Urban Informality and COVID-19 Responses in Masvingo City, Zimbabwe: Questioning City Inclusivity

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Abstract

In many cities, urban informality is sidelined in the provision of services and development of the city. The outbreak of COVID-19 has called for myriad interventions to stop the spread in many cities. The big question in the city of Masvingo is how urban informality has been included in these interventions. COVID-19 has been on the increase since it was ever recorded in the city of Masvingo. As at end of August 2020, over 200 cases of COVID-19 have been recorded and pointers also show that cases are on the increase. Many people have been deprived of their livelihoods in the city due to the outbreak of COVID-19, thereby exposing people to vulnerability due to lack of livelihoods. The outbreak of COVID-19 has also resulted in closure of countless economic activities in the city, thereby depriving people from their sources of livelihoods. The most affected by the closure of economic activities are the informal traders. The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has called for copious interventions to try and stop the spread of the disease. The study examined the inclusivity of COVID-19 interventions in the city of Masvingo to see how they include other disadvantaged groups such as the urban informality. The informal sector in the city of Masvingo is not included in the city's COVID-19 response strategies. The city is mainly focusing on the formal sector in their response strategies, thereby leaving the informal sector out and exposing them to elevated risk of contracting the COVID-19 disease. This research examined the inclusivity of the COVID-19 interventions in the city of Masvingo, with special reference to the people in the informal sector. The informal sector, even though they live in cities, they are usually regarded as people living in the urban periphery because they are not included in the city's development agenda and service delivery system. The research applied a qualitative methodology where in-depth interviews and field observations were used to collect data. Interviews were done with city authorities and people in the informal sector. The research showed that the interventions taken to fight the outbreak of the COVID-19 have not benefited the people in the informal sector but only the formal sector. The informal sector has been sidelined, showing a clear exclusionary urban policy. Their livelihoods were destroyed in the guise of preventing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, such destructions were not done in the formal sector which again apparently shows exclusive urban policy. The research therefore calls for a more holistic approach in the fight against COVID-19 disease for the inclusive of the city and the betterment of life for all people in the city.

Keywords: Inclusive planning, urban informality, COVID-19, service delivery, Masvingo

■1.0 INTRODUCTION

Urban spaces are designed with exchange values, which have the tendency to exclude urban informality in the development of the city. There is a growing tendency in urban areas to exclude the disadvantaged groups of the city from the development of the city, which is a denial of the right to the city. Urban informality has developed to be a permanent feature of city's landscape hence deserves inclusion in the development and delivery of services of the city (Huchzermeyer, 2011). It is contributing close to 90% of jobs and contributing over 60% of GDP in Zimbabwe (Magure, 2015). In the city of Masvingo, urban informality is occupying between 80% and 90% of city space, which makes it the major space user in the city (Chigwenya, 2020). This contribution therefore calls for inclusion of urban informality in city development. However, cities of the Global South have been advancing neo-liberal urbanisation policies that have denied urban informality space in their development interventions (Huchzermeyer, 2011; Kamete, 2018, 2020; Matamanda, 2020). The neo-liberal cities want to portray cities without informality hence the sector has been left out in the development of cities. However, urban informality has taken strong roots in cities, not only of the Global South but even in the Global North (Aliyev, 2015). Most urban spaces are characterised with the gentrification process, which pushed the urban informality out of the city where city services do not reach (Fisher et al., 2013; Magure, 2015). Van Deusen (2002) further argues that modern cities exclude the urban poor and urban informality in the development of the city, which is a denial of their right to the city. The exclusion of urban informality in the development of cities is not only a denial of these people's right to the city but is a lost opportunity for development of cities. Urban informality is a rich source of livelihoods for a lot of people in urban areas because more than 80% of urban population in southern Africa depends on it (Rogerson, 1996). In Zimbabwe it is

estimated that the informal sector is responsible for creating 90% of employment and 60% of gross domestic product (Magure, 2015). Neo-liberal urbanisation policies therefore are no-longer viable in contemporary cities, which are driven by new urbanism and inclusivity (Kamete, 2018, 2020; Magure, 2020; Matamanda, 2020). It is no longer possible to exclude other city inhabitants in the development of the city because it is not sustainable. Roy (2005) argued that the informal sector and the urban poor have proved to be a permanent phenomenon of the urban society; hence it is not possible to plan cities without informality. She further argued that the urbanisation of poverty calls for a new planning theory that realises the need to plan for livelihoods of urban poor.

The neo-liberal policies that characterise most of cities in the Global South have created cities, which are mainly frontiers of capital accumulation and entrenchments of interests of elites, which disenfranchising the urban poor of their right to the city (Van Deusen, 2002). Neo-liberal planning therefore has been reproducing social exclusion especially of the urban informality which has been kept out of the city's development agenda. In this way urban planning in neo-liberal cities is swiftly moving away from its noble roles of providing and building a just and sustainable cities (Fainstein, 2005; Kamete, 2013). Provisions of a just city are closely linked to right to the city because it strives to allow all citizens to enjoy uninterrupted benefits from the city's service delivery system. The exclusionary urban policies have therefore largely resulted in hegemonic global political and economic relationships that have worked to exclude urban informality from accessing and using public spaces in favour of rights of the elites. The advancement of neo-liberal policies has created contested urban spaces, where the propertied and the property-less are continuously in confrontation (Coggin & Pieterse, 2012). The city should be seen as a melting pot, i.e., site of encountering difference, and according to the theory of the right to the city, there should be a place where differences live. Fisher et al. (2013) called for the marginalised and disenfranchised groups of the society to be actively involved in the shaping, designing the city and also actualizing right to the city. They further argued that right to the city should see resources being transferred from capitalists to the city inhabitants so that the marginalised city inhabitants are allowed to fully benefit from the provisions of the city. As a result, the marginalised groups will be empowered to play an active role in city affairs. Resources play a critical role in operationalising right to the city; without resources all endeavors to operationalise right to the city are in vain. Therefore, the planning system should avail resources from the city for use by all citizens.

