

A citizen reporting platform for Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe

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Government set up probe team

By Citizen reporter

Government has set up a probe team to investigate the circumstances surrounding the increase in illegal structures in Chitungwiza and Seke rural.

The team is composed of officials from the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development, the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EMA).

The illegal structures are houses and other properties that were built on top of sewerage, water or electric infrastructure or on areas that were earmarked for other development purposes like schools, playgrounds and wetlands.

The shortage of land for urban housing purposes has led to an increase in illegally acquired stands in and around the town as unsuspecting stand seekers fall prey to the corrupt officials of the municipality and other local government officials such as headmen and village heads.

According to media reports, there are more than 10 000 houses that are being classified as illegal structures which the ministry of local government says must be destroyed.

Fear has gripped the town and the diaspora as some of the houses are owned by people who are in the diaspora as they are the ones who had the buying power during the Zimbabwe dollar era.

Civil society groups and other individuals are calling upon the government to be rationale in dealing with crisis than creating a humanitarian crisis during the rainy season.

“The probe team should consult all stakeholders concerned, look at all issues with regards to happenings at town house, the work of cooperatives, their duties vis a vis the work of the council”, said Admire Zaya, Coordinator of Chitungwiza Progressive Residents Association.

He also said that section 74 of the Zimbabwean Constitution prohibit demolitions and forced evictions of citizen from their homes without a court order.

“No person may be evicted from their home, or have their home demolished, without an order of court made after considering all the relevant circumstances”, reads section 74 of the Zimbabwean Constitution.

The probe team is expected to produce its findings and recommendations to the ministry on Thursday the 14th of November 2013.

Others have dismissed the probe team saying the ministry of local government under the leadership of Minister Chombo has set up a number of commissions of inquiry but the reports were never made public.

The last commission of enquiry into the affairs of Chitungwiza Municipality which was led by Fungai Mbetsa produced a report in 2012 which was never availed to the people for scrutiny.

“I guess report will not be availed to the citizens because some of the big fish were involved in the land deals” said a 31 year old man who preferred not to be named. **END**

“The possibility that we may fail in the struggle ought not to deter us from the support of a cause we believe to be just” ~ Abraham Lincoln

Chitownnews train citizen reporters

By: Nyasha Nhau, Cleopas Muzenda and Trudence Mangachena



Trained citizen reporters pose for a group photo after the workshop

Chitownnews held a two day citizen reporting workshop at Chitungwiza Vocational Training Centre on the 24th and 25th of October 2013. The workshop saw the participation of 30 youths in the town that were drawn from different backgrounds.

The participants were taught on the general aspects of information dissemination which include the role and importance of media in society. Among other things, the participants also learnt basics of news gathering, online writing and editing as well as basic techniques of photo-journalism.

Participants were also taught on the elements of newsworthy events which include impact, proximity, timeliness, prominence, relevant, useful and human interest.

“News is an account of an event, fact or opinion that interests people,” said Farai Dauramanzi of Chitownnews.

Participants also engaged in group discussions where they had to identify the successes and challenges in the social, political and economic sectors of Chitungwiza. Corruption and nepotism were identified as challenges in all three sectors under discussion.

“The citizen reporting platform has come about to bring news to Chitungwiza residents, news that directly affect them and news that concern them,” said Cleopas Muzenda, one of the participants.

Citizen reporting has enabled the ordinary man to generate and disseminate news and information for consumption by other ordinary citizens of the global village through the internet.

The online Chitownnews is the brainchild of Chitungwiza Community Development Network (CCDN), a youth servicing organization that is headquartered and operating in Chitungwiza and the surrounding rural areas of Seke, Beatrice and Chihota.

The project seeks to provide localized news and information to the citizens of Chitungwiza that have a directly impact on their livelihoods.

Chitungwiza is the third largest urban area in Zimbabwe and is now regarded as the fastest growing urban area in Zimbabwe. **END**

CHIPRA STATEMENT ON DEMOLITION OF HOUSES

Chitungwiza progressive Residents Association (CHIPPRA) receive with shock the message from the Local governance Minister Dr Ignatius Chombo on the government intention to demolish 10 000 houses in Chitungwiza.

This message comes with shock because Dr Chombo was the minister of the same ministry for the past decade, he presided over Chitungwiza Municipality through a commission when he sacked the then elected Mayor Mr Mishech Shoko, and when he suspended the former town clerk Mr Godfrey Tanyanyiwa and when he brought in a commission led by Mr Fungai Mbetsa.

