



**Livelihoods
destroyed following
demolitions...victims
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authorities**



**STIs in Tertiary
Learning Institutions,
SAYWHAT Speaks Out**

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RUWA – Desperate owners of informal business structures that were last week razed down by the Ruwa District Council situated on the eastern outskirts of Harare have requested authorities to take their plight into consideration saying the demolitions destroyed their sole means of survival.

The secretariat members of Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CiZC) and Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) visited the two affected suburbs of Damafalls and Zimre Park, on Monday, November 11, where the informal traders had desperately resorted to trading from car boots, and makeshift tuck shops made of plastic wraps supported by frail wooden planks in the rainy weather.

A trail of destruction in the area and a palpable sense of dejection among the affected informal traders, who have mostly been involved in various informal businesses since the onset of Zimbabwe's economic woes more than a decade ago, were evident.

Their original and more durable structures, ranging from wooden cabins to brick shelter were razed down last Thursday, November 7, 2013 in an exercise reminiscent of the Operation Murambatsvina of 2005, which was condemned by the United Nations (UN).

Some informal traders also resorted to serving faithful customers from house windows in a desperate bid to recoup the losses incurred during the demolition exercise.



Illegal structure destroyed in Ruwa on the 7th of November 2013

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They said selling wares was their only means of survival, and they could not think of any alternatives, imploring government to erect proper stalls for them as they were ready to acquire trading licenses and pay tax.

Sources in Zimre Park said there was no single officially recognized market stall erected by Council, which could have led to the sprouting of illegal business structures.

The affected people poured their hearts out about the unexpected disruption to their sole source of livelihood for which a notice of barely half-a-month was given.

Lucia Chitengu (not her real name), a 58 year-old-widow and head of a family of five, stood by her new stall largely made of plastic next to the remains of her wooden cabin, narrating that vending had been her only means of survival for more than a decade.



One vendor continues his business at the demolition site

She moved to Zimre Park about three years ago from the oldest high density suburb of Highfields in Harare, where she had been a vendor since 1999.

"Everything had been going on well here," Chitengu said, "until we received a notice from Council informing us that there would be demolitions.

"We tried to appeal to the authorities and they said they would give us three months, but a few days later they came to destroy our structures."

The notice, marked as No.A/16/3 from the Ruwa Local Board, a copy of which was seen by the Crisis Report was dated October 23, addressed to all Ruwa residents, and copied to the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP).

The notice warned the residents that the demolitions would be effected in line with the Public Health Act Chapter 15:09, Sections 82-85, further threatening that the expenses incurred by Council during the exercise would be passed to the "nuisances", in apparent reference to the informal traders.

"It has been noted with great concern," the notice reads, "that a lot of unlicensed businesses are being operated and conducted on council land, along streets, on street corners, developed and undeveloped land, in front of licensed shops at escalated and unprecedented levels.

"These businesses include preparation of perishable food, selling of meat, fish and poultry, groceries and vegetables, hard ware materials and other numerous wares we cannot mention now.

"All these activities have not been approved by council and are operating illegally. The activities are a potential source of the outbreak of diseases and are injurious or dangerous to health.

"However it is the duty of the Ruwa Local Board under Section 83 of the Public Health Act to maintain cleanliness and prevent nuisances."

The affected people claim to have seen the notice on October 27, two days before the expiry of the ultimatum on October 29, prompting them to make a plea for a three-month "grace period" on the same day.

The written plea by the informal traders, which appears to have been disregarded as the demolitions went ahead, was made through their chairman, Peter Bgwoni, alongside other undersigned representatives T.G. Zhuku, Reward Tagwirei, and Edwin Chermei.

The plea, which was copied to the Town Council and Member of the National Assembly for Goromonzi Constituency, having acknowledged receipt of the notice of demolitions, reads in part:

"Therefore we appeal for a grace period of at least 3 months before demolitions as we have organized ourselves into a civilized group that is prepared to at

least engage council in dialogue to reach a common consensus over the matter.

"As informal traders in Zimre Park we agree to council's efforts to create a clean city, but we lobby for allocation of land before demolitions to insure sustainability of our informal businesses at some level contributing to the economic recovery of the country.

"As informal traders we are in a position to mobilize ourselves in erecting clean and environmentally friendly structures as per council orders referring to the served letter.

"Demolition itself might not be a solution as witnessed by the recurrence of such structures after demolition. . .

"We feel it is the duty of the council to send their health inspectors to inform us about health issues that may harm residence (sic) due to our operations so that we can abide by them.

"We suggest formulation of a policy that can ensure proper operations of informal sectors in Zimre Park.

"This can only be met if council and the concerned stakeholders work hand in glove to create such a policy."

The informal traders claim to have been driven into their present means of survival by the high unemployment levels and lack



A Trader picks up the pieces after his only source of livelihood has been destroyed

of job opportunities in Zimbabwe, with one of the youthful traders claiming that the non-availability of employment was evident everywhere as the local Ruwa Industries had also shut down.