The aim of the research was to examine the inclusivity of the COVID-19 interventions, to see the inclusivity of interventions by the city of Masvingo with special reference to the inclusion of urban informality. COVID-19 is spreading fast in cities of Zimbabwe and the city of Masvingo is not spared, which therefore calls for a holistic approach in the interventions. Even though the city of Masvingo started off with very low prevalence of the COVID-19 cases, there are evidence that cases are on the increase hence the need for inclusive approaches in the interventions to allow the interventions to cover all the city inhabitants. Urban informality is usually not included in the city's provisioning systems hence are found living and working in hazardous environments. COVID-19 has also seen closure of most of the activities of the informal sector in the city thereby depriving a lot of people in the city of livelihoods, which also deepen the prevalence of poverty. The study therefore examined how urban informality is included in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 is a problem that affects all the city inhabitants therefore the interventions that are meant to curb the spread of it should be inclusive to cover all the city inhabitants. The study also examined how urban informality was included in the development agenda of the city with specific reference to operation during the COVID-19 outbreak. This research is important in the sense that it examines governance issues in cities of Masvingo. It examined the inclusivity of the city in cases of crisis such as that which was brought by the Covid-19 pandemic in light of creating sustainable and inclusive cities. In many occasions, the marginalised groups of the city are not considered as right beneficiaries of urban services and in this way they will be disenfranchised of their right to the city. The urban informality is often victim of such segregatory urbanisation policies as they are always excluded in the urban provisioning system. The COVID-19 has been causing untold suffering throughout the world and all the people are affected, which means that all the interventions should include all city inhabitants for the sustainability and inclusivity of the city.

■2.0　LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1　Informality and Right to the City

The urban informality has been suffering from poor service provision and has been living in appalling environmental conditions because of lack of service delivery. The lack of provisioning in the informal sector has been due to the exclusive urbanisation policies that have been pursued by many cities especially those in the Global South (Huchzermeyer, 2011). These cities have been driven by neo-liberal urbanisation policies that have no space for the urban poor. Such urbanisation policies are exclusive and are responsible for unequal development and unsustainable city development. Cities should incorporate all citizens in the development and provisioning of the city so as to ensure that all city inhabitants enjoy right to the city and environmental justice (Debrah, 2007; Harvey, 2008, 2012; Lefebvre, 1968, 1996; Schlosberg, 2004). An inclusive city is a city that takes care of all its citizens including the disadvantaged groups of the society. According to Simone (2005), right to the city calls for cities to take care of the different and mutating rights of the city inhabitants and this means that city should incorporate in their provisioning systems the needs of disadvantaged groups such as the people in informal sector. In this way the city will be conclusive and also giving the disadvantaged groups their right to the city. Right to the city give all city inhabitants unencumbered access to city services so that they would enjoy urban life (Lefebvre, 1968, 1996). However urban informality has been marginalised in city service provision which is a denial of their right to the city. The informal sector has developed to be an important economic sector in the urban areas, especially in developing economies where it is contributing more than 90% of labour (Magure, 2015), and it has also developed to be a strong development partner because it has created linkages with the formal sector for sustainable development (Mazongonda & Chirisa, 2018). As such local authorities should try and incorporate urban informality in the city's development because the sector is contributing significantly to job creation, and to the Gross Domestic Product of economies (Aliyev, 2015; Brown et al., 2014; ILO, 2000; Jackson, 2012; Kamete, 2012; Onyenechere, 2011; UN-Habitat, 2010a, 2010b). When the

urban informality is included in the city's development programme they will be allowed to enjoy their right to the city because they were will be allowed to participate in the development of and shaping the city according to the desires of their hearts (Lefebvre, 1968, 1996; Harvey, 2008, 2012). It will also result in social justice, equity, democracy, inclusion and participatory governance, which marks a departure from the exploitative and exclusionary neo-liberal practices. However, the informal sector is finding itself marginalised in the development of cities and at sometimes there is hostility between local authorities and urban informality because of the fight for right to the city (Huchzermeyer, 2011; Kamete, 2020; Matamanda, 2020). Urban local authorities are trying to portray cities without informality by trying to plaster under and destroy urban informality (Huchzermeyer, 2011). Such urbanisation policies deny urban informality their right to the city. The planning systems in urban areas are too harsh to urban formality, which is fast becoming an urban reality (Aliyev, 2015; Roy, 2005, 2009).

2.2 Informality and City Inclusivity

Most cities are characterised by skewed distribution of benefits between the formal and the informal; where the urban informality and other marginalised groups suffer social and environmental injustices. In this way the marginalised groups are denied their right to the city because they are denied the right to receive services from the city. Schlosberg (2004) argued that urban areas should be seen making efforts to reduce economic and social inequalities that are prevalent in urban areas. In this way cities will be addressing social inequalities that may cause social strive and contestations. Addressing social inequalities will also call for adoption of development agenda that is inclusive, which incorporates the diversity of urban areas (Fainstein, 2005; UN-Habitat, 2010a, 2010b). Urban informality has for long been sidelined in the development of cities and this is a disenfranchisement of their right to the city (Simone, 2005). The shift towards inclusive development initiatives should start with changing the planning practices that have for long been characteristically taxonomic and exclusive in their nature and have been used to create social injustice in urban areas. The traditional planning systems, which remained mainly physical planning has not been able to address social issues such as urban poverty, so the livelihoods of the poor such urban informality remained unprovided. Contemporary cities need to adopt the new planning paradigm, which is more inclusive. The new world order is that cities are becoming too diverse and this diversity needs to be provided for. Urban informality has developed to be a permanent city phenomenon hence the need to include it in city development (Huchzermeyer, 2011; Roy, 2005, 2009). According to UN-Habitat (2010a, 2005), the diversity of cities of today requires a paradigm shift, because it is no longer possible to do business as usual but acknowledge the diversity and plan for it. Urban informality has become an urban reality which therefore requires its inclusion in city's development agenda (Fainstein, 2005; Sandercock, 1998). The inclusion of urban informality calls for new planning theory that recognises the activities of urban poor. Inclusive planning takes care for the needs of all city inhabitants including the new land uses such as urban informality that are considered as livelihoods of the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups (Gerometta et al., 2005; Gondwe et al., 2011; Huchzermeyer, 2011; Roy, 2005; Sandercock, 1998; Watson, 2002). Sustainable development calls for the promotion of the needs of the vulnerable groups of the society such as urban informality and ensuring that development benefits are targeted at improving their conditions (Chambers & Conway, 1991; Ellis, 2000; UN-DESA, 2012; World Bank, 2010). In so doing therefore, development initiatives will be addressing the critical issues of sustainability by addressing the inequalities that are characteristic of economies of cities of the Global South. It will also expand the capabilities and opportunities of the poor, thereby availing to them livelihood strategies that will enable them to improve their well-being (Berdegué, 2005; Chambers & Conway, 1991; Cozzens, 2010; Gerometta et al., 2005). Cozzens (2010) further argued that inclusive development initiatives are more effective strategies for reducing inequalities and poverty therefore the inclusion of urban informality in the development of the city should result in inclusive and sustainable cities (UN-Habitat, 2005).

