churches, this also generated a great deal of embarrassing interest and questions. After a few days, the family therefore packed up and left, heading back to the rural business centre, where the informants found them.

The interviewers decided to facilitate their moving somewhere more appropriate. They therefore went and negotiated on the family's behalf with a kraal head in yet another rural district some distance away. He was very reluctant to accept strangers without any transfer documentation from relevant traditional leadership. However, this kraal head's wife put in a strong plea for this family, and he eventually capitulated, seeing as the request was coming from the churches. The family was allocated one ruined hut. The floor of the hut is loose soil, not conducive to a 3-month old baby. The roof has also fallen in, and there is no door. However, this hut is at least something that this family can begin to improve and is better in the medium term than sleeping on an open veranda.

This family has been moved from: Ngozi Mine -> church -> Helensvale -> business centre -> sister's rural home -> back to business centre -> different rural district

Situation four

Bulawayo urban:

15 year old girl

originally from three roomed house: displaced when landlord's relatives displaced

This case is a clear example of the vulnerability of unaccompanied children in the current situation – rape of a minor as a result of OM.

“Joyce” aged 15, was left in charge of her of a three-roomed house in the high density suburb of Bulawayo. Her paternal grandmother was renting the house. Grandmother had gone to sell clothes in Binga rural area. Joyce left school about 2 years ago as parents did not have money to further her education. The owner of the house works in South Africa. He got a message that his own relatives had been displaced and living in the open; he then decided to come and talk to Joyce’s granny so that he could take over the house for his relatives. Joyce’s granny was not available so he left his relatives at the house to give Joyce some time, about a month (August 2005), for the granny to come. Unfortunately the granny did not come, and the people left at the house evicted Joyce.

Joyce sought accommodation next door; the neighbours agreed, but encouraged Joyce to go to the bus rank and ask a special favour to be taken to her parental home and then the parents could pay on the other side. The bus driver was reluctant to take Joyce in case her people were unable to pay. He asked Joyce to bring a deposit of \$60 000 or \$100 000 because the total bus fare was \$160 000. Joyce went back with this message to people she was staying with, but no one had the money to give Joyce. Another neighbour heard this story and approached Joyce. He informed her that he would give her money if she come to his house to work for him.

The following morning Joyce went to the man’s house - where he raped her. Joyce screamed and another woman in the neighbourhood come to her rescue.

The matter was quickly reported to the neighbouring police station and Joyce was taken to hospital. She was examined by the doctor and then referred to another room for investigations (HIV and pregnancy test). Unfortunately these were not done as there was no one to take specimens. The policeman came back to take Joyce to the police station.

Joyce stayed at the police station for three days, as there was no relative to take her in. There was no food at the police station for her, but she was assisted by members of police who brought sandwiches to work.

A church counsellor was informed by the medical social worker at Mpilo Hospital about the plight of Joyce. She arranged Joyce alternative accommodation, counselling and private medical care. Joyce was then given money to return to her parental home. The perpetrator has not been caught, and it will be three months before Joyce knows if she is HIV positive or not.

Situation five:

Rural district, Matabeleland North

2 women, both widows, not related, and one grandchild each

Originally from Killarney informal settlement

Interview: 31 August 2005

Interview one: The first old woman who spoke of how she had recently nursed her daughter who had died, since arriving in this area. She has a grandson who she looks after and who is with her. She described the nightmare of having her home burnt when her daughter was already extremely ill. Because the police had warned them they were coming, she and her daughter had slept outside in the cold winter weather for a week prior to the actual demolition, even though her daughter was already very ill. At the churches, the daughter received medical treatment and was taken to Mpilo hospital for a few days and the church met the expenses. They were then “pounced on” in the night and taken to Helensvale, also with her ill daughter to look after. She has now had to watch her daughter die and get buried in a strange place. This woman is in deep mourning and is not relating to anything much. She has been left with a seven year-old grandchild to raise.

Interview two: the other woman dumped in this same place, was very anxious and kept saying that she has nothing. She said she needed thatching grass, and pots, as hers were lost during the forced midnight move to Helensvale, along with everything else. She has been offered two huts for a million dollars each, by a man who is busy building himself a new homestead on another plot. However, both huts are severely scavenged in that the doors and thatch and even some poles have already been removed by him (see photo). This same man also wants two million dollars for his field. While it is not unusual for people to “sell” huts and fields in communally owned areas to recover their outlay, this old widow does not have four million dollars to buy two semi-collapsed huts and a field. In any case, this will not buy her right of tenure; she feels she could be moved on any time. She also does not have resources to build a homestead from scratch.

Situation six:

Rural district, Matabeleland South:

6 women and 1 man, not related:

Informal mining settlement deep in the bush

Originally from Bulawayo backyard structures

Interviews, first week of September 2005.

Note: there are literally scores of informal mining settlements across Matabeleland, and these have become home to unknown numbers of those forced out of the towns.

Seven Bulawayo residents who were living in backyard structures in the high-density suburbs have ended up in a sprawling informal mining settlement in the remote bush. They did not know each other prior to displacement. There are more displaced persons than these seven in this camp, but others were reluctant to be identified. Conditions in the camp are extremely tough. Dwellings are tiny, plastic shelters. There is no safe water and no decent ablutions. Approximately fifty people live here, mainly single men. The women commented that it was “not a safe place” for women, but say that they have very few options at this time [see photos].

