

Making a livelihood in (and beyond) the African city: the experience of Zimbabwe

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Abstract:

The formal labour markets and economies of many cities in southern Africa have been very weak for decades which has led to significant adaptations in the nature of the livelihoods of most urban households. The lack of formal and reasonably paid jobs has also had a strong impact on population growth in cities although this is often not recognized. This paper will review some of these trends in southern Africa and illustrate them with case study material from Harare, Zimbabwe where many urban residents were forced to 'outsource' their livelihoods beyond the city boundaries to rural areas and other countries as the 2000s progressed.

Mrs Gambanga was married to a security guard and lived in Kuwadzana Extension – where USAID had built some controversial steel-frame low-cost housing in the early 2000s. She had moved to Harare in 1999 but by 2001 she planned to leave soon – in less than a year. She had first worked as a domestic in a low density area, Msasa Park, but was a home-carer when interviewed. According to her, there was not much difference between employment opportunities in Harare and those in the communal areas for 'unemployment is a problem everywhere'. Her husband earned Z\$6,800 but food, transport and rent alone cost them Z\$4,820. She was worried about the 'price hikes on everything' and felt that her standard-of-living would be better in Gutu communal area, where she had come from and where she was born. They had some land and had managed to produce maize and groundnuts the previous year; this had both contributed to their cash income and to their food consumption in Harare. In Gutu she felt she had 'opportunities to survive out of my own effort'. Another reason for leaving Harare was that her husband's income was 'so little'.

In 2001 I conducted, with Chris Mutambirwa of the University of Zimbabwe's Geography Department, the fourth round of a series of surveys on migrants to Harare; the previous surveys were held in 1985, 1988 and 1994. The case study above is drawn from the last survey round, during which over four hundred people were interviewed, and is indicative of what had become, by that year, an overwhelming set of understandings about life in Harare: that it was too expensive and risky economically to survive in for long. For the vast majority, the plan was that they would leave the city at some future date (sometimes clearly specified but quite often only vaguely indicated) – usually, but not always, to take up farming in the rural areas. This was one year after the fast-track land reform programme started and the Zimbabwean economy was already in crisis. None of us involved, researchers or respondents, would have believed at that time how much worse things were to become – that in a few years people would be buying basic goods with 'bricks' of Zimbabwean dollars bound in elastic bands, that cholera would

break out in the High Density Areas, that every backyard shack in the city would have been destroyed displacing tens of thousands and that the majority of the city's residents would not be able to buy mealie meal (the country's staple cereal) through 'normal' outlets but would be using parallel markets (which were much more expensive) and other sources such as special aid programmes. Yet by 2001 a threshold had already been passed in Harare in terms of certain key parameters relating to people's livelihoods and living standards and their perspectives on city life.

A key aspect of our migrant surveys over the years was to investigate the nature of migrants' rural-urban linkages – the significance of which mainstream urban livelihood literature had increasingly come to appreciate from the 1990s (eg Tacoli 2001, 2006; *Environment and Urbanization* 1998, 2003), although there had always been an important strand of research and literature in Africa, and elsewhere, which demonstrated how relevant these links had remained in many urban contexts (eg Prothero and Chapman 1985; Gould and Prothero 1975; O'Connor 1983; Gugler 1961, 1991, 1997, 2002). In West African literature, in particular, such links are often accepted as an obvious element in urban (and rural) society. In southern Africa, however, the issue has often been bound up with an urban transition model which tends to presume that such links were mainly derived from the nature of the region's institutionalized migrant labour system and would dwindle over time, evidence or theorizing to the contrary notwithstanding (eg Ferguson 1999; Author and Mutambirwa 1990; Mabin 1990). Our research on migrants to Harare in the 1980s and 1990s had found that such links remained very active, including expectations among the majority of those surveyed that they would eventually leave the city and return to rural areas (Author and Mutambirwa op cit; Author with Mutambirwa 1998; Author 2000). It was also clear that important economic turning points had been reached in 1991, with the imposition of ESAP (Zimbabwe's Economic Structural Adjustment Policy), and 1997, when a budgetary crisis triggered by war veterans' economic demands led to a massive devaluation of the Zimbabwean dollar (already much weakened by SAPs). The impact of these events greatly undermined many elements of the formal urban economy throughout Zimbabwe. Real incomes were very significantly reduced, de-industrialization occurred and the informal sector expanded. Poverty in the urban areas became increasingly prevalent as it did also in rural areas. However, the rate of decline in the towns was faster than in the rural areas, measured either qualitatively by Zimbabwean people (Author and Mutambirwa 1998) or quantitatively.¹

The expropriation of thousands of commercial farms in Zimbabwe which began in 2000 deepened the economic crisis. The important backward and forward economic linkages between production on farms (both large and small) and production in the cities were severely damaged and output fell steeply in both. As yet (in April 2010) these virtuous circles have not been really re-established. The government had already abandoned many of the conditionalities under which international finance was available from 1997

¹ Using data in Ersado (2003) I have calculated that per capita real consumption in the urban areas was 40% lower in 1995/96 than in 1990/91, compared to a 24% fall in rural areas.

but the problems now became worse.² Urban poverty, already serious, swiftly became the norm. Real food insecurity was soon endemic: an urban vulnerability survey found 66% of the country's urban population was food insecure, on a par with the rural areas, by 2003 ((ZNVAC/SADC 2004). Harare, Chitungwiza and Epworth (the three urban areas of Harare Province which basically function as one urban economy) were found to have similar poverty and food insecurity levels to the country's urban average – being the capital city made no difference.

From the standpoint of comparison of this situation with the Harare of the 1980s, the conditions were staggering. However, from the standpoint of comparison with the livelihoods and employment situation in large cities in most sub-Saharan African countries north of the Limpopo at the time, they were not so surprising. From Dakar to Lagos to Dar es Salaam to Lusaka, urban poverty, food insecurity and the predominance of work in the informal sector were established ten to twenty years before these features became so significant in urban Zimbabwe (Bryceson and Author 2006). The decline of African urban (and rural) economies began in the 1970s with the debt crisis/oil price rises and was then hugely exacerbated by the policies of neo-liberalism from the 1980s. The impact on African urban economies of exposure to the naked forces of comparative advantage was drastic (as, indeed, the World Bank intended it to be); the simultaneous shrinking of the public sector also undid many of the social and welfare advantages of urban residence (Author 1997).