All and sundry are aware that during this period land was being parceled out to people through corrupt means.

We at CHIPRA do not condone corruption and its ill effects, but demolishing houses that were bought legally from the council and council accepted co-operatives is a violation of human rights.

Section 74 of the new Zimbabwean Constitution states that, “No person may be evicted from their home, or have their home demolished, without an order of court made after considering all the relevant circumstances”.

It is in this spirit that CHIPRA is saying the government should stop forthwith this envisaged action. Chitungwiza municipality should bear the brunt for allocating stands on illegal spaces by providing new stands serviced and built reasonable houses as espoused.

We urge the new councillors and the Mayor to clean the mess that was left by commissions and the former town clerk. We urge Mr George Makunde to bring sanity in the management of Chitungwiza affairs.

We value your contributions in Kariba hence we do not expect that Chitungwiza Municipality to be an appendage of the ministry in the day to day operations of the council both in management and procurement.

Government should redirect their efforts towards community development, employment creation and empowerment. We do not empower through destruction of what we built over the years with sweat and tears.

At CHIPRA we remain resolute; we do not want a repeat of operation murambatsvina which made more than 700 000 people destitute as we say “together for better service delivery”. **END**

Mixed feelings among residents over housing probe

By Tsitsi Bere

Chitungwiza residents are divided on the recent pronouncement of a probe into the awarding of housing stands within the town by Minister of Housing Ignatious Chombo.

In an interview with *Chitownews*, Diana Machiri (23) of Unit J supported the probe and felt that it was necessary and the Minister needed to be applauded.

“As ratepayers, it is important that we know the culprits behind this housing mess and they must be answerable for their actions. The Minister is simply doing his job and should be praised,” said Machiri.

Job Takavada (46) of Unit G also agreed with Machiri’s sentiments and accused the previous MDC-T led council of causing confusion and failing to represent the people.

“It is because of those selfish councilors that we now have this problem. We elect you to serve us, and then you start serving yourself. We want answers!” demanded Takavada.

Most residents however are concerned that such a probe might lead to another *Murambatsvina* and see the demolition of houses in the so called undesignated areas.

“After investing in a 7 roomed house it is only natural that I should be worried. I sincerely hope it will not lead to the demolition of houses,” said Tawanda (34) of Unit O Extension.

Edna Guvanwa (31) of Zengeza 3 is skeptical that the Minister would allow for any demolition of houses to take place even if they were found to be in uninhabitable areas.

Continued on next column

Motorists welcome to the pothole season

By Eddie Karonga



File photo of a pot-holed road filled with rainy water

The coming of the rains should naturally bring smiles across all social divides, but for motorists in Chitungwiza heavy rains can also cause serious problems in the form of potholes.

A perennial menace on the town’s streets and highways, potholes are every driver’s worst nightmare. Potholes clearly describe the state of the town’s road network.

The extensive and expensive damage they cause to a vehicle suspension including tyres is quite documented. A number of accidents have also been attributed to potholes.

Gerald Tarumbwa (32), a kombi driver complained that the Municipality need to set its priorities right and attend to the more important problems which include dealing with potholes once and for all.

“The idea of just filling up potholes with mud shows that the Municipality does not take the issue seriously, which is very disappointing for some us who use the roads every day,” said Tarumbwa.

The Chitungwiza Municipality has made many unsuccessful attempts to find a lasting solution to the problems of potholes over the years .They are constantly resorting to temporary measures which include using mud to fill up the potholes or loose tar which disappears after a few weeks or days.

Simba Sithole (30) a business operator, highlighted the importance of a good road network in attracting investment into the town.

“If the Municipality continues on this path of neglecting the town’s roads, then we are doomed as a town in terms of business investment. Who would want to put money where they are no roads?” asked Sithole in an emotional interview with *Chitownews*.

As the rain season commences, most motorists are curious to know which remedy the Municipality will apply this time around in curbing the problem of potholes. **END**

From previous column: Mixed feelings over housing probe

“I doubt very much if the Minister will go to such extremes. Can you imagine the number of people that would be affected? Some of the recipients of these stands are government employees you must remember. It would be a disaster!” said Guvanwa.

At a time when the government is clamping down on corruption in both private and public service, questions are being raised on who exactly deserves to be punished for the social ills that are plaguing our communities. **END**