The women are trying to make a living by selling goods and cooking for the miners. The displaced man is now gold panning. However, the police from the nearest rural business centre regularly raid this community, looting all the goods. They have already been raided three times by the police and had all their vending wares seized, in the space of a little more than a month.

Four women and the man related the stories of how they ended up in this mining camp.

Interview one: this 19 year-old girl reported that her vending stand was destroyed in Nkulumane Sekusile informal market in Bulawayo. She has one child of her own and 6 other dependents, including her mother, nieces and two siblings, who are not with her. She was forced out of her accommodation because the owners needed it back after their structure was destroyed. She said that around mid June, police went around the high density areas and rounded people up in trucks, if they were sleeping in the open like her, and as several people in the truck were from a certain small rural town in Matabeleland South, the entire truckload of people were dumped there. She said there were around 7 women in the truck that she knew, and around 20 that she did not know. She does not know what happened to the others. They were all left at the police station in this rural centre. She heard it was possible to make money trading in the nearby mining communities, and so she decided to try and see. She commented that she found life in the camp unbearable, and worse for women. She wishes to return to Bulawayo, but says she cannot return home until she has made some money to take back, as her family is now destitute. On the other hand, every time she makes a little in this camp, the police steal it.

Interview two: this woman is a 35-year old widow, who reported that after the demolition of her home, she slept near Renkini Bus Station in Bulawayo. She has three children, two in high school and one in junior school, and she has supported them by vending. They are in her home area of Bikita, which is far away. She slept under a tree for three days. On the fourth day, she was rounded up by police and forcibly removed to a small rural business centre south of Bulawayo. She is not from this area, and she knew nobody in this centre where she was dumped. She spent two days sleeping in the open here, until she was invited by someone in this business centre to go to the mining community to vend. She is selling beer and groceries to the miners. She has lost everything – her wardrobe, her bed, blankets, groceries, clothes – when her home was burnt down. She says that while the people in this settlement have been kind to her, she does not intend to remain there, but will leave as soon as she has bus fare.

Interview three: a 38-year old woman, separated from her husband, she has two children. She was forced to demolish her tuckshop and was left with no income in Bulawayo. She made her way to this mining community after she heard that it was possible to do business there. She says she is battling to earn enough money in this place, especially since the police recently looted all the goods she was hoping to sell. But she does not consider it an option to return home, because there is no way of earning a living now in Bulawayo either.

Interview four: this 49-year old married woman has 5 grandchildren who are her dependants. Her backyard structure was demolished and simultaneously she was stopped from vending. She moved to the rural business centre of her own accord, and from there to the mining community. She commented that her economic situation was pathetic. In Bulawayo, the family is now living in a ruined building. She has left her grandchildren living in this ruin with another relative and has come to try and make a living. She is feeling that although life is far from perfect in this settlement, she will stay and make some money, as there is no point in returning to Bulawayo.

Interview five: this 34-year old man is separated and has one child. He was vending second hand clothes in Bulawayo before his backyard shelter and all his clothes were burnt. The day after this, he left town for the rural business centre, hoping to sell goods at the bus terminus. The police chased him and others away from there. He then decided to go to the mining community, and he is now learning to gold pan.

He says the life is not easy, and there are constant confrontations between the panners and other villagers, who accuse them of ruining the riverbed. The police also raid and take their gold. He says life is unbearable there, and that he lived well in Bulawayo compared to this, but doesn't know what else to do.

Situation seven:

Rural district in the Midlands

Family of husband, wife and seven children

Originally from PORTA FARM near Harare

Interviewed in early September 2005.

This man and his wife went from their rural home to Harare many years ago. They lived first on the banks of the Mukuvisi River, and made their living by fishing. They were then forcibly removed along with many others, to Porta Farm, where they have been ever since. The man is a traditional healer, who set up a surgery, and his wife set up a tuck shop. Both were licensed by the local authorities to undertake these activities. They built a four roomed house in Porta Farm where they lived with their seven children.

During OM, their house, surgery and shop were all totally destroyed. The family was forcibly moved to Caledonia Farm. The conditions both in Porta during the last few weeks, and then in Caledonia, were atrocious. When the camp at Caledonia was closed in late July, police trucks took them to the Mavingo, which is several hundred kilometres away from where their family is based. They have been separated from two of their children, who had moved in with friends in Harare in order to stay in school during the move to Caledonia.

The family have been given an old deserted homestead, with only one room and no roof. They are very angry about what has happened to them, but feel that at this point they cannot return to Harare as there is nowhere there for them to live. They will try to rehabilitate the hut and start over again.

Situation eight

Ngozi Mine, Bulawayo urban

Eight women and three men

Originally from Ngozi Mine

18 August 2005

The police have been regularly patrolling Ngozi Mine and aggressively chasing and arresting anyone they find in the vicinity since this informal settlement was razed on 11 June. The following interviews are summaries of two sworn affidavits made after the police brutally assaulted eleven squatters there, fracturing the arm of a 21 year-old woman. All the interviewees have been charged for having been found at Ngozi Mine, but do not know what the charges are. The police have not been charged for assault.