These economic changes elsewhere in Africa, including the southern African countries of Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique, meant the rural-urban income gap shrank. In certain instances it even reversed (Jamal and Weeks 1993; Author 1997). Given the significance of this factor in broad patterns of internal migration (ie movements within, not between countries), it was to be expected that the rate of net in-migration into towns would decline and that the rate of urban population growth would start to decline. This is precisely what has been happening in many sub-Saharan African countries. The patterns were already emerging in the 1990s (Author 1995, 1997). They were evident in censuses when these became available and also from many small-scale surveys. Nonetheless, much of the academic and international agency literature still tends to assume that Africa is a rapidly urbanizing continent (eg UN Habitat 2008).³ This is despite the evidence of a wide range of censuses and large-scale migration surveys in the past ten years or so, particularly in West Africa, but also including evidence from Mozambique (see Author 2009, and forthcoming) and, to some extent, Malawi.⁴ The pattern began in southern Africa, in fact, as Zambia has been counter-urbanizing since 1980 (Author 2005).

² It is these conditionalities which affect all countries in Africa, and elsewhere, which caused the real shortage of finance and investment in Zimbabwe which has crippled the economy. The formal 'sanctions' on investment and travel by certain members of the Zimbabwean elite instituted in response to land expropriation and human rights' abuses, which attract so much attention, are really only 'icing' on the conditionality 'cake'.

³ Populations in large cities are often still growing quite fast – just not as fast as they were when net in-migration was very strong. Much of the current growth is attributable to natural increase or, at least, not much higher than would be suggested by current urban birth and death rates. Unless there is significant net in-migration from rural areas, however, the urban share of the population only increases very slowly; this pattern appears now to be established in much of West Africa.

⁴ The situation in Malawi is complicated by the extensive borders around the capital city, Lilongwe, which makes the assessment of Lilongwe's truly 'urban' population growth difficult.

These broad patterns can be traced at the urban livelihood level in terms of the relationships between urban incomes and necessary consumption (eg of food, housing, clothes); household composition and economic activity levels; and people's perceptions about city life, particularly in relation to rural life. At an aggregate level such perceptions, and resultant behaviour and migration, have caused a significant increase in out-migration from cities and a re-evaluation and re-vitalization of the importance of rural assets in livelihoods. However, these perceptions are strongly influenced by gender, age, position in the household especially in relationship to responsibility for dependents, and current and expected asset ownership. Both the general trend and these variations are evident in the case studies from Harare in 2001 presented below which, along with the case at the start of this paper, represent a handful of the many hundreds of interviews conducted with migrants since the 1980s.

Mrs Guwa: a female household head

Mrs Guwa was a widow in her late thirties whose children were split between Harare and the communal lands. She categorized herself still as a housewife, and was not looking for work, presumably because of her domestic responsibilities. She reported no urban-based income of her own. She was paying Z\$2,000 in rent for six rooms and it seems likely that she had some income, possibly from a pension, although the survey did ask about unearned income of this sort. However, she was managing to defray a significant element of her family's urban costs by growing food in Goromonzi communal land, where she had been born and had two acres of land, five head of cattle and five goats, presumably all inherited from her husband. In the previous crop year she estimated that most of her urban maize consumption had been met by her rural production. In total the land had produced ten bags of maize, plus three bags of groundnuts. She had also lived in the town of KweKwe, before coming to Harare, and assessed the relative job and earnings prospects to be the same in both towns. For her, the problem with Harare was the high cost of living, and she could think of nothing good about living in the city. Her major items of expenditure were school fees, followed by food and transport. She felt that her standards of living had not changed since she lived in KweKwe. She was uncertain about how long she would stay in Harare but it was possible she would leave and return to farm in the communal lands, which she regarded as her 'home', because of the cost of living

Mr Zhakata: a married male household head

Mr Zhakata was a married man in his late twenties who worked as a security guard, a formal job but low paid, earning Z\$7,000 per month. He had been born in Bikita communal land, in Masvingo Province, about 250 kms south east of Harare. He left Bikita in 1999 because he was dissatisfied with life there and had no job and came to Harare to live with relatives and to look for work. He felt it was easier to find a job in Harare than in Bikita as 'there were many companies', but was unsure about an earnings comparison because he had not earned anything in Bikita. In common with many adult migrants who had family responsibilities, although this was even truer of women, he cited how expensive Harare was as the main problem and could think of nothing good

about living there. Food was costing him Z\$4,000 per month, transport Z\$1,000 and the rent for the one room the family occupied was Z\$800 per month, which left him Z\$1,200 to cover clothes, school fees and any other necessities. When asked to compare living standards in his birthplace with Harare he thought that 'Bikita is better because property belongs to one self, such as housing'. He had two acres of land in Bikita but no other assets there. The year before the survey he had produced maize, groundnuts, roundnuts and rapoko and brought some of the food to Harare to supplement the family's food purchases. This contribution to the food budget was reasonable, but less than half their annual consumption. He was uncertain how long he might stay in Harare but said when he did leave he would return to Bikita because of the cost of living, and would farm there.

Mr Gwitira: married male household head

Mr Gwitira was married and living with his wife in Kuwadzana Unit 7 in 2001 where he owned the house they lived in. He was in his late twenties. He had been born in Mount Darwin communal area. He had come to Harare from the town of KweKwe in 1997. They had a child living in the communal areas. He worked as a formal employee in a printing firm as a mechanic and earned Z\$10,000 per month but their outgoings on their mortgage, food and transport alone were Z\$8,800. They were just managing it appeared as he was quite positive about Harare where 'people have higher incomes and are skilled' and 'services are abundantly available' although there were also 'too many people chasing too few jobs'. They had 2 acres of land and a modern house in the rural areas but had not produced anything in the last crop year as they could not raise enough money for inputs. He thought they would stay in Harare for at least ten years but then would have to leave because of the costs and they would farm once they left. However, the main reason for leaving, he pointed out, would be to rent the urban house out to generate income.