Although official unemployment figures in the country vary there is consensus by analysts that the informal sector provides economic refuge for the majority of Zimbabweans.

Those who count people in the informal sector among the employed put unemployment levels at about 8%, while those who exclude the informal sector put the figures as high as 90%.

Above 70% of Zimbabweans are believed by most analysts to be outside of the formal sector, potentially rendering any attack on the informal businesses inconsiderate and discordant with the socio-economic realities.

Maxwell Siziba (not his real name), 33, was serving a steady stream of his customers, when the *Crisis Report* arrived at his new structure, erected barely a meter from where another was demolished last week.

His wares range from tomatoes, snacks, sweets and beverages such as *maheu*.



Receipts for monthly Tuckshop fees paid to the Town Council

Siziba, who is the breadwinner for his family, a wife and two children, says he has been in the vending business for three years, and that is how he has been making ends meet.

Siziba pays monthly rentals of US\$ 60.00, as well as school fees pegged at US\$72.00 for his daughter who attends school at Zimre Park Primary School, where Siziba said US\$ 20.00 was pending in fees for the Third Term, which runs until December.

Apart from catering for his basic needs, Sibiza said the informal business had allowed him to pay money as some form of protection for his business to Council to fend off municipal police.

According to Siziba, if government opened dialogue, he was ready to negotiate with the authorities for ways of legalizing his business in order to safeguard his means of survival.

“I am ready to cooperate with the authorities if they were to allocate us some markets stalls,” Siziba said. “I would also be ready to pay whatever amount of money they charged for that.”

All of the informal traders interviewed at the 10 sites of demolitions visited by the *Crisis Report*, claimed that they had been paying monies up to US\$60.00 per month to Council for their informal businesses.

One of the informal traders had 31 receipts, dating back to February 2012 for payments quoted as “spotfine tuckshop” or “penalty tuckshop”, ranging between US\$ 10.00 to US\$ 40.00, and totaling US\$ 475.00.

A 31-year-old woman, who had her brick structure razed down, said it had cost her about US\$ 300.00 to build.

She had erected the informal business structure in order to augment her husband’s income to raise enough money to sustain the family of 10, she said.

While some informal traders said they had managed to clear their tuck shops before the demolitions, she had only found some of her wares such as eggs destroyed among the rubble as she rifled through to salvage whatever remained of her wares in the aftermath.

After the visit on Monday, the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR)’s Communications Officer Kumbirai Mafunda said:

“We are now consulting our clients with regard to the next course of action that we are going to take.

“But we are worried about the level and extent of destruction and demolitions of informal trading stalls in Ruwa.”

Meanwhile, there have been conflicting statements from government about the demolitions with some officials saying they would continue, while others condemned them.

STIs in Tertiary Learning Institutions, SAYWHAT Speaks Out

FOLLOWING recent media reports claiming that there has been an outbreak of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) in colleges such as the Great Zimbabwe State University (GZU), the Crisis Report (CR) interviewed Jimmy Wilford, Director of SAYWHAT a non-governmental organisation that deals with sexual health matters among students. Wilford, below, speaks at length about this issue.

Question: Do the recent media reports pointing to an outbreak of STIs among tertiary students ring a bell, or confirm any trends that you have noticed in students' sexual health matters in the past?

Answer: The recent media trends that have sighted an increase in the number of STIs both new and repeat cases amongst tertiary institutions are a cause of concern to SAYWHAT. Unfortunately, most of the media cases have not pin pointed in figures an increase in the number of STIs at college clinics which information was going to be critical to give a more reflective analysis on the prevalence of STIs amongst college students in Zimbabwe. The cases that were reported in two local papers the Herald and the Standard with a particular example of 10 000 cases of STIs over a period of 3 months gave a more quantitative reflection. However they failed to relate the figures to either the college clinics or the times when the colleges are open to students. The same story goes on to say most affected districts were Chiredzi and Gutu and these do not host any tertiary institutions of note. It is even more difficult to make a sound conclusion when most of these Universities do not house students on campus. It makes it difficult to track and attribute any trends noted to a specific college as data collected at clinic level (T5 forms) does not require the client to indicate their profession, but age and weight, amongst other personal indicators. Although this data is relevant in directly tracking the number of unprotected sexual contacts as well as other spill over effects like unplanned pregnancy, it falls short in giving comprehensive analysis on the state of STIs amongst college students.

Question: From your assessment, how able has been the Zimbabwean government in dealing with student health matters in general and sexual education for tertiary institutions in particular?