Interviewee One:

I was born in November 1984 at XX

I have a minor child, who is under three years of age. After leaving my employment I had no place to stay. I used to sell vegetables as a way of living. I went to stay at Ngozi Mine sometime

in 2001 while I looked for another place, but to no avail. I had therefore built my own plastic shelter. Sometime in June 2005 we were evicted by Riot Police.

I went to stay at Emakhandeni with a friend. I stayed for 3 weeks and went back to Ngozi Mine. While I was there the police came again but I ran away. I was chased and caught by two Officers and I fell down. I was beaten with a baton on the left elbow and I fractured it; as I fell down I injured my right knee. As I woke up I was forced into a small police truck. I lost all my clothing in a bag; 2 blankets and a pot, pan and 3 plates.

While I was at Central Police Station no finger-prints were taken as my hand was too swollen. I spent a second night at Central Police Station. I and the other 11 were taken to court; we were remanded. The next court date is in September.

Interviewee two

I, the undersigned YY do hereby make oath and state as follows. I was born in 1982, at Mpilo Hospital in Bulawayo. I am customarily married and have one minor child born in 2004. I and my husband had moved to Ngozi mine after our shelter in Njube was destroyed by riot police sometime in June 2005.

On the 18th August 2005, a big police truck arrived at 11am and a small police truck with officers in plainclothes. The big truck was full of riot police popularly known as “Murambatsvina”. The riot police jumped out of the truck, and surrounded the whole area; four of them came to me.

I was approached by four officers whom I believed to be aged about 24 to 26 years. The four were armed with baton sticks and digging iron bars. One of them said to me in Shona “Mchembere paza imbaa yako hausi kuziva kuthi urikuita tsvina.” Which literally translates to say “old lady destroy your house, don’t you know that you are making this dirty”. I told him that I did not hear what he was saying. Another officer repeated the similar words in Ndebele saying “Khipha idoti yakho leyi” which translates to say, “remove your dirt.”

I advised them I needed to take my child out as she was asleep inside the hut. I came out carrying my nine months old child; as I was about to put him on my back I was beaten up several times with baton sticks on the buttocks. My child fell down as I tried to save myself from the beatings.

I felt dizzy and fell to the ground, and I was kicked on the stomach and on the left side and on my breast. I started menstruating immediately. Other women who were present at the time held me up and assisted me into the small police truck. I and another 10 people who included women and men, rode in the small truck to Luveve Police Station.

I lost my clothing that comprises of 2 Jean trousers, 3 T Shirts, and 10kg mealie meal, 250ml bottle of cooking oil, and 1 Blanket. At the station we were locked up until the following day at about 10am. We were not given any food or blankets and no water. At about 10am we were taken to Central Police Station. At Central Police Station photos and finger prints were taken together with individual statements.

At about 7pm I was weak and was not allowed treatment while in police custody. We were locked up in the cells. I collapsed and fainted. The next day, I saw my aunt S, my father and mother. My mother was carrying my child. I was then given clothing by my mother and told to go and change and we left.

I returned to my father's home and was welcomed. Kitchen utensils and a 14' colour television were damaged. My husband was away. I lost my child's towels and 1 baby blanket, 6 dinner plates, 6 water glasses. 2 Jean trousers were lost, wrapped in 1 blanket, and 2 pair of sheets.

My child was ill and had some sores on the legs; he was coughing which has persisted. My neighbour has accused me of bringing illnesses from Ngozi Mine.

Situation nine

Victoria Falls

An estimated 60,000 displaced when suburbs were razed September 2005

Victoria Falls is one of the worst affected areas in the country. The UN report refers to 64% of homes having been demolished under OM. The authors have made two visits to the affected region, and confirm that the situation is dire and living conditions are appalling. Congestion in the few remaining houses is such that ten or more people are now living in two roomed houses – and at night up to fifteen others will emerge and seek shelter around the few houses still standing. Several warehouses have been turned into dormitories by the owners, who have strict rules that these spaces are for men only, who sleep on open floors in their hundreds. If wives visit, the husbands have to go and sleep with them in the open bush outside the warehouse.

Victoria Falls is a wilderness area, and people are literally sleeping in places where buffalo, elephants and lions wander around. People are terrified of being trampled on or eaten.

The churches in Victoria Falls, with support from the Bulawayo churches and elsewhere, have been trying to help many of those displaced. They have been regularly feeding up to 4,000 IDPs. As time has gone on – and it is now nearly 4 months since the demolitions, it has become increasingly clear that the current situation is untenable. OG/HK has delivered a handful of houses, and there is no short or medium term strategy being implemented to improve the welfare of the tens of thousands of IDPs here.

It became clear that the police were under pressure to forcibly remove and dump people. The pastors, in discussion with local police, reached an understanding with them that any movement of people out of the area should be done jointly. The pastors have in any case been receiving desperate requests from people, needing transport to move goods and families out of the impossible situation that prevails and back to rural homes, before the start of the rains.