Mr Rushwaya: a divorced male household head

Mr Rushwaya was recently divorced and, like Mr Zhakata, working as a security guard earning Z\$6,500 per month. He had been born in Kadoma town, and had come to Harare from there in 1999, at first living in another HDA as a lodger. He was still a lodger in Kuwadzana, paying Z\$500 for one room. His motivations for migrating were absolutely typical for male HHHs: he had had no job in Kadoma and was dissatisfied with life, and the main reason why he came to Harare was to seek employment; a secondary motive was that he felt life would be better in Harare. He thought incomes in Harare were much the same as in Kadoma – any differences were determined by occupation. He was generally very negative in his assessment of Harare: 'everything is expensive' and there was 'nothing' good to be said about living there. His main item of expenditure was transport, costing Z\$2,200, over a third of his total income. He claimed to spend only Z\$400 on food, which seemed very low – possibly he underestimated being newly divorced and unfamiliar with this aspect of household expenditure. He had one acre of land in Ngezi communal lands, east of Kadoma, and both a traditional and a modern house there. When asked to compare living standards in Harare with his previous place of residence, he chose to make the comparison with Ngezi, even though he had been born in and came from Kadoma, and it was evident that he saw this as his 'home' and had been creating a rural-based option there before his divorce. In his view, 'Ngezi is better because there is land which generates production'. However, he had produced nothing

on his land the previous year which he said was because of the break up of his marriage – if his arrangements conformed to one of the typical patterns this probably meant that his wife had been unavailable to work on ‘his’ land during the rainy season. When asked if he would stay in Harare or leave, he simply said he did not know.

Mrs Mukora: wife of male household head

Mrs Mukora was in her late twenties and married to a man who worked as a general labourer for a private sector formal firm, earning Z\$6,500 per month. She classified herself as a housewife and did not work, even part-time in the informal sector. They lived with their children in one room as lodgers in a house where their landlord also lived, paying rent of Z\$900 per month. She had been born in Shurugwi communal area, and had moved later to Zhombe, west of the industrial town of KweKwe in Midlands province. She had left Zhombe for personal reasons, going to Harare in 1996 to join her husband who was already there and had moved to Harare to take up a job. At first they had lived together in the area of Chikurubi, near Harare’s prison, and then moved to lodge in Kuwadzana. In her opinion Harare offered better job and income opportunities than the communal areas; however, she could think of nothing good about her life in Harare. In her view the cost of living was ‘too high’. She was unable to list her main monthly expenditures beyond the rent, but nonetheless stated that living standards were worse in Harare than in Zhombe because ‘life in rural areas is not too expensive. Therefore, living standards in Harare are low’. She and her husband had only one acre of land, a few chickens and a modern house in the communal areas and in the past crop year had managed to produce three 90 kg bags of maize, plus two buckets of groundnuts and two bags of roundnuts. They had brought some of the maize to Harare, although it only contributed a little to the family’s total annual maize consumption. She was not sure how long they might stay in Harare but felt they would probably eventually go back to Shurugwi, where she had been born, due to the cost of living and to ‘retire’ from town life. She said they would farm there when they left.

Mrs Kambarami: Wife of male household head

Mrs Kambarami was in her early twenties and married to a man who worked in a formal media enterprising where his chief job was photocopying. His income was very low at only Z\$3,000 per month and she was looking for a job; she had worked in the past. They were lodgers, renting one room for Z\$1,000 and their landlord occupied the same housing stand. She had been born in Masvingo town and had come from there to Harare in 1997. She had come to seek employment and to live with relatives in Dziverasekwa HDA. She had met her husband in Harare and was not sure when he had come there. She felt there was no difference in the chance of getting a job in Harare compared to Masvingo, but that incomes were higher. The main elements of the household budget were Z\$1,525 for transport, Z\$1,500 for food and the rent which exceeded their income by Z\$1,000. This provides for the context for her view that standards of living in Harare compared to Masvingo were ‘lower... because of high expenses’ and that the main problem was the ‘high cost of living and expensive food’. She and her husband had no rural assets, but she said they intended to leave Harare within a year because of the cost of living and look

for somewhere to take up farming. She said they were looking for ‘an appropriate place’ or would ‘go for land redistributed in designated farms’.

Mrs Shambare: Wife of male household head

‘if you do not work you will die of hunger in Harare’

Mrs Shambare was in her early twenties and both she and her husband were working in formal sector jobs. She was a quality controller for clothing and he was a tailor and they both earned Z\$6,000 per month. Her views were strongly influenced by their involvement in the textile industry. She had come to Harare in 1996 from Mutasa communal lands about 200 kms southeast of Harare as she had no job there and chose Harare as her destination because she had relatives there and wanted to look for a job. Her husband had migrated to Harare in 1999 and they had met in town and they were lodging in one room in a house whose owner lived in the rural areas. In her view there was better chance of getting a job in Harare as the ‘clothing industry is more established’, but that the incomes one would earn were the same as they were ‘negotiated for by unions’. The best thing about Harare was the ‘abundance of income earning opportunities’, and the worst thing was ‘if you do not work you will die of hunger in Harare’. In her opinion standards of living were worse in Harare than Mutasa, where ‘everything else can be produced from the land, such as vegetables and maize’. Via her marriage she now had some land in Shurugwi, although she was uncertain of the acreage, and they also had both traditional and modern houses there. Yet they had not produced anything on this land in the past year due to ‘work commitments’. The family’s primary outgoings were Z\$4,000 on food, Z\$2,400 on transport and Z\$1,000 on their rent, so they were not nearly as hard up as many respondents. She was unsure of how long they would stay in Harare but thought they would one day go to Shurugwi, mainly because of the cost of living, but also because of a ‘desire to be at home’.