Inclusive cities should therefore allow all city inhabitants to participate and benefit from development initiatives. Cities of the 21st century should recognise the values of ethnography; promote inclusiveness, and participation of all stakeholders for them to be regarded as inclusive (UN Habitat, 2010a, 2010b). Planning practices of the 21st century, therefore, call for a move away from the illusions of the scientific rational comprehensive planning, which is very taxonomic, top-down, supply driven, ineffective and unresponsive to the needs of the poor (Fainstein, 2005; Kamete, 2013; Sandercock, 1998; World Bank, 2010). Rational planning is the traditional planning approach that does not recognise livelihoods of the poor such as activities of urban informality because of its insistence on universal citizenship. It is therefore divorced from the realities of cities especially those of the Global South which are experiencing rising incidence of urban informality and poverty (Matamanda, 2020; Roy, 2005, 2009). The neo-liberal urbanisation policies pursued by many cities in the Global South have also been marginalizing the urban informality because of their obsession create world class city (Devas, 2001; Huchzermeyer, 2011; Krase, 2016). Parnell and Robinson (2012) further argued the neo-liberal urbanisation processed have resulted in exclusion of urban informality in the provision of essential services such as water and sanitation as these services are concentrated in gated communities. Therefore, urban informality has been disenfranchised of their right to received essential services from the city. In some cases, the exclusion of urban informality from the city is characterised with a lot of hostility, contestations and coalitions, where regulatory instruments are crafted to push urban informality out of the city centre (Huchzermeyer, 2011; Kamete, 2018, 2020; Matamanda, 2020). Such hostilities are caused by neo-liberal urbanisation policies that are focused on city order and cleanliness with very little regard to social order (Kamete, 2013).

The neo-liberal planning system is therefore accused of mainly focusing on issues of physical planning and place making which have very little to address social issues such as urban poverty, social justice, equity, environment injustice and governance (Roy, 2005, 2009). These aspects are critical in addressing the urbanisation of poverty which is an urban reality in contemporary cities (Fainstein, 2006; Gondwe et al., 2011; Roy, 2005, 2009). Contemporary cities can no longer afford to develop without urban informality because urban informality has grown to be a permanent feature of city development (Aliyev, 2015; Huchzermeyer, 2011). Cities should recognise that urban societies are diverse socially and culturally, hence the need to cater for the diversity (Fainstein, 2005; Loukaitou-Sideris, 2012; Sandercock, 1998; Watson, 2002). Most problems in cities of the Global South which include physical disorders, unsustainable urban growth and environmental problems are, therefore, a result of failure by the city planning system to recognise and incorporate

disadvantaged groups such as urban informality (Jelili & Adedibu, 2006; Roy, 2005, 2009). The urbanisation of poverty is a reality in most urban areas, which therefore calls for a paradigm shift, where the new planning paradigm should recognise livelihoods of the poor and plan for them. The new urbanism calls for right to the city and inclusive urbanism, where the diversity of urban inhabitants is provided and incorporated in the development of the city (Aliyev, 2015; Brown et al., 2014; Kamete, 2013, 2017; Rogerson, 2004; UN-Habitat, 2018). For example, in Zimbabwe, the informal sector is contributing more that 60% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and it is now regarded as the virtual economy (Kamete, 2013; Magure, 2015). In other cities of the Global South, it is producing goods that have accessed international markets. In the city of Masvingo, urban informality is now occupying between 80-90% of the city space (Chigwenya, 2020). The informal sector is, therefore, a very important player in economic development of cities, which therefore calls for its inclusion in the development of cities and should also be included in the service provision of the city for the sustainability of the city.

In most cities of the Global South, urban informality is not included in the development of the city as a result of their failure to create safe and liveable spaces for urban informality (Adeyinka et al., 2006; Joseph, 2002). This exclusion is a violation of these people's right to the city, especially their right to receive services from the city and participated in the development of the city. Improving the conditions of the urban informality will go a long way in reducing poverty and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (Joseph, 2002). Schoenfish-Keita and Johnson (2010) added that this will also help in removing the poor and disadvantaged groups from the hazardous environments that characterise the work spaces of urban informality. In this way they will be fighting exclusion and disenfranchisement of the urban informality of their right to the city. Schoenfish-Keita and Johnson (2010) further argued that the inclusion of urban informality in the development of the city will also extend the horizons of democracy in cities as all urban citizens will be participating in the development of the city.