In the first two weeks of September, there has therefore been a joint church/police exercise, which has seen the shifting of an estimated 1,000 IDPs from Victoria Falls back to rural areas. Day after day, trucks of every description, loaded to the point of collapse with furniture and people, have been trekking out of Victoria Falls to relocate those who wish to be relocated to rural areas.

The movement of people from Victoria Falls has been on an entirely voluntary basis, where the churches put out word that on a certain day, families needing transport to a particular destination should register for help. Most people moved so far have gone to Hwange area. People will next be moved to Tsholotsho, Binga, and Lupane.

People are being sent off with 50kg of maize, some cooking oil and barley. Details of where people are being transferred are being recorded, to make follow up possible. The next task will be monitoring the status of those being currently relocated, as the Bulawayo churches have been doing, to ensure that destitute families being relocated into rural districts of abject poverty and starvation, have enough to survive. Some of those being relocated told the authors that they were taking advantage of the offers of free food and transport to move families and belongings, but would be back in Victoria Falls as soon as they could because they have to earn a living.

Even with this movement of possibly ultimately thousands of people out of Victoria Falls, the situation in the town will remain of deepest concern. This community is in need of a coherent policy for short and medium term support, rather than the current crisis management that is reaching a handful of people. Victoria Falls needs massive intervention to recover.

Situation ten

**Two year old boy: disabled after feet burnt during “Murambatsvina”
Victoria Falls
Incident on 2 June, interviewed late September 2005
[see photos 3 and 4]**

This child’s mother wept while relating how her two year-old child “fell into the ashes” of a newly burnt hut on 2 June, in Victoria Falls. He suffered horrendous burns on both legs, from his feet to his thighs. The child was taken to the clinic who transferred him to hospital saying he had severe burns. The medical records show that “he was burnt down to the tendons”.

The mother tells the story in her own words:

“I realised that he was not healing, so I thought it was better for me to leave the hospital with him and come daily for dressings. I went to the hospital every second day because I had to work for taxi fare to get him to hospital as his burns are too bad for me to carry him. Then they told me that the burns were getting worse and that I should go to Mpilo hospital [in Bulawayo]. They did not give me money for transport, so it was a struggle to make the journey. I made it to the hospital in Lupane. There Dr Mpfu assisted me, by giving me bandages and injecting my son for free. When I realised he was getting better, I came back [to Victoria Falls].

“It hurts me so much, if I talk about it I feel like crying. My child was able to walk and run, now he is disabled. It pains me, he cannot play with the kids like he used to. Even in church he cannot dance....

“I blame the police for burning things, forgetting that we have children. I have never seen anyone except you, nobody has come to talk about it.”

“He cannot manage to walk, he cannot stand, he cannot sleep on all sides; he sleeps on one side until sunrise. Sometimes if he sleeps on the side without a wound, he wakes up with a swelling on that side, because the blood won’t be moving. If I put him on my back, blood comes out of his wounds. I can’t carry him on my back, I just carry him in my arms. If he is seated, he tells me he is tired of sitting.”

This mother and child are in urgent need of further medical assistance, as well as a wheelchair and/or large pram to help move the child around. He needs to be evaluated to see if a prosthetic boot of some kind could get him mobile in due course.

Situation eleven

Young boy: deliberately savaged by police dog

Woman: deliberately savaged by police dog on same day

Victoria Falls

Incident: early September; interview, late September 2005.

Background

After the interviewees had their homes razed in Victoria Falls early June, they moved into the surrounding bush with what they had salvaged of their possessions. They lived in the open bush for two months. The police harassed them and said they should move to the roadside, but they had no transport for their belongings so they stayed in the bush. They slept under trees as they were too afraid to put up structures. They were “many”. They picked up food from the refuse dump as they had no other means of earning a living.

The woman interviewee reported that her husband was working for Environment Africa, and he had to give up his job once he had no place to stay. He had to stop working to stay in the bush to look after his property and family, and look for somewhere else to stay.

They eventually made contact with the local church, who allowed them to go and get clean water. The churches helped them and promised transport to get their furniture home. They took some of their things to the church, but other things were stolen because they were left in the bush.

Attack by police dog: interviewee one

The woman interviewee related that a police dog savaged her, at around 7pm one Wednesday evening in September. It was near the church, in the bush where she stays. A policeman in a truck stopped and told his dog to “catch them”. The dog jumped off the truck and attacked her. She was bitten on her legs severely – multiple lesions and swelling consistent with dog bites were clearly visible two weeks later.

“It was biting me while I was rolling and screaming. The officer finally called off the dog. I told the policeman his dog had injured us and he said, ‘go back to where you came from!’ The policeman ordered the dog to chase the other person, a young boy. He was also bitten.”

“I went to the police post with my brother and they wrote me a note to go to the hospital where they treated us. They said we had to pay for dressings and so we stopped going for treatment as we had no money.”

Attack by dog: interviewee two

The young man and a friend were staying in the bush because they had to look after their property. There was no water there. They were fetching water from the nearby church, and came back towards the fire where they were staying. Then they saw a police vehicle approaching and stopping. They ran away, leaving the water containers. As they ran, they saw the dog catch up with them. It grabbed the interviewee and attacked him and he fell over and rolled screaming on the ground.

ie: 30% of those who lost dwellings in Bulawayo's two informal settlements are included in this sample.

ii. "The backyard displaced"- now in rural context

A further 20 interviews with families displaced from backyard structures to rural areas were included simply to highlight the need for far more research to be done into the plight and coping strategies of the "backyard" displaced. As mentioned earlier – very little is formally known about this group, which makes up around 97% of Bulawayo's displaced and which has received close to no help from NGOs or churches whatsoever.