Mrs Ndlovu : Wife of male household head

‘stressful in Harare and difficult to make ends meet’

Mrs Ndlovu was married to a director in a formal sector enterprise, earning Z\$25,000 per month so this was one of the wealthier households interviewed. He also had a secondary, informal job supplying security from which he made \$2,300. She was in her early twenties, classified herself as a housewife and was not looking for work. They owned their house. She had been born in Bulawayo and had also lived in KweKwe, before moving to Chitungwiza in 1999 where she had lived with kin. She would not say why she had left KweKwe or why she had come to Harare; when her husband had moved to Harare she said he was accompanying his parents. She could not judge how earnings in KweKwe would compare with Harare as she had been a student when she was there, but reckoned job availability was the same, ‘proportional to population’. She thought a good thing about living in Harare was the ‘competition and challenges’, although she also argued that living standards had been better in KweKwe because it was ‘stressful in Harare and difficult to make ends meet – there was competition’. The thing she disliked about Harare was ‘urban poverty, crime and immorality’. They had some land and a modern house in a rural area and had produced 15 bags of maize in the last crop year, some of which had been consumed in Harare. She estimated their main expenditures as Z\$8,000 on food, Z\$8,000 on transport and Z\$2,300 on rates for the house. This

suggested they were eating well and that they had room for manouevre in their budget. They still planned to leave Harare, however, within the next five years, and to go and live in the town of Marondera, mainly because of the cost of living, but also because she wanted a 'peaceful environment; Harare is overcrowded'.

Mrs Mazodza: wife of male household head

Mrs Mazodza was in her late twenties and her husband was employed as a carpenter in the formal sector earning Z\$5,000 per month. This was a low income and he had a secondary, informal sector, job selling vegetables although she could not estimate his earnings from that. She had been born in Mazowe district about 40 kms north of Harare, on a commercial farm, and had come to Harare in 1998 from another commercial farm in the area of Selous, near Chegutu, about 80 kms southwest of Harare. She moved to Harare to join her husband and they had lived in three other parts of Kuwadzana, at first with kin and then as lodgers. They were still lodgers in one room in a house owned by a landlord who lived in the rural areas. She thought it was difficult to find a job in Harare, more difficult than on the commercial farm. However, her general views on the city were highly positive and evidently coloured by her experiences as a commercial farmworker. Harare was good because 'electricity is available, and water is collected nearby'; and she could think of nothing bad about the city. They were paying Z\$3,500 for food each month and Z\$750 for rent, which left them with very little left over for all the other necessities, and one of their children was living on the commercial farm, but nonetheless in her experience Harare living standards were better, 'because you do not work very hard'. They had no rural assets and intended to live permanently in Harare.

Mr Chimutanda: single, male household head

Mr Chimutanda, in his early twenties, was the unmarried son of a retired man who owned a house in Kuwadzana but was living in the rural areas. Mr Chimutanda had six rooms in this house, but did pay Z\$1,000 in rent, although that was way below the market rent for such a house. He worked as an assistant civil engineer, and was paid Z\$6,000 per month. He had been born in the town of Bindura, about 80 kms northeast of Harare. This town had been the site of considerable political tension in 2001, shortly before the survey, as there was a by-election and ZANU(PF) had conducted a programme of intimidation of suspected MDC supporters, including house-to-house searches, which had led to many people fleeing the area (Amnesty International 2001). Mr Chimutanda had come to Harare from Bindura years before, in 1996, but was nonetheless acutely aware of the situation there which strongly coloured his views. His reasons for leaving Bindura were that he was dissatisfied with his life there and he had no job, and he came to Harare because he thought life would be better there. However by 2001 his comparisons of Harare and Bindura were not very favourable; he thought it was more difficult to get a job in Harare by then because 'there are too many people looking for jobs now', and he estimated that earnings were likely to be the same in the two towns, but in Bindura 'expenditures are low'. On the other hand, in 2001 Mr Chimutanda felt that it was good to be in Harare because 'Harare is peaceful and there is little violence'. He said he paid

Z\$6,000 a month for food, which seemed excessive compared to the amounts mothers with families were citing – but possibly as a single man he was eating out much of the time which would make it very expensive. His next biggest expenditure was transport at Z\$3,000, and then electricity and water at Z\$1,700. This helped to explain why he cited housing problems as a bad thing about living in Harare – in total he was paying out Z\$2,700 for the house which was burdensome; and his total outgoings exceeded his income. On balance he felt that living standards in Harare were better than in Bindura, as ‘all goods and services that may not be available in small towns are available in Harare so it’s better’. However, he also stated that he planned to leave the city in six to ten years time and move to Chiweshe communal land, which he regarded as his ‘home’ where he would take up farming, although he had no land there at the time of the survey. This was in part because of the cost of living in Harare but also because ‘it is less political in my rural home area’.

Mr Samuriwo: Young, male, dependent relative

‘ladies disturb my thinking’

Mr Samuriwo was living in a household headed by his aunt, a nurse earning Z\$18,000 per month who owned the house in which they lived. He was under 25 years of age and unemployed, and said he was looking for his first job. He had been born in the nearby communal area of Goromonzi, about 40 kms east of Harare, and had come to town from there in 1998, at first living with other kin in Chitungwiza. His primary purpose was to try and find a job, but he was still looking three years later. In his view it would be easier to find a job in Goromonzi, although he felt there was more money to be earned in Harare. What he felt was particularly good about living in Harare was that transport was so easily available. The ‘bad’ thing was that ‘ladies disturb my thinking through dressing’. The household’s main expenditures were ranked as first, food, followed by transport, then accommodation and service bills (ie the mortgage and rates). Yet he was unable to estimate how much was actually spent on anything but accommodation which was costing Z\$2,000 per month for a standard four-roomed house. For him, living standards were better in Harare. He also pointed out that an advantage of Harare was that he was able to pick up occasional part-time construction work, so he had not, in fact, been entirely unemployed since his arrival. He had no land or other assets in Goromonzi, and said he would remain permanently in the city.