Answer: To start with, college clinics are not under the custody of the Ministry of Health and Child Care, but under the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, where respective colleges are left with responsibilities to select and recruit nurses as well as the procurement of other essential drugs. This kind of arrangement makes it difficult for college clinics to provide essential drugs that treat SRH related cases as most of them are not certified to provide such. For example, some University or college clinics do not test for HIV, a procedure that can be done by a primary care nurse in a clinic that is outside campus. Sexuality education is differently tackled by different colleges with some only limited to HIV, a situation which makes it difficult to enhance the capacity of students to make informed choices. At national policy level, there are no clear guidelines on how sexuality education will be imparted to student trainees as part of their social development, a situation that has resulted in some colleges, using lecturers who are not trained in a sexual and reproductive health field to conduct these lectures with student trainees. Most colleges are operating with limited government support hence all the operational costs are being derived from the fees paid by students, and with such a scenario very little in terms of budget allocation trickles the way of social development of students were SRH related programs are supposed to be funded, thus competing with other social development issues like sport and entertainment. From the general assessment of SAYWHAT, there is greater unmet need to be fulfilled by government to ensure comprehensive sexuality education as well as the provision of youth friendly SRH services, which might go a long way in the primary prevention of reproductive health challenges like STIs, unplanned pregnancies, and unsafe abortions amongst others.

Question: What do you think would cause STI outbreaks in tertiary learning institutions if the recent media reports were accurate, and do you believe poverty is one of them?

Answer: STIs might probably be a symptom of other underlining political and socio-economic factors, which if not addressed will continue having these symptomatic challenges resurfacing. The past immediate budget for example allocated to health

only 9% of the 15% required by the Abuja Declaration, and this will directly have a bearing on the amount that will trickle to support SRH services and related information, knowing fully well that 70-75% of funds allocated to ministries will be gobbled by salaries and allowances. Sexuality education by nature is a social expression of a biological drive and heavily depends on society's preparedness to tackle some of these SRH challenges as they emerge. The inability by most portions of our society reflects as STIs at college level, simply because the young people were not developed to be assertive and resilient in the face of a wide range of challenges, including those of a sexual and reproductive health nature. It will be incomplete to associate poverty with the increase in the number of STIs, but there are so many other factors that deal with the software development of the students. For example, sexuality education at family level, which needs very little money, but only the accurate information, correct attitude and sparing some time to remember that family time is talking time. Poverty at a macro level affects the ability of government to tackle preventable health related problems, and at a micro level affects the families' ability to access quality services on SRH. For example, Zimbabwe today has the highest maternal mortality rates i.e. 960 per every 100 000 live births due to the high cost of maternity fees, leaving most families with no option, but to have home deliveries. Early marriages that force teenage females to resort to marriage as a way of dodging poverty related challenges has resulted in more SRH challenges that are even more fatal than the STI cases. For example, 30% of all maternal deaths are amongst teenagers in Zimbabwe. Reflecting on tertiary institutions, most risky behaviours are fuelled by the vicious cycle of poverty as students will be trying to meet the high costs of living on campus, which includes tuition fees, accommodation costs, food, transport and clothing, which in their own regard are basic needs not wants, and in the fullest rights, and not privileges. The symptom that we will all observe by not fulfilling these rights is the high cases of STIs as reflected by media reports.

Question: How has SAYWHAT been filling the gaps in sexual health education for university students?

Answer: SAYWHAT has employed a three pronged approach as defined by its strategic plan of 2009-2013. Firstly, SAYWHAT has been conducting activities and initiatives that seek to generate and share information on sexual and reproductive health rights, services and commodities. Secondly, SAYWHAT has been the rallying factor in networking and advocating for the rights of students on all matters to do with their sexual and reproductive health rights. Lastly, SAYWHAT has provided support and developed the capacity of students to meaningfully mobilise their communities at all levels and challenge SRH related issues, targeting young people in Zimbabwe.

Question: What are your recommendations for other stakeholders, including government in dealing with such problems of potential STI outbreaks in universities?

Answer: SAYWHAT recommends inter-ministerial dialogue and responses to ensure effective co-ordination and implementation of all blue prints, targeting young people by line ministries e.g. Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Employment Creation, Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Ministry of Health and Child Care, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education et cetera. SAYWHAT recommends increased efforts by government to address under-lying causes of SRH challenges such as youth unemployment, addressing students' grants and scaling up of the health budget. SAYWHAT recommends the meaningful participation of young people in the designing, implementation, budgeting as well as monitoring and evaluation of initiatives targeting them. SAYWHAT recommends evidence based responses by both government and stakeholders as youth needs are dynamic especially with regards to SRH. SAYWHAT recommends a more defined curriculum as part of social development that provides age appropriate sexuality education, services and information, targeting young people from primary to tertiary institutions, including youths out of school. SAYWHAT recommends the capacity building of strategic government institutions (in service and pre service) that deal with young people on youth friendly service provision. SAYWHAT recommends tailor made programs, targeting key populations among young people such as adolescents living with HIV, youths living with disabilities, orphans, youths in rural and resettled areas as well as youths in learning institutions – colleges, police, army et cetera.

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