Furthermore, it remains unknown what percentage of this group has left urban centres for rural areas, and largely unknown where they are or how they are faring. This group of 20 was included as so little is known at this stage about how people displaced (regardless from where) to rural areas, are faring in their new situations.

Urban to rural ratio of respondents

- Urban: 37 Killarney / Ngozi families were interviewed in urban Bulawayo
- 12 never left their homestead vicinity
 - 6 relocated within the Bulawayo area
 - 19 have returned from the rural relocation to original home vicinity
- Rural: 63 families were interviewed in rural Matabeleland
- 43 were families forcibly moved from churches and dumped
 - 20 were families who relocated after loss of backyard structures

Urban = 37% Rural = 63 %

Humanitarian concerns

Health:

- 37 families reported at least one family member with serious health problem
- 15 of these families reported loss of access to medication since relocation

Patients no longer accessing medication included patients with TB (2), high blood pressure (1), schizophrenia (2), epilepsy (1), as well as an assortment of diarrhoea, bad coughs, aches and pains, dizziness etc.

Most urgent needs

School fees:	92
Food:	88
Shelter:	65
Transport to new place	27
Medication	15

Under "other", families asked for:

Soap (9); clothes (6); blankets (5); seeds (2); tools (2); pots (1)

“I will sell tomatoes and run”⁸³

Source of income prior to demolitions:

vending	40%
informal (other) ⁸⁴	29%
gold panning / mining	8%
domestic worker	6%
formal	2%
nil	15%

Source of income after demolitions:

vending	19%
informal (other)	10%
gold panning	5%
domestic worker	2%
formal	0
farming:	4%
cooking	4%
Nil	56%

Most notable is that the number of respondents who report having no independent source of income has almost quadrupled as a result of the demolitions. Previous to the demolitions, only 15% were without a source of income; this has soared to 56%.

Out of the pitiful 44% of respondents who are even capable of contemplating how to source income at this stage, most of them are *not currently earning*, and responded by saying:

“If I can find money to replace my lost goods, then I will vend again”

“If I can replace my lost tools, then I will do carpentry”

“If somebody gives me seeds, I will try to farm, but I have no money to buy seeds”.

These comments, which indicate at least some forward planning and intent, were recorded as “vending”, “informal” and “farming” respectively.

Only half of those who were vending still consider this a viable future option, either because they have been displaced from their markets by being moved out of town, or because they have lost their supplies during the destruction of the informal sector and cannot see how to afford to replace them, or because they feel the government doesn’t allow vending any more, and are afraid of arrest.

Other informal activities have been even more badly affected, for the same reasons – dropping from 29% to 10%.

⁸³ This comment from one interviewee captures the dilemma of the very poor, who only want to earn an honest living doing what they have been doing for many years – vending – but knowing they will be hounded.

⁸⁴ This included brewing beer, sewing, casual building/carpentry, hairdressing, shoe repair, soap making, temporary labourer

People who were working steadily either in formal jobs (2) domestic work (6) and gold panning (8) have mostly lost their employment as a result of being forced out of town. Only 7 out of 16 people in this group are still earning money: this is less than half.

It is notable that while 63 families - more than half - were interviewed in rural districts, only 4 spontaneously suggested that they could earn money from farming.

The majority of families are still not sure that they have secure tenure where they are: in some instances, they are in the middle of serious land disputes not of their own making, or are living on the kindness of family members. These families have been relocated up to five times in twice as many weeks: planning as if the current location is going to last makes little sense considering the recent experience of these families.

Rural respondents also reported having no farming inputs - no draught power, no tools, no seeds or fertiliser. It seems most IDP families do not foresee that it will be possible for them to farm this season – which is sadly probably realistic.

The vast majority – 60% were incapable of any optimism, and responded by saying:

“I have no idea what I will do”

“I have lost everything, there is nothing I can do”

“Nothing”

One pastor commented that he finds it overwhelming to see the state of shock that people are in. He referred to displaced persons as “blank, unable to do anything at this stage, unable to come to terms or see a way forward”.⁸⁵

Adjustment – or otherwise - to current situation of IDPs

All respondents were asked a set of three questions to try and gauge the degree to which families are coping with the circumstances they now find themselves in.

Do you feel welcome where you are now? Explain:

Are you happy to stay where you are now? Explain:

If you had the option, would you go back to where you were living in May 2005?

Various combinations of response to these three questions are shown below, with a brief comment on what this indicates about the respondent’s acceptance of where they have found themselves now.

- i. YES – I feel welcome
- YES – I am happy to stay where I am now
- NO – I would not return to where I lived in May 21%

This indicates that OM has proved to work out well enough for 21% of respondents, who have adjusted and been accepted well.