Mrs Gwatidzo: young, female dependent relative 1

‘entertainment is good, and jobs can easily be got’

Mrs Gwatidzo was in her late twenties and living with her husband at her parents-in-law’s and looking for a job. The head of the household was an accountant in the formal sector; she did not know his income but it was evident that it was a reasonable one by the standards of Kuwadzana. They were private tenants, renting three rooms from a landlord who lived elsewhere in Harare. She had been born in Zwimba communal land, west of Harare, and had then lived in Bulawayo, coming to Harare in 1996 for educational reasons and at first living in the nearby HDA of Warren Park with kin. She thought Harare offered more in terms of incomes and jobs, as there ‘seems to be more companies in Harare’. The thing she liked best about Harare was that ‘entertainment is good, and jobs can easily be got’, although she had not managed to find one herself. The worst

aspect of Harare was that it was ‘too crowded’. When asked to rank the household’s main items of expenditure she first listed clothes at Z\$10,000 a month, followed by food at Z\$2,000 and then transport at Z\$1,160. This was clearly impossible with far too much assigned to clothes and not enough to food for the whole household – it seemed more of a wish list for herself. She had no rural assets, but did have one child in the communal lands. She said she would go back to Bulawayo in the next five years, as living standards were better there because ‘it was cheaper’ and she anticipated that unemployment, housing problems and the cost of living in Harare would lead to her and her husband leaving.

Ms Mudzengerere: Young, female dependent relative

‘life is easygoing if one has money, that is there is no hard work’

Ms Mudzengerere was the young cousin, aged between 18-24, of a male household head who earned his living as a photographer working as a formal sector employee. He also used this skill to earn extra money on the side. She was unemployed and looking for a job. She had been born in Harare, but had been living in Mutekedza ward in Chivhu communal lands before migrating back to the city in 1996. She would not say why she left Chivhu, but said that she chose Harare as her destination, firstly, because she had relatives there to live with and, secondly, to look for a job. Her first residence in Harare was in Greenlane, a low density area, where she had been living in the main house (as opposed to being a domestic in the servants’ quarters, which was more usual when migrants had lived in the LDAs at some point). In her opinion, there were ‘equally poor chances [of finding a job] in Harare and Chivhu’ which, given she was searching for a job, was probably a heartfelt assessment. She also estimated that incomes were the same in both places, ‘if the jobs are the same’. On the other hand, a positive aspect of life in Harare was that ‘life is easygoing if one has money, that is there is no hard work’. A major concern about Harare was ‘the street kids problem and immorality’. Her photographer cousin owned the house, so there was no rent to pay, but she estimated food for the whole household was costing Z\$6,000 per month and that service bills on the house such as electricity and water and rates added up to Z\$3,400. Such large bills suggest a substantial house and ‘easygoing’ use of services for the household as a whole but it seemed that she herself was struggling economically as she judged that living standards were worse in Harare as ‘Chivhu is better because most production is from land and services are cheaper’. She had no assets back in Chivhu, however, and she said she did not know whether, or how long, she would stay in Harare.

Ms Chifamba: Female single lodger household head

‘Living in Harare to earn money, not to enjoy the facilities’

Ms. Chifamba, a young woman aged in her early twenties, who would have been born around the time of Zimbabwean independence, had come to live in Harare in 2000. She had been born in Kadoma, another town about 120 kms southwest of Harare, which was the centre of Rhodesia’s and then Zimbabwe’s textile industry. However, she had then moved to the communal lands, to Gutu in Masvingo Province and had moved thence to Harare. She was living on her own, as an independent woman and the head of her own

household, lodging in a room in the house of a landlord who also lived on the premises, which was the most common arrangement for migrants in the surveys. Only five other *female* single lodger households were identified by the 2001 survey, of 408 respondents, so her situation was quite unusual. She had originally moved to Harare because she had no job and wanted to look for work. When she first arrived she had lived elsewhere in the same HDA and, in common with very many migrants in all the surveys, at that time was living with and helped by relatives; their presence was a primary reason for choosing Harare as a destination along with the fact that she anticipated that incomes there would be higher. She had quite definite views about Harare and her reasons for being there and took a strong moral stance. She was employed as a vendor selling clothes in a flea market and, as the enterprise was licensed, she could be regarded as 'formal' sector (although she, no doubt, would have lost this livelihood in 2005 when Operation Murambatsvina was launched, since the flea markets were all destroyed). She was earning Z\$1,600 per month, but claimed primary outgoings of Z\$1,000 on food and Z\$700 on rent, plus another Z\$700 on clothes – she was very interested in clothes, which was perhaps not surprising given her job and age. Indeed, when asked to compare how much one could earn in Harare with Gutu, she offered the comment that 'people are more fashion conscious in Harare', the suggestion being that this was because they had more money. Yet, as can be seen, her own situation was that her basic outgoings (even excluding the clothes!) exceeded her income. This must have been part of the reason why, when asked what was good about living in Harare, she answered 'nothing'. She also believed that 'mini skirts and hipsters [trousers] have had a bad influence on life' – an outlook which neatly combined her professional experience with her personal morality. She judged that, once her necessary urban expenditures were taken into account, living standards were now better in Gutu and she intended to return there in the future, mainly because of the cost of living, but thought she would stay in Harare for ten years or more. She said that when she returned to Gutu, which she regarded as her 'home', she would farm although she currently had no rural assets of her own. In her opinion, she was only in Harare to 'earn money, not to enjoy the facilities' and offered the final remark that 'life in Harare can encourage prostitution'. Ms. Chifamba appeared to offer a blend of determination, an independent mind and way of life, and a level-headed ability to assess her situation and plan for her future.