■3.0 METHODOLOGY

The research was done mainly under the qualitative research methodology where in-depth interviews and field observations were the main research methods used. A cross section of the city of Masvingo was involved where the city centre, the high density suburb and the low density suburb were involved. The research design was chosen so as to give the cross-sectional view of the COVID-19 interventions throughout the city. The qualitative methodology was chosen because of its ability to get into the depth of the inquiry. In-depth interviews can further probe into the obtaining responses thereby giving information that enrich the research. The in-depth interviews were done with key informants in the city of Masvingo who were involved in the COVID-19 response. These key informants from the city council included those from health department of the city, the planning department and council chambers. From the government, key informants included the ministry of health and the office of the resident minister. Other key informants were civic organisations representing informal sector. In total, 9 interviews were done with key informants, 5 with city council officials, 2 with government officials and the other two with civic organisations representing people in the informal sector. These key informants were purposively selected and heads of departments in these various organisations were selected for interviews. These people are regarded as leaders in their various departments hence are presumed to pregnant with important information for the research. In addition to this, 20 other interviews were done with people in the informal sector located in different sites in the city and these sites were city centre, Mucheke high density suburb, Rhodeen low density suburb and Rujeko high density suburb. The data collected include the response strategies that are being done in the city and how they are affecting informal activities. These were conveniently selected because most of the people in the informal sector were not allowed to operate so the research relied on people whom were available. The leaders of people in the informal sector helped to identify these research participants for the interviews. The interviews were also complemented by field observations to see the COVID-19 responses that are being taken in the city of Masvingo. The field observations captured the spread of COVID-19 interventions in various sites in the city to see how they were covering the population of the city. Observations were captured in photographs. Data collected were analysed qualitatively, where they were first familiarised with, in what Pope et al. (2000) called the immersion stage where the researcher had to be familiarised with the records and the notes that were taken during data collection. After the data were classified into thematic areas and frameworks, they were latter interpreted in line with the created thematic areas and frameworks. To avoid biases in data analysis, the transcribed notes that were obtained in the interviews were shared with some of the interview participants to show that the notes that were classified in the thematic areas still reflect the ideas they had given. The conclusions that were obtained in the study were also reviewed by other peers, so as to spruce out biases that might have been incorporated in the study.

■4.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 COVID-19 Cases in Masvingo: An Overview

The outbreak of the COVID-19 has called for a lot of interventions to stop the spread and these interventions were guided by the World Health Organization (WHO). Given that there is no cure for COVID-19, all the interventions were meant to prevent the spread of the disease. The major interventions recommended by WHO were; avoid crowded places, keeping social distance, sanitization of spaces, regular washing of hands with alcohol based rub and wearing of masks. The city of Masvingo has adopted these preventive measures in a way to curtail the spread of COVID-19. The city of Masvingo did not record any case of COVID-19 for the first four months of the year. COVID-19 cases started to be reported when the government started to repatriate its citizens from neighbouring countries such as South Africa, Botswana and Mozambique. The first case was recorded in April 2020 at a quarantine center in the city. By the 1st of July 2020, the city of Masvingo had recorded 53 positive cases of COVID-19. Figure 1 below shows the COVID-19 positive cases in the 10 provinces of Zimbabwe as at 30 June 2020 and the city of Masvingo was the fifth in terms of prevalence of COVID-19 positive cases. The cases were steadily increasing as the government stepped up the testing of COVID-19 cases and by the end of August 2020, the city had recorded an

upwards of 286 COVID-19 positive cases and nationally there were over 7000 cases recorded, while the deaths have stagnated at 220 since late July.
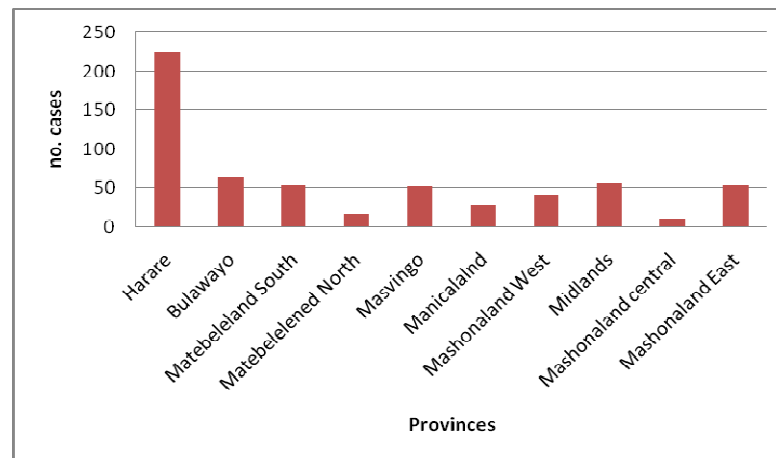

Figure 1 COVID-19 Cases in Zimbabwe by 1 July 2020

4.2 COVID-19 Interventions in City of Masvingo: The Formal and the Informal under Closedown Regulations at Level 5

Masvingo city's first approach in response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 disease was to effect total close-down of all economic activities. The lockdown started at level 5 which saw all economic activities being closed down accept for essential services such as those in medical and food supply. The closedown was first for three weeks and business was brought to a total standstill except for the mentioned shops. However, unlike in the formal sector, the informal sector was totally closedown regardless of whether it was food, manufacturing or service sectors. Shops in the formal sector that were offering food and medical services were allowed to operate during the level 5 closedown but no such moratorium was extended to the informal sector. The closedown was done indiscriminately and the city authorities took this chance clean their city by destroying all informal shells that were in the city. The destruction came as a result of government directive to destroy all informal activities in cities as they regard informal sites as hit doors for COVID-19. Although there were many activities of the informal sector selling different food products such as cooking oil, sugar, rice, fruits and vegetables, they were all closed. The city went on to close the fruit and vegetable market at Chitima and Tanaiwa markets, which were given half a day to close down. Although there are no informal players in the medical field there were so many in the food industry carrying out their business at various places such as the food and vegetable market at Chitima market and the Tanaiwa market. All these markets were not offered the same opportunity as those in the formal sector to sell their food items at these markets. One of the representatives of people in the informal sector said:

> *[...] our people were ready to implement all measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We have the sanitizers, the masks and we were prepared to practice social distancing [...] we therefore don't know why we were sidelined.*

The operators in the informal sector also claimed that they do not know why they were excluded because they were prepared to implement COVID-19 prevention measures during their operations just like those in the formal sector. The closure remained in place despite the announcement by the government of agricultural products to be important services hence should be allowed to operate. This shows that the city does not regard urban informality as an important sector. The people in the informal sector however claim that there is rapid shrinking of the formal sector which has resulted in ballooning of informal activities in the city to the extent that urban informality is the economy. However urban informality continues to receive second class treatment from the city authorities despite its huge contribution to livelihoods of people in the city. One of the respondents said that:

> *[...] the industry is currently operating at less than 20% capacity [...] some as low as 10%. The informal economy is ever growing [...] it is the one that is driving the city's economy and is giving livelihoods to the majority of the citizens. If it was not for this sector, this city will be economically on its knees.*

This shows that urban informality has been growing in the city hence deserves to be considered in the development planning of the city. However, the city of Masvingo's COVID-19 responses is side-lining the informal sector in their interventions as they are only benefiting the formal sector. The city authorities although they are acknowledging the role played by urban informality in creating livelihoods in the city they are however doing nothing to promote their activities in their interventions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The city has imposed a blanket closure on all activities of urban informality despite the call by the government to allow activities in agriculture, medical and food sectors to operate. One of the key informants also alluded that informal activities are growing in the city and they are playing a key role in providing livelihoods not only to the urban poor but to the majority of the city inhabitants. However, despite this realisation the city is only giving a lip service to the activities of urban informality because while they agree in principle on the critical role played by the informal sector in the city, they are doing nothing on the ground to show that they appreciate their role. All activities of urban informality have remained closed despite government's announcement to allow some of them to operate. The Chitima market, which is the biggest agricultural market, has remained closed for almost six months.

After indiscriminately closing informal activities the city went on to destroy all the informal sector vending shells in an apparent move to get informal activities out of the city. The destruction was done as a directive from government to clean up the city as a measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19. There were no such measures taken in the formal sector. The different treatment between the formal and informal shows that urban informality is not treated the same as those in the formal sector despite all being citizens of Masvingo city. Preference is given to the formal sector at the expense of the informal sector despite the fact they are all city inhabitants and all have the right to the city. It is the right of those in the informal sector that has been sacrificed at the altar of environmental safety. There is a general perception within the city authorities that the informal sector contributes to environmental problems hence they should be closed down. However, it is the general lack of planning and inclusion of the informal sector in the city's development plan which causes environmental problems. For example, if the city had included urban informality in their interventions, they could have planned to availing preventive measures in the informal sector so that they can operate alongside their formal counterparts. The blanket closure of all the informal activities was a gross violation of the people in the informal sector's right to the city. The city was supposed to allow some outlets in the informal sector especially those in food sector to operate under the same condition as those given to their counter parts in the formal sector. This will have shown that the city has included urban informality in their interventions. One of the representatives of people in urban informality commended that the city of Masvingo is not willing to develop the city with urban informality because they have not integrated it in their development despite visible evidence of the great role urban informality is playing in driving the city's economy. He said:

> *[…]. this city is anti-development [...] the informal sector has been closed down for more than six months now. How many lives have been affected because of lack of livelihoods [...] urban informality is the major space user in the city and they are closing it [...] where are they going to get the revenue to run the city [...]*

Similar sentiments were echoed by one of the representatives of the resident forum, who argued that the city is not serious on issues of urban informality because they have not been taking these activities as real economic activities. He said the city has not taken any concern on the effects of closure of urban informality. He argued that the city is not including urban informality in their development. He said;

> *[...] the city is applying a piecemeal approach to urban informality, because there is no clear direction from the city on how urban informality should development in the city. Up to now the city has no policy on urban informality [...] they are still using colonial pieces of legislation that prohibits operations of informal activities […]*

Similar views were delivered by one of the practitioners in one of the informal markets who said:

> *[...] this council does not realise that urban informality provide livelihoods to many people [...] how can we find our market closed and explanation was given as to why it is still closed? This sector is no longer for women and the aged but is providing livelihoods to many people in the city and it has proven to be a viable economic activity.*

The popular informal market in the city, the Chitima Market, which is the biggest market for informal activities in Masvingo city is a no go area for the all informal traders despite housing different informal activities, which include those selling food, clothing, and farm produce. This market was forcibly closed by heavily armed riot police as a compliant measure to prevent spread of COVID-19. The market has been closed for more than six months now. Even when the country then moved from level five to currently level two of lock-down which allowed more businesses in the formal to be opened, those in the informal sector remained closed. Figure 2 below shows some of the empty informal shells as a result of closedown. All these places were providing livelihoods to thousands of people in the city but they have remained closed.

Figure 2 Empty shells after the closure of all informal activities in the city of Masvingo

4.3 The Deregistration and Restructuring of Urban Informality

The city after closing all informal activities went on to cancel all their leases and started renovation these places in preparation for reopening after the assessing the COVID-19 situation. However, the proposed renovations are much to the disgust of many people in the informal sector and are more likely to spread the deadly disease than to prevent it. They have reduced the vending shells size from 4m^2 2m^2 in an apparent move to accommodate more vendors. The reduction of shed sizes will defeat the purpose of the whole programme of preventing the spread of COVID-19 as it is going to double the number of people that are going to use the same space, which make it difficult to practice social distancing. The WHO regulations advocate for avoiding crowded places and maintaining social distancing but the new designs are going to increase the concentration of people at these centers and this is likely to elevate the risk of spreading COVID-19 among informal vendors. Of great concern in the whole process is the fact that the whole programme was done unilaterally without consulting the informal sector hence the designs do not meet their expectation as the spaces are too small for any meaningful business. The people in the informal sector are therefore just forced to consume what the city is producing. The people in the informal sector were arguing that the renovations were a noble idea, but to create another vending shed which are even smaller than the original ones would rather underestimate the urban informality. They were asking why the city is still producing these vending sheds which do not give any security to their goods. They were preferring designs that were done in the City of Harare where informal activities are housed in a building which gives security to their goods. One of the operators stated:

> *[…] we have done a lot in this city in terms of the economy of this city [...] we deserve better treatment than these sheds […] we are the business people in this city [...] we have built very good houses out of this informal business […] we have bought very good cars but to build us these sheds is a mockery to urban informality [...] we need permanent structures. If they cannot afford it, they must allow us to build our own permanent structures.”*

Such unilateral decisions show lack inclusivity in the city because the city has not consulted the informal sector on the new developments. The city was supposed to engage people in the informal sector to come up with the most appropriate designs for their shells. Asked why they were reducing these vending shed, the city authorities just said these are the new standards that they were implementing in the city. However, the city could not specify where these new standards were adopted from, which means they were just thump sucked and implemented. Such unilateral and top-down decisions making approaches do not reflect the inclusivity of the city because it is not including the expectations of the people in the informal sector. There are also a lot of corruption allegations that are being leveled against the city authorities as it is argued that the move to reduce the shed sizes was meant to add their own clients who are said to have paid them some money.