Example: one man reported that because of high bus fares to the rural areas, he has been unable to return home from Bulawayo to see his wife and children for almost two years, and being

⁸⁵ interview in Bulawayo with pastor, Friday 9 September.

trucked by the police to Nkayi has reunited him with his family that he was otherwise too poor to get home to. He is now happy to settle with his family for at least a while.

- ii. YES – I feel welcome
YES – I am happy to stay where I am now
YES– I would return to where I lived in May 10%

This indicates 10% of respondents feel welcome where they are, and are prepared to stay in the short term, but are likely to return to their previous urban setting at some point.

Example: a woman commented that of course she felt accepted in her mother's homestead and of course she could be happy living back with her mother: but nonetheless, she wanted to return to town so that her children could return to their schools and she could earn a living as a vendor again.

- iii. YES – I feel welcome
NO – I am not happy to stay where I am now
YES – I would return to where I lived in May 7%

This indicates another 7% of respondents who may not remain where they now are for long, but will head back to their original location when they can.

Example: a girl of 18 was dumped with her maternal aunt whom she had never met before, as she herself had been born and raised in Killarney. Her mother has now died, and when police were insisting at Helensvale that everyone must identify a rural home, she remembered her mother talking of this maternal aunt in Matobo. The girl commented that her aunt was very pleased to see her, because she arrived with 50kg of maize and 50kg barley from the churches. This food was quickly distributed among the neighbours and the other 18 people living with the aunt, and in three days it was all gone. The girl was herself not happy with this, and has since returned to Killarney.

- iv. YES I feel welcome
NO – I am not happy to stay where I am now
NO – I would not return to where I lived in May 7%

This 7% is feeling trapped by their situation. While they are not feeling pressured by the people around them, they are not happy, and wish to leave, but know that it is not practical to go back to their previous situation.

Example: one of the women interviewed in the mining community (Situation six above), is an example: she reported that people were being kind, but that it was an unbearable life. However, she knew she could not go back to Bulawayo as there was nothing there for her.

- v. NO - I am not welcome
NO – I am not happy to stay where I am now
YES – I would like to return to where I lived 24%

This indicates that 24% of respondents will not remain in their current location, but will head back to their original location at the first opportunity. This is the second most common response.

Example: five families who have been dumped in a rural area have found themselves in the middle of a land dispute. The local headman has allocated them land that had originally been farmed by other local families, whom the headman had decided were not productive enough.

There are other local families who for some time have been vying for possession of this land since the original families were evicted, so that there are now three sets of “owners” making claims on these properties. Needless to say, the IDPs do not feel welcome and happy, and do not see a long term future here.

- vi. NO – I am not welcome
- YES – I will stay where I am now
- NO – I would not like to return to where I lived 1%

This single respondent was not happy to stay where he was not welcome, but did not see how going back could be an alternative.

- vi. NO – I am not welcome
- NO – I am not happy to stay where I am now
- NO – I would not like to return to where I lived 28%

*This is the most worrying response, as it indicates 28% of respondents are unhappy and have no sense of what to do next. **Furthermore, this is the most common response.***

Example: several respondents said they were unwelcome and unhappy where they were, but were afraid to go back to a squatter camp that might be destroyed again, resulting in further property losses.

[2 people out of the group who had never left Killarney felt the questions were not applicable as they had not in fact moved. Interestingly, the rest of this group gave varied responses – several of them felt not welcome there, in the wake of the burnings, not really happy to stay, but not knowing where to go.]

Summary

Only 21% of respondents seem likely to stay where they have been currently placed. The other 79% expressed varying degrees of dissatisfaction with their current situation and indicated the need to move, either back to where they were, or somewhere new from either the past or the present.

This is hardly surprising: as the UN report pointed out, it is not possible to reverse the natural impulse all over the world of rural to urban drift. Furthermore, in the Zimbabwean context, those who have moved to rural areas have lost their source of income in a situation where rural areas are starving; those who have moved in with urban relatives know that this is a temporary and congested solution that cannot last, while those who have moved back to destroyed informal settlements know that they will receive further harassment and possible property loss if they remain there. People are desperate, and around 60% of respondents have said they are unhappy where they now are. Half of these do not see an immediate alternative.

Whatever reasons people had to leave rural areas and head to urban centres in the first place, those reasons still remain and have not disappeared as a result of the demolitions.

Appendices

Appendix One:

Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Zimbabwe to assess the Scope and Impact of Operation Murambatsvina on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe

by the UN Special Envoy Mrs. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka

Executive Summary

On 19 May 2005, with little or no warning, the Government of Zimbabwe embarked on an operation to “clean-up” its cities. It was a “crash” operation known as “Operation Murambatsvina”, referred to in this report as *Operation Restore Order*. It started in the Zimbabwe capital, Harare, and rapidly evolved into a nationwide demolition and eviction campaign carried out by the police and the army. Popularly referred to as “Operation Tsunami” because of its speed and ferocity it resulted in the destruction of homes, business premises and vending sites. It is estimated that some 700,000 people in cities across the country have lost either their homes, their source of livelihood or both. Indirectly, a further 2.4 million people have been affected in varying degrees. Hundreds of thousands of women, men and children were made homeless, without access to food, water and sanitation, or health care. Education for thousands of school age children has been disrupted. Many of the sick, including those with HIV and AIDS, no longer have access to care. The vast majority of those directly and indirectly affected are the poor and disadvantaged segments of the population. They are, today, deeper in poverty, deprivation and destitution, and have been rendered more vulnerable.