Ms Gweshe: Female single lodger household head

'even in bars there is no money these days'

Ms Gweshe, a young, never married, woman between 18 and 24 years of age, headed her own household and had come to live in Harare in 1996 from Masvingo town. She had been born in Chivhu communal land, which is about half way between Harare and Masvingo. She was a lodger, occupying one room costing Z\$1,000 per month; she had lodged elsewhere in Kuwadzana but had not lived with relatives in town when she first came there, which was unusual. This may have been because she earned her living through prostitution which she estimated earned her Z\$30,000 per month, one of the highest incomes found in the 2001 surveys and more than three times the average. She said she had come to Harare to 'take up employment' - it was unclear whether this was prostitution but it seemed likely – and because she deemed life would be better in Harare than in Masvingo. She reckoned that her earnings were roughly the same in Harare as

they had been in Masvingo, however, and she was finding it more difficult to find ‘jobs’. As a result she estimated that her standard of living in Harare was ‘fairly average’ compared to Masvingo, and clearly felt that Harare had not lived up to expectations. On the one hand, an advantage was that ‘there are so many clubs and bars in Harare’, but, on the other, Harare was ‘too expensive, even in bars there is no money these days’. Her primary expenses were ranked as her rent, then food, followed by remittances. She did not specify the amounts, nor to whom she remitted but, since she had no children in Harare or elsewhere, it was presumably to other family members in Chivhu. She had no rural assets and intended to remain in Harare permanently.

This young woman was untypical of the overall sample of migrants in many ways; being a single lodger, as already noted, was unusual for women, and her income was very high, especially for someone with no Harare-based dependents.

Ms Katsande: a female housemaid in a high density area

Ms Katsande was a young housegirl working for a household whose head was a driver for a formal sector enterprise. She was unrelated to the household and earning only Z\$800 per month, a pittance. She had been born in Chinhoyi communal land, about 110 kms northwest of Harare, and migrated to the city in 2000 from there in order to seek employment. She had first lived in the LDA of Waterfalls, again as a domestic, before moving to Kuwadzana. She believed it was easier to get a job in Harare than in her rural area, but nonetheless said, ‘I haven’t realised anything good’ about the city. Her main worry about living in Harare was that ‘employers are at times rude and arrogant’. She judged that the household’s main costs were food, followed by rent and other accommodation bills, and then transport but, understandably given her position in the household, had no idea how much the HHH earned or how much was spent, except for the rent which was Z\$2,500 for three rooms. For her living standards in Harare were ‘better than living in the rural areas’, where she had no assets. She did not know how long she would stay but thought she might eventually end up back in the rural areas, specifying Guruve over 100 kms northeast of Chinhoyi, where she anticipated being given land by her parents.

Mrs Mandizvidza: married woman

Mrs Mandizvidza said she would definitely be staying in Harare. She was living in Kuwadzana Extension in 2001 and was employed as a teacher and married to a professional man who was a manager in financial services. Their joint incomes totalled almost Z\$50,000 per month – about the highest recorded that year. In addition, she had a side-line, selling clothes and plates, from which she said she earned another Z\$10,000 per month. They also owned their house. She had been born in the communal lands (Zvishavane) and had lived in Masvingo town prior to moving to Harare. Her views on Harare were mixed. For her, the positive aspects were that incomes were higher and that ‘life is competitive and there are many opportunities to do business’. The downsides were that the city was dirty and infrastructure was poor in some places. She felt that her standard of living had actually been better in Masvingo where transport was not so expensive and, because it was a small town, you could walk to places. This family also had an acre of land in the communal areas, and had grown maize the year before of which a little had been eaten in Harare. However, they had not built a house there.

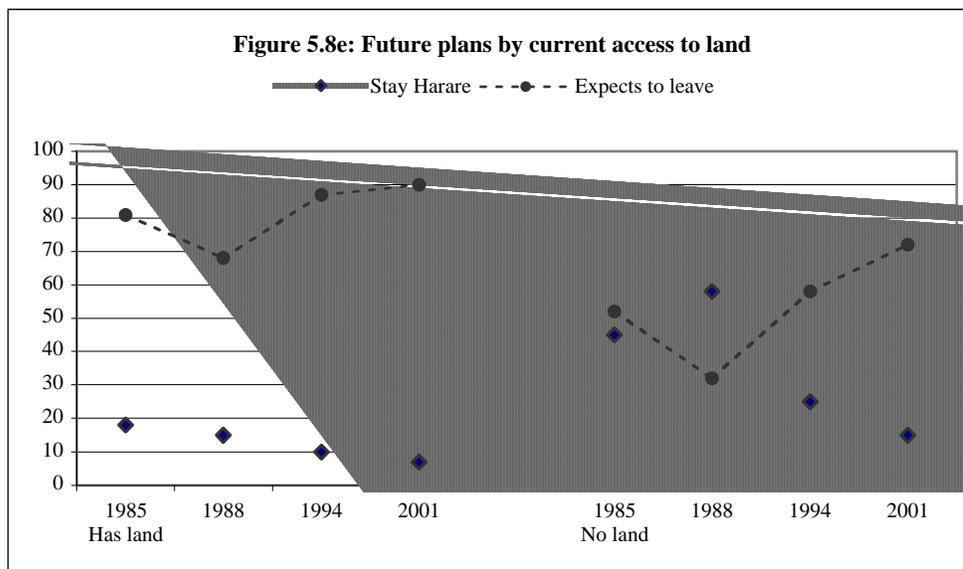
These case studies demonstrate vividly how variable were attitudes to living in the city and strategies for the future. Women who played a key role in the reproduction of the household were by far the most negative about Harare: they were often far too distracted by the sheer logistical difficulties of making ends meet (and sometimes not managing) to enjoy what the city had to offer in terms of entertainment, for example. Mrs Mukora was typical of very many married women in the survey, whose perceptions of Harare and her family's prospects there were dominated by the difficulties of getting by on an income which was low. The attractions of growing one's own food were repeated again and again. Yet the gender issue was not straightforward; younger women without much or any responsibility for other's needs were quite likely to be impressed by the city's cultural aspects and/or the benefits of water and electricity, both factors which were, unfortunately, soon to become less certain benefits in Harare (unless they were housemaids whose horizons were very limited indeed as they had little money or freedom). They were also less likely to anticipate a future move out of the city. And male household heads (rather than sons or other male relatives living in an extended household) were more likely to be negative about Harare than daughters or other female relatives. In other words, it was 'being in charge' as food and clothing and school fees became harder and harder to find that tipped the balance about people's feelings about the pros and cons of city life and this clearly fed through into their plans about whether they would or could stay permanently, or for how long. Being economically secure made a huge difference: the Mandizvidzas typify, in many respects, the characteristics that might be expected of a particular type of permanent urban resident. They were both middle-class professionals whose joint incomes greatly exceeded their main outgoings so, in 2001 at least, they were not too stressed about the negative trends in the economy. They were in a position to save and would both be expecting pensions. They were owner-occupiers so, once retired, they could rent out some of the rooms for a further, inflation-proof income. The fact that they had not built a house in the communal areas could be regarded as indicative of their strong urban orientation, both economically and culturally.