The city of Masvingo is therefore failing to plan for informal sector in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, they have rather taken the opportunity presented by the lock-down to change the outlook of informal activities in the city. The eradication of informal sheds was reminiscent of the clean-up campaign during Operation Murambasvina / Operation Restore Order of 2005, which brought a lot of suffering to the people. A lot of people are without livelihoods because of the lockdown and closure of activities of urban informality. The city of Masvingo is planning urban informality without them and this is a recipe for disaster as already shown by construction of sheds that do not meet the expectations of people in the informal sector. The informal sector deserves better treatment and engagement in the city especially taking into consideration that it is a source of livelihoods for so many people in the city. The city therefore needs to embrace urban informality and plan with them for sustainable and inclusive city. In this way the people in the informal sector can positively participate in the economy of the city. The city should rather create platforms for engagement, and structures that will see the inclusion of informal sector in the development of the city. The situation obtaining in the city of Masvingo where city fathers make decision on urban informality without consulting them therefore shows that urban informality is not included in the running of the city. It also shows that the city has not fully embraced urban informality in its development process. This is also reinforced by the fact that despite the presence of national policy on informality, the city does not have a policy on urban informality, not even a desk has been created in the city council to deal with issues of urban informality. Some cities like Harare have a special committee on Small and Medium Enterprises, where issues on urban informality are addressed for the development of the city (Chigwenya & Dube, 2018). Such initiatives show that urban informality is included in the development of the city. The inclusion of urban informality is a good recipe for sustainable and inclusive city. The prevailing situation in the city of Masvingo where the city makes decisions on behalf of urban informality does not auger well with inclusive city. One of the leaders of the civic organisations remarked:

> *[...] we are treated as pressure groups in this city, hence the city does not listen to our issues, we are not given our space to contribute to the economy of the city […] but we form the most crucial part of city's economy right now.'*

4.4 Urban Informality and Water Provision in Masvingo City

The exclusion of people in the in formal sector in the COVID-19 responses is also glaring evident in the provision of services that are essential in the prevention of spread of COVID-19 such as water and hand sanitizers. The WHO guidelines on managing the COVID-19 pandemic require the maintenance of hygiene through regular washing of hands using alcohol based rub. This therefore calls for regular supply of water and sanitizers in the city. The city is providing hand washing facilities at all public spaces such as clinics, civic centre and water collection points and they have also taken measures to improve their water supply system in the city. Before the outbreak of Covid-19 water was rationed and areas received water two days per week, but during the COVID-19 outbreak it was improved as areas were receiving water on a daily basis. Water supply service however is not available in spaces occupied by urban informality. They rely on open wells and community boreholes for their water. Most of the boreholes are not located in areas occupied by urban informality. Some people are walking close to five kilometers to the nearest water point while others were resorting to bringing their water supplies from their homes and others rely on shallow open wells. This exposes people in informal sector to elevated risks of contracting COVID-19 disease. The informal sector is therefore more vulnerable and more susceptible to contracting COVID-19 disease than the rest of city inhabitants where there is improved water supply. In some areas like the light industrial areas, which have been turned into innovation hub for people in the

informal sector, water supplies were discontinued long back and these people are relying on community boreholes and unprotected wells. The tendency to prefer the formal sector at the expense of informal is a disenfranchisement of people in the informal sector's right to receive city services and it exposes them to contraction of COVID-19 disease. This is not sustainable, unjust and shows the exclusionary urban policies. Water is very important in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic as people are required to regularly wash their hands and exercise good hygiene. Figure 3 below shows one of the open well used as water points used by some people in the informal sector.

Figure 3 One of the shallow open wells used as water point by people in the informal sector

At these unprotected water sources there were no provisions for sanitizers and hand washing facilities like boreholes in the formal sector. Also at these open wells people hardly exercise social distancing because of overcrowding. This therefore exposes urban informality at high risk of contracting COVID-19. However, people in the informal sector know that the city authorities have the capacity to provide water to them but they are only unwilling to do so because at one time when the city's pumping system broke down, the city pulled its resources to supply water point throughout the city. One of the respondents asked and claimed:

"*[....] if the city could supply water to the whole city using water bowsers, how come they are failing to put just one water bowser at our Chitima market and people can access water during this Covid-19 period?*"

Lack of water in areas occupied by urban informality is not good for a just and inclusive city. City authorities should create living standards that exhibit equal living standards for both the formal and informal sectors for inclusive city. This should result in social inclusion, where even the vulnerable groups of the city are offered the same opportunities to access city services (Feitosa et al., 2011; Waterhout et al., 2013). Asked why they were not receiving services that will help to prevent the spread of COVID-19 disease, one of the respondents lamented:

[...] the city does not regard us as citizens of this city [...] we are living as an island in the city because we are disconnected from the whole city. There is nothing that shows that we are part of city […]

This shows that people in the informal sector are not connected to the on goings of the city. There are no services from the city means that they urban informality is excluded from the provisions of the city. Right to the city, according to Lefebvre (1968, 1996), allows all city inhabitants to receive services that will allow them to enjoy urban life. Issues of water provisioning and the provision of sanitizers at public spaces should also be extended to the people in the informal sector so that they can enjoy urban life the same as their counterparts in the formal sector. City services need to reach spaces occupied by urban informality in an inclusive city, this will also lead to just and sustainable city.