Operation Restore Order took place at a time of persistent budget deficits, triple-digit inflation, critical food and fuel shortages and chronic shortages of foreign currency. It was implemented in a highly polarized political climate characterized by mistrust, fear and a lack of dialogue between Government and local authorities, and between the former and civil society. There is no doubt therefore that the preliminary assessment contained in this report constitutes but a partial picture of the far-reaching and long-term social, economic, political and institutional consequences.

In assessing the scope and impact of the operation and the ability of the Government of Zimbabwe and of the humanitarian community to respond, the Special Envoy’s mission, supported by the United Nations Country Team, met with President Robert Mugabe, a cross-section of members of his cabinet and various people and institutions. These include central and local government officials, political parties, religious leaders, civil society organisations, the private sector, professional and trade associations, academia, the donor and humanitarian community, as well as some of the people affected. The mission was further informed by hundreds of written submissions and testimonials, official records and legal documents, interviews, articles and reports made by the media, and by site visits across the country. Furthermore, the mission witnessed first-hand the process of demolition and eviction and met with many of its victims.

The Special Envoy’s findings and their implications are as follows:

(i) Operation Restore Order, while purporting to target illegal dwellings and structures and to clamp down on alleged illicit activities, was carried out in an indiscriminate and unjustified manner, with indifference to human suffering, and, in repeated cases, with disregard to several provisions of national and international legal frameworks. Immediate measures need to be taken to bring those responsible to account, and for

reparations to be made to those who have lost property and livelihoods. In parallel, other confidence-building measures need to be taken to restore dialogue between the Government of Zimbabwe and civil society.

(ii) Even if motivated by a desire to ensure a semblance of order in the chaotic manifestations of rapid urbanisation and rising poverty characteristic of African cities, none the less Operation Restore Order turned out to be a disastrous venture based on a set of colonial-era laws and policies that were used as a tool of segregation and social exclusion. There is an urgent need to suspend these outdated laws and to review them within the briefest time possible to ensure the sustainability of humanitarian response and to set the stage for meaningful physical reconstruction and the restoration of livelihoods;

(iii) The humanitarian consequences of Operation Restore Order are enormous. It will take several years before the people and society as a whole can recover. There is an immediate need for the Government of Zimbabwe to recognise the virtual state of emergency that has resulted, and to allow unhindered access by the international and humanitarian community to assist those that have been affected. Priority needs include shelter and non-food items, food and health support services.

(iv) Any humanitarian response can only be meaningful and sustainable if it contributes to the long-term recovery and reconstruction efforts of the Government and of its people. Zimbabwe is not a country at war and it remains peaceful. By African standards, it has a well maintained physical infrastructure. The international community should engage the Government of Zimbabwe and help it to address some of the issues and causal factors that led to the present predicament. These include, first and foremost, the lack of security of tenure for the poor. They also include conflicting and outdated housing and urban development policies, overlapping jurisdictions, and a lack of clear definition of and respect for the respective roles and competencies between central and local spheres of government. The humanitarian response provides a unique opportunity and entry point to link the provision of temporary shelter and other forms of humanitarian assistance with immediate security of tenure for all those affected and to prepare the ground for overcoming the failures and inherent weaknesses in governance.

In view of the above, the Special Envoy proposes the following recommendations for the Secretary General's consideration:

A. Recommendations that the Government of Zimbabwe should be encouraged to undertake:

a. On Humanitarian Issues

Recommendation 1: An estimated 700,000 people in cities across the country have either lost their homes or their livelihoods or both. The Government of Zimbabwe should immediately halt any further demolitions of homes and informal businesses and create conditions for sustainable relief and reconstruction for those affected.

Recommendation 2: There is an urgent need for the Government of Zimbabwe to facilitate humanitarian operations within a pro-poor, gender-sensitive policy framework that provides security of tenure, affordable housing, water and sanitation, and the pursuit of small scale income-generating activities in a regulated and enabling environment.

Recommendation 3: There is an immediate need for the Government of Zimbabwe to revise the outdated Regional Town and Country Planning Act and other relevant Acts, to align the substance and the procedures of these Acts with the social, economic and cultural realities facing the majority of the population, namely the poor.

Recommendation 4: There is an immediate need to revive dialogue and restore trust between different spheres of government and between Government and civil society. This process should emerge from a broad-based consultation among all Zimbabwean stakeholders.

b. On Accountability and Legal Issues

Recommendation 5: The Government of Zimbabwe is collectively responsible for what has happened. However, it appears that there was no collective decision-making with respect to both the conception and implementation of Operation Restore Order. Evidence suggests it was based on improper advice by a few architects of the operation. The people and Government of Zimbabwe should hold to account those responsible for the injury caused by the Operation.

Recommendation 6: The Government of Zimbabwe should set a good example and adhere to the rule of law before it can credibly ask its citizens to do the same. Operation Restore Order breached both national and international human rights law provisions guiding evictions, thereby precipitating a humanitarian crisis. The Government of Zimbabwe should pay compensation where it is due for those whose property was unlawfully destroyed.