In relation to this, the difference in the accuracy or ability to judge expenditure according to position in the household was one of the telling aspects of the surveys, with dependents least able to make reasonable estimates. This both reflected the fact that someone else was doing most of the purchases and paying the bills, and also suggested how relatively stress-free their lives in Harare were, compared to household heads and their spouses who were usually very cost-conscious and worried about money. Two young dependent relatives in the case studies had little idea of the household budget. The very fact that Mrs Gwatidzo cited 'entertainment' as the key 'good' aspect of Harare and that Mr Samuriwo's greatest problem was the provocative dress of Harare's young women is indicative of this; HHHs or wives were far less likely to make such comments relating to their social lives and leisure activities, instead concentrating on economic matters.

Opinions were also influenced by the individual's potential to compare cash incomes being generated in Harare with incomes which were, or could be, derived from agriculture. Both men and women who had some land were less likely to judge incomes

Figure 1: Trends in the future plans of Harare in-migrants and the influence of owning rural land

in Harare as higher than those with no land, which suggests that agricultural assets and



incomes had become much more valuable in relative terms. The landless were certainly not overwhelmingly positive about Harare in this respect either. The major significance of productive rural assets for the livelihoods of those who had land was clear (Author forthcoming). The urban vulnerability assessment held two years later in 2003, which sampled the entire urban population, added further compelling evidence of this ‘outsourcing’ of Zimbabwe’s urban livelihoods. Thus, in Harare, Chitungwiza and Epworth, the largest single source of income per capita per household recorded was cereal and cash crop sales at 21%, which significantly exceeded the share generated by formal employment at 15%. Incomes sourced from all types of agriculture (crops and livestock) constituted one third of average incomes and exceeded the total from all types of urban employment (formal and informal). Similar reliance on agricultural incomes was found across the urban hierarchy in most provinces. In Harare province’s towns, over half of incomes (56%) was generated from sources other than locally urban-based work: agriculture, remittances and gold panning (see Author forthcoming). The crisis within the urban economy and its incapacity to support the city’s residents was thus tellingly demonstrated. It was thus that Harare had solved the ‘wages puzzle’ (cf Jamal and Weeks 1993) whereby measured incomes earned within the city from urban-based sources were simply insufficient to support the population. The city was relying on the countryside and immigrants. The impact of landholdings for such patterns is obvious and they played a major role in determining future plans as is evident in Figure 1 – migrants with land were always more likely to plan to leave the city in the future and this influence grew stronger as the economy declined.

Birthplace also plays a part in these attitudes and decisions. Mrs Ndlovu, for example, who was adamant she would remain urban (but not in Harare) was urban-born and had already lived in three towns in her life; Marondera would be the fourth. She and her

husband were nonetheless supplementing their incomes with fairly significant agricultural output, relative to most of the other migrants, and were probably able to do this by investing in good seeds and fertilizer. Their desire to leave Harare was only in part driven by cost issues; while she suggested she in some ways enjoyed the challenge of living in the big city, it was also clear that the hassle and stress was getting her down and she was lucky enough to be able to opt for a more peaceful, yet still urban, environment. Mrs Mazodza's birthplace in a commercial farming area illustrates well the significance of the nature of alternative options in shaping migrants' views of Harare and their futures. A very small proportion of migrants in all but the 1985 survey were born in commercial farming areas. Mrs Mazodza had been born in Zimbabwe, but may have been of foreign ancestry as she laid no claim to land or a rural 'home' in Zimbabwe – which is often a marker of having foreign parentage. There could be no doubt from her comments that, despite the seemingly very difficult economic circumstances facing her family, in comparison to her only other alternative livelihood, back on a commercial farm, Harare's advantages were clear.

Mr Chimutanda illustrates how very particular economic and political circumstances, which would be very hard to generalize, combine to influence migration and livelihood plans for some individuals. On the one hand, he was typical for a young single man in not being so overwhelmed by cost issues that the advantages of Harare's broader amenities and services were still important to him. Yet, the seeming advantage of his father's house was worrying him as it was so costly. The phenomenon of children living in parents' Harare houses in the HDAs, while the parents lived elsewhere, was encountered quite frequently; when the out-migrants could rent the house out, either in its entirety or more frequently room by room to lodgers, and 'retire' to the CAs, this was an enormous advantage for their livelihoods, representing an inflation-proof monthly income. Mr Chimutanda's views and plans were also significantly affected by the geography of political violence, although his views indicate the importance of relativity as a few other male respondents argued that a problem with Harare was that *it* was politically violent. During a focus group discussion, it was also opined that 'there is more peace in the rural areas as compared to Harare where riot police are called in every time a crowd forms'.