■**5.0 DISCUSSION**

The COVID-19 interventions in the city of Masvingo show that there is a marginalisation of urban informality as most of the interventions do not include them. This is prevailing despite the fact that the urban informality is contributing approximately 80% to employment creation in cities of the Global South (Debrah, 20007) and 45% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in sub-Saharan Africa (Kamete, 2013). In Zimbabwe, some scholars are arguing that urban informality is contributing more than 60% of GDP (Magure, 2015). This therefore shows the huge contribution urban informality can play in city economy hence the need to include it in development. The exclusion of urban informality is a denial of their right to the city, because as city inhabitants, urban informality has the right to participate in the development of the city and received services from the city. The situation obtaining in the city of Masvingo where urban informality is not consulted on issues that affect them is therefore a denial of their right to develop a city according to the desire of their heart (Harvey 2008, 2012). There is also glaring bias towards the formal sector in the interventions to stop the spread of COVID-19. All efforts are

directed towards the formal sector while urban informality is marginalised. This marginalisation does not auger well with principles of right to the city, which calls for all city inhabitants to have access to city services (Lefebvre, 1968, 1996). The informal sector in the city of Masvingo is not given the chance to operate alongside their formal sector counter parts as the formal sector was the only one allowed to operate during outbreak of COVID-19 outbreak. The importance of the informal sector in the economy of city of Masvingo is very significant because they are occupying between 80-90% of city space (Chigwenya, 2020), which shows that urban informality is a critical player in the economy of the city, which therefore warrants it inclusion in the development of the city. The city authorities also agree on the huge contribution of the informal sector can play in the city, but there is very little evidence of engagement of the informal sector in the development of the city. For example, the city has been excluding urban informality in their planning and this resulted in development improper vending shells that fall way below the expectations of urban informality. This exclusion is a disenfranchisement of the people in the informal sector's right to the city because as city inhabitants of urban informality, they have equal right to shape a city according to the desires of their hearts (Harvey, 2008, 2012; Lefebvre, 1996).

The urbanisation of poverty in many cities has resulted in growth of livelihoods of the poor in cities (Huchzermeyer, 2011; Roy, 2005, 2009). It is therefore no longer possible to develop cities without urban informality because informality has grown to be a permanent feature of urban areas (Aliyev, 2015; Huchzermeyer, 2011). This therefore calls for integration of informal activities in all city development efforts. As a result, all COVID-19 interventions in the city of Masvingo were supposed to reflect and incorporate urban informality for an inclusive city. According to Roy (2005, 2009), urban poverty and urban informality are realities in many cities, hence cities need to plan their development interventions with that in mind. Failure to recognise urban informality especially in cities of the Global South is a denial of realities in these cities (Huchzermeyer, 2011). The situation obtaining in the city of Masvingo where the city is planning for urban informality without people in the informal sector is a disenfranchisement of their right. Lefebvre (1968, 1996) argued that all city inhabitants have the right to contribute to the development of the city because a city is a collective artwork of all citizens, hence all citizens should be allowed to participate in the development of the city. Roy (2005, 2009) calls for new urban planning theory that recognises the prevalence of urban poverty and plan to eliminate it by promoting the growth and development of livelihoods of the poor such as activities of urban informality. Cities that have integrated urban informality in their development have been able to create over 90% of the new jobs (ILO 2000, Jackson 2012). The inclusion of the informal sector in the development of the city does not only give the people in the informal sector a livelihood but it creates sustainable cities because of their inclusivity (UN-Habitat, 2005, 2010a, 2010b). Planning for sustainable cities calls for development initiatives that improve the conditions of the poor.

Cities of the 21st Century should realise that there is great diversity in cities, as a result, they should move away from traditional planning systems that are elitist and only provide for just a few privileged groups of the city. Planning in the 21st century demands a paradigm shift to adopt inclusive planning approaches that seek to include the diverse range of urban societies (Fainstein, 2005; Jackson 2012; UN-Habitat, 2005, 2010a, 2010b). The situation obtaining in the city of Masvingo where COVID-19 interventions are only targeted to the affluent groups of the city does not auger well with inclusive and sustainable city. The urban informality is increasingly being part of the urban society so their activities need to be included in the development agenda of the city so as to create sustainable and inclusive cities. So the exclusion of the informal sector in opening their business alongside their formal counter parts does not auger well with inclusive city. Jackson (2012) further argues that inclusive city planning serves all the urban communities including the disadvantaged groups of the city. The COVID-19 responses offered by the city of Masvingo, which marginalise the people in the informal sector therefore does not auger well with the dictates of a sustainable and inclusive city. It rather disenfranchises them of their rights to participate in the development of the city and receive city services (Harvey, 2003, 2008, 2012; Lefebvre, 1996). UN-Habitat (2005) further argues that the planning imperative of the 21st century is to address the vulnerability of all citizens with special attention being given to the urban poor so that all the citizens are treated the same. Therefore, the exclusion of urban informality in the provisions of services that prevent the spread of Covid-19 militates against sustainable and inclusive city. Cities in the Global South have failed to include spaces occupied by urban informality in their services delivery and as a result urban informality is always living in very hazardous environments (Brown, 2001). If cities embrace urban informality, they can allow them to shape cities according to the desires of their heart (Harvey, 2003, 2008, 2012). Their inclusion will also create sustainable and inclusive cities (Fainstein, 2005; Simone, 2005; UN-Habitat, 2005).