Recommendation 7: The wrecking of the informal sector by Operation Restore Order will have detrimental effects at a time that the economy remains in serious difficulties. Apart from drastically increasing unemployment, the Operation will have a knock-on effect on the formal economy including agriculture. The Government of Zimbabwe has to undertake corrective policy reforms in macro-economic management and governance issues, focusing on land reform and land tenure with a view to provide secure tenure for the poor both in rural and urban areas.

Recommendation 8: The Government of Zimbabwe should grant full citizenship to those former migrant workers and their descendants who have no such legal status.

B. Recommendations for the United Nations and the International Community

Recommendation 9: Operation Restore Order has precipitated a humanitarian crisis of immense proportions. In an apparent response, the Government of Zimbabwe has launched a counter programme, Operation Garikai (Rebuilding and Reconstruction). The Government itself, even with the best efforts, has limited capacity to fully address the needs of the affected population without the assistance of the international community. The United Nations should therefore work with the Government of Zimbabwe to mobilize immediate assistance from the international community to avert further suffering, and encourage the Government to create conditions for sustainable relief and reconstruction for those affected.

Recommendation 10: The United Nations, working with the African Union and the Southern African Development Community, at the highest levels, should assist the Government of Zimbabwe to promote real internal dialogue among its various constituencies on the one hand, and dialogue with the international community on the other hand, with a view to working out the modalities of returning Zimbabwe into the international fold.

Recommendation 11: Although a case for crime against humanity under Article 7 of the Rome Statute might be difficult to sustain, the Government of Zimbabwe clearly caused large sections of its population serious suffering that must now be redressed with the assistance of the United Nations and the broader international community. The international community should encourage the Government to prosecute all those who orchestrated this catastrophe and those who may have caused criminal negligence leading to alleged deaths, if so confirmed by an independent internal inquiry/inquest. The international community should then continue to be engaged with human rights concerns in Zimbabwe in consensus building political forums such as the UN Commission on Human Rights, or its successor, the African Union Peer Review Mechanism, and in the Southern African Development Community.

Lessons Learned

Recommendation 12: Operation Restore Order has to be understood within the broader context of the urbanization crisis in Africa. It is recommended that the international community draws lessons from the Zimbabwe crisis for the entire African continent and actively support the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. It makes a clarion call to the international community to realize that without a more concerted approach to promote urban environmental sustainability (Goal 7, target 10 on water and sanitation, and target 11 on slum upgrading and prevention of the Millennium Declaration), the other countries in Africa could well experience another "Operation Restore Order" sooner than later.

Appendix two:

INFORMATION FORM: HLALANI KUHLE/GARIKAI

Date of Interview..... Name of interviewer.....

Place of interview [church or /district centre/ village / constituency]: *If interview was by telephone, say where caller was calling from*

Day/Date of arrival at place where interviewee now is.....

NAME..... Male / Female AGE.....

MARITAL STATUS: single /married / divorced / separated / widowed /

CITIZENSHIP STATUS: Zimbabwe / foreign parents, born here / born in region /

ADDRESS/ AREA from which you were first displaced (ie Killarney, Hatfield etc)
..... number of years at that address.....

ADDRESS / AREA where you can now be reached, or where you suspect you may end up:

District:.....Village:.....under Chief / headman.....

Number of children/dependants living with interviewee, with ages.....

.....

.....

.....

Number of children above who were in school.....

Is anyone in family in poor health? *Describe.*

.....

Were they on medication? YES / NO *What type?*

If yes, are they still on medication? YES / NO

Brief history of interviewee:

Was s/he displaced during the recent “Murambatsvina”? YES / NO Date.....

Source of income prior to displacement.....

Was your home demolished?: YES / NO

Where has s/he /they been living since then? Circle and fill in all relevant places and dates

Church (name)..... arrived:..... departed:.....

Family (suburb/village)..... arrived:..... departed:.....

Helensvale / Caledonia / other police holding: arrived departed:.....

District Centre..... arrived:.....departed:.....

Village (district)..... arrived:..... departed:.....

In cases of displacement within area (ie backyard structure demolitions):

Where has s/he /they been living since then? Circle and fill in all relevant places and dates above
House of landlord / neighbour (suburb, town)..... since:.....

Summary: total number of weeks/days displaced:.....

Did you move on at your own free will, or did the police / others forcibly move you each time?

Explain what happened:

.....
.....

How was your final destination decided upon? I decided / police decided / ID card / other

Explain:.....

If the police moved you, did they provide you with the following? Give details:

Free transportation all the way to final destination.....

Food:.....

Materials to build a home:

Were any threats / comments made during this process? Say what.....

.....
.....

What property loss have you experienced?

.....
.....

What will your source of income be now?

What are your needs now? Circle as relevant and say what is most urgent

Food / shelter / transport to some other place / medication / schooling for children / other

Explain:

.....
.....

Do you feel welcomed where you are now? Explain:

.....
.....

Are you happy to stay where you are now? YES / NO

If you had the option, would you go back to where you were living in May 2005? YES / NO

Why?

.....