Some of the debates in literature about migration in Africa, including discussions about the urban transition model, tended to divide the migrant population into two groups: those who will leave town eventually (or will oscillate) and those who will stay permanently (eg Mayer and Mayer, 1961; Pauw 1973; Macmillan 1996; Lok and Collinson 2006). There is sometimes a presumption too that if people want to stay (in the absence of influx controls etc), then they will. In fact, the evidence from Harare, and all across Africa, is that structural economic conditions set the trends. What people would like to do and what they actually do are often different – their choices are constrained. The interaction of these various shifting forces means that there are also shifts in the relative prevalence of different types of migrants who might be more usefully divided into four groups: characterized as willing stayers, reluctant stayers, willing leavers and reluctant leavers. For example, the typical profile for a 'reluctant leaver' judged on their attitudes to Harare and the sorts of reasons given for expecting to leave was a young migrant who had

enough to get by or was supported by family and who had no assets in the communal areas. It is quite possible that their assessment of the pros and cons of Harare over other destinations and livelihoods might change as they got older and took on more responsibilities, however, and reluctant leavers could become willing leavers. If they were lucky and achieved the things they thought necessary for permanent urban residence they could also become willing stayers.

It is argued that similar scenarios have been playing out across sub-Saharan Africa since the imposition of structural adjustment programmes from the 1980s onwards. Making a livelihood in many large cities has become very difficult. At the same time rural livelihoods have often also suffered although there are important geographical variations within and between countries in this respect. As a result there is much evidence now that migration patterns have changed. Often mobility has remained high, or even increased, but the *net* movement into *large* towns has decreased as circulation has increased. The growth of large city populations has consequently often reduced to levels which can largely be attributed to natural increase rather than in-migration. In some cases the impact of net in-migration is now very minor or negligible. The interplay of demographic forces is complicated and highly varied across space and temporally so it is usually best to examine the evidence on a country by country basis (see Figures 2 and 3 for examples of the census evidence for Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire in the 1990s). In some cases the interplay means that cities are growing more slowly than the population of the country in which they are located – in a demographic sense, therefore, they are counter-urbanizing (their share of the national population is reducing). This phenomenon is bound to occur for some settlements in highly urbanized countries (eg Europe, Latin America) but not in sub-Saharan Africa where the majority of populations are usually still rural. As noted in the introduction, the usual depiction for Africa is that urbanization is still proceeding very rapidly but for a range of countries recent census evidence suggests this is no longer the case (Author 2009, forthcoming) – albeit many small towns are growing fast – and it is important that the policy implications of the livelihood crisis which underlie these trends are recognized.

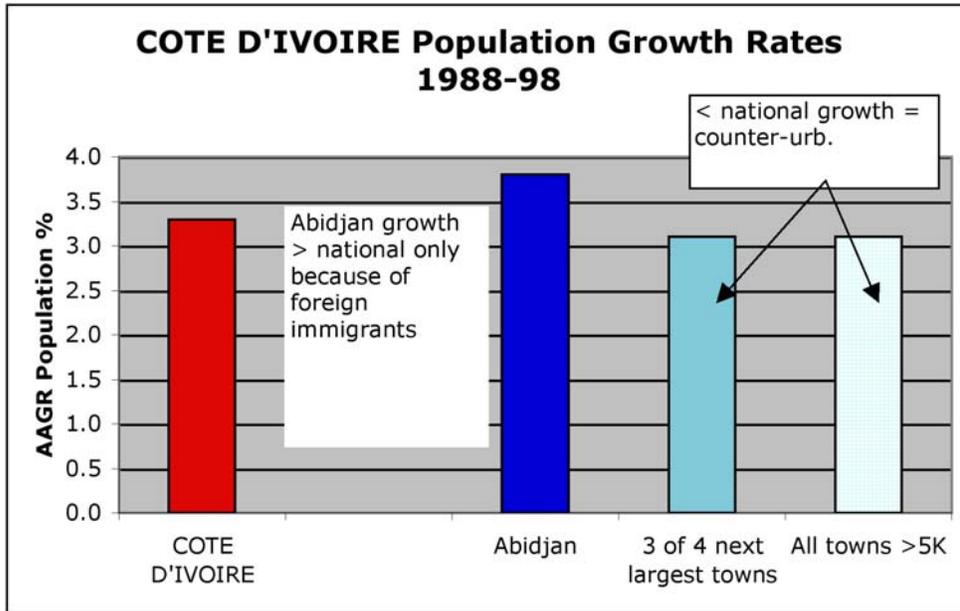


Figure 2: Urban and national population growth rates in Côte d'Ivoire in the 1990s

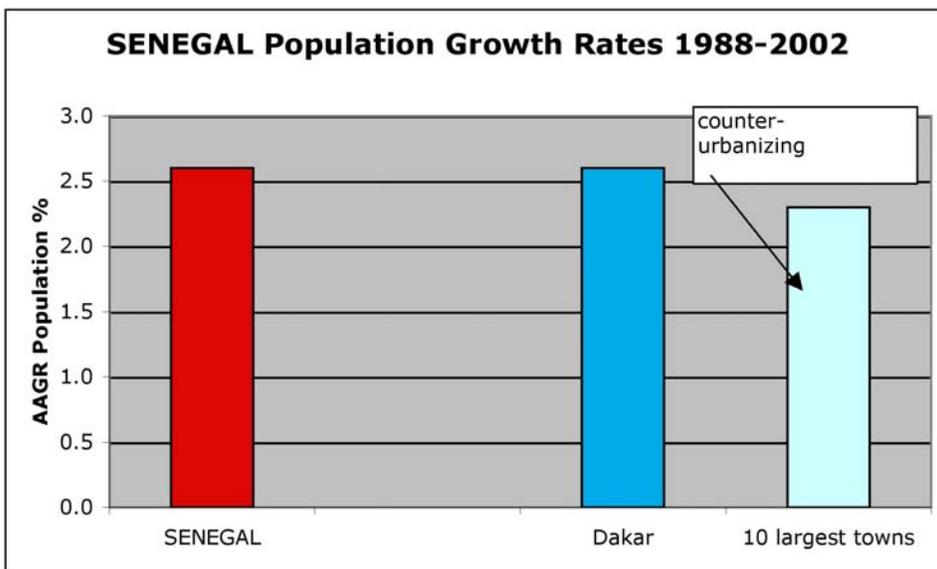


Figure 3: Urban and national population growth rates in Senegal in the 1990s

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