The city of Masvingo is making some unilateral decision which affect people in the informal sector without engaging them and this has resulted in provision of structures that do not meet their expectations. Urban informality should be taken as part of the city and hence they should exercise their right to participate in the development of the city (Harvey, 2003, 2008; Lefebvre, 1996). Fainstein (2005) argued that contemporary cities are very diverse and in this diversity, cities should be in position to provide for this diversity. The diversity of urban population should be allowed to enjoy their right to the city; however, spaces occupied by informal sector in the city of Masvingo is treated as territories outside the city boundaries because city services are not reaching them. This is not sustainable and a denial of their right to the city (Devas, 2001; Harvey, 2008, 2012; Huchzermeyer, 2011; Ramanathan, 2006). Urban informality has grown in its contribution to economies of cities, because of its role in creation of employment and giving livelihoods to urban people (Aliyev, 2015; Debrah, 2007; Devey et al., 2006; Gunsilius et al., 2011; Jackson, 2012; Potts, 2008). It is therefore no longer possible to plan cities without the informal sector (Huchzermeyer, 2011; Roy, 2005, 2009). So the exclusion of urban informality, which is happening in the city of Masvingo is an underestimation of the role that can be played by informality. If the city was conscious of this role they would have included it in its development programmes for the benefit of the city. Failure to plan for the informal sector is a failure by the city to recognise the contribution of the informal sector to city economy. In some cities where urban informality has been included it is generating an upwards of 90% of new jobs (Jackson, 2012). Exclusion is also a failure to recognise city diversity and provide for it (Fainstein, 2005; UN-Habitat, 2005). Cities of today are no longer homogeneous societies but have become too diverse due to urbanisation of poverty, which has made livelihoods of the poor a permanent feature of cities. Cities therefore need to plan for livelihoods of the poor such as activities of urban informality. The urban diversity requires a paradigm shift in terms of moving away from traditional planning system that only looks at physical planning by adopting more pragmatic planning that caters for the multiple realities and characterise contemporary cities (UN-Habitat, 2005, 2010a, 2010b). Therefore, the city of Masvingo in its response to the outbreak of COVID-19 should not show bias towards the formal sector but include all city inhabitants. The diversity of modern cities has deconstructed the notion of universal citizenship because they have become so diverse communities characterised by different ethnic groups, race, gender, races and social lives and all should be provided for (Fainstein, 2005; Sandercock, 1998). This diversity needs to be celebrated rather than oppressed

in cities of the 21st century for sustainable and inclusive city. This, therefore, calls for a planning approach that incorporates this diversity so that the needs of the different people in the city are recognised and facilitated (Roy, 2009; Simone, 2005; Watson, 2002).

Most cities that do not include the informal sector in their development are usually directed by neo-liberal urbanisation policies which do not recognise the existence of urban poor as they insist on achieving world class cities, city order and place making. These urbanisation policies are exclusionary as they do not cater for the urban poor who in most cities are the majority (Huchzermeyer, 2011; Rogerson, 2018). Masvingo City has been insisting on city order and cleanliness, in an attempt to drive towards world class city, and in that drive they have been insisting on destroying urban filth by eradicating activities of urban informality. These neo-liberal urbanisation policies have been responsible for marginalisation and exclusion of urban informality. However, in most cities of the Global South, the informal sector has been driving economies and is giving livelihoods to millions of people (Rogerson, 2018). It therefore calls for their inclusion in the city's development interventions. The informal sector is part of the urban population hence constitute the urban diversity, and according to Lefebvre (1968, 1996), have to be included in urban development. Likewise, all the interventions to stop the spread of COVID-19 in the city of Masvingo should also be enjoyed by all people including those in the informal sector. In contemporary cities urban life is not expressed in singular or homogenised way but in its diversity (Lefebvre, 1996; Simone, 2005). The informal sector as part of urban diversity, therefore should not be recomposed into some universal characteristics but should be allowed to enjoy their different aspirations (Kamete, 2017; Simone, 2005). Simone (2005) further argues that cities of today need to be developed into conduits of realizing people's aspirations in their different ways. Right to the city, therefore, according to Simone (2005), means that city inhabitants are allowed to use cities as arenas for realizing different and mutable aspirations in varying degree. The city of Masvingo, therefore, needs to embrace urban informality as a way of urbanisation because informality is a reality in urban areas and they need to be served by the city (Gunsilius et al., 2011; ILO, 2000; Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987; Roy, 2005, 2009). Therefore, all efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the city of Masvingo should be inclusive to allow people in the informal sector to benefit. Failure to plan for the informal sector is, therefore, failure to give these people their right to the city particularly their right to enjoy the services offered by the city authority and also realise their individual aspirations (Harvey, 2003, 2008, 2012; Simone, 2005).

■6.0 CONCLUSION

The outbreak of COVID-19 disease has caught governments and local authorities unaware and has called for a lot of interventions so as to curb the spread of the disease. The city of Masvingo has also taken a lot of initiatives to stop the spread of the disease. These interventions include social distancing at all public places, scaling down of operation so as to reduce the number people at each working station, regular washing of hands with alcohol-based hand rub and sanitization of surfaces. All these interventions were aimed at reducing the spread of COVID-19 disease in the city. These interventions were as per guidelines provided by the World Health Organization (WHO), however, in the city of Masvingo there is a clear difference of application if these interventions between the formal and informal sector. The city has shown strong bias towards the formal than the informal because most of the interventions have benefited the formal more than the informal. Shops in the formal sector were allowed to operate while all vending shells for informal activities were closed, these closures were done despite the fact that the informal sector was prepared to implement the operating guidelines as provided by WHO. Even the distribution of sanitizers in public places was mainly focused in the formal sector while the informal sector was neglected. Places such as water collection points and spaces occupied by informal sector were not included. At open wells there were no sanitization materials and people could hardly exercise social distancing. Urban informality is therefore sidelined in the application of interventions to stop the spread of COVID-19 which shows exclusionary urban policies. As a result, urban informality has been denied their right to the city of Masvingo. Water, which plays a very critical role in preventing the spread of COVID-19, is not provided in spaces occupied by urban informality while in areas occupied by formal sector it has been supplied daily. This also shows the exclusionary policies of the city of Masvingo because service delivery has been selectively delivered. The people in the informal sector travel long distances to the nearest communal borehole and some used unprotected and open wells, which again raises their risks of contracting COVID-19 and other diseases. The exclusion of urban informality in the interventions to stop the spread of COVID-19 is therefore a denial of these people's right to the city and is also reflective of exclusionary urbanisation processes. Contemporary cities should show inclusion of all city inhabitants in their development interventions so that they are just and inclusive cities. The COVID-19 responses therefore were not inclusive as they were leaving out some social groups and as a result pose serious questions on the sustainability and inclusivity of the city.

The study has been done in the first outbreak of COVID-19, which therefore call for further studies to find out the operations of urban informality in the post COVID-19 period to see how planning in cities is implemented for urban informality during the COVID-19 pandemic. In essence, the COVID-19 pandemic has decimated urban informality, which therefore calls for further studies to find how urban informality is doing in the post COVID-19 era.

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