

## **PROTRACTED STRUGGLES FOR BASIC SOCIAL SERVICES AND AMENITIES IN ZIMBABWE'S INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Many cities in developing countries are experiencing an influx of poor immigrants in search of better livelihood. This population boom and poor housing policies exacerbated the proliferation of informal settlements. This paper critically explores the protracted struggles for basic services and amenities in Zimbabwe's urban areas and particularly in informal settlements. It has been noted that most if not all informal settlements in Zimbabwe are excluded and overlooked in provision of basic services and amenities such as clean piped water, sanitation, electricity and healthcare services. This paper argues that engaging in a multiplicity of struggles for basic services is a manifestation of the service delivery crisis prevalent in Zimbabwe's urban areas. It emerged that with these protracted struggles the urban poor are able to influence the local authorities to at least recognise their needs for basic services and amenities as evidenced by the slum upgrading as well as the sites and services schemes. Thus, in this paper squatters are not portrayed as helpless and passive victims but rather as rational and innovative actors who can manoeuvre their way out of exclusion from basic services. Giddens Structuration thesis was utilised as the major theoretical insight into the analysis of these coping strategies. This study employed qualitative methodology using un-structured interviews, Observations and FGDs as main data collection techniques.

**KEYWORDS:** Informal Settlements, Basic services, Housing crisis, Exclusion, Service delivery struggles

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This treatise focuses on the basic social services and amenities related struggles in urban informal settlements with particular attention being paid to the Zimbabwean context. It is argued in this paper that informal settlements are perpetually overlooked in the provision of basic social services and amenities in most if not all urban areas in Zimbabwe and many other countries. Of note however is the fact that people in such informal settlements have not been passive victims of such exclusion from these basic services and amenities. They have responded by engaging in protracted struggles of many kinds to gain access to these services and amenities. Many developing countries are confronted by the perpetual challenge of informal settlements. Informal settlements have a long history in Zimbabwe dating back to the colonial era. Rapid urbanization resulting from the ever-increasing rural to urban drift has far outstripped the existing housing supply hence creating a housing crises which provided fertile ground for the mushrooming of informal settlements in many urban areas. In Zimbabwe it has been noted that there is a backlog of over one million housing units, against the current urban population estimated to be increasing at the rate of between 6 to 7 percent every year (Herald, October 29, 2009). Worststill, inappropriate housing policies, and economic difficulties confronting the country have both exacerbated the housing crisis in most urban centres in the country. Paradoxically, many governments, Zimbabwe included, have dealt with problems of informal settlements and urban poverty by taking steps to remove the poor from the city or chronically excluding them from accessing basic social services and amenities(see Gukurume,2011;Mangizvo & Kapungu,2010;Tibaijuka,2005). This has been done through a multiplicity of anti-urbanization policies and eviction drives which push the urban poor out of their informal settlements, through demolishing their makeshift houses and sending them back to the rural areas or at least out of the city into poorly planned relocations. However, these sometimes brutal policies have marginally succeeded in curtailing the spread of or halting the problems faced in informal settlements. Thus, the only tangible effect of these policies has been deepening service delivery struggles, increasing poverty and prolonged suffering for the urban poor, whose right to basic social services and amenities is perpetually violated. Gukurume (2011) argued that the service delivery struggles in Zimbabwe are a clear manifestation of marked inequalities in urban social service

delivery system. These inequalities closely mirrors or rather portray remnants of the colonial legacy which was epitomized by racially discriminatory service delivery policies. Since 2004, there has been a significant proliferation of service delivery struggles in most urban centres of the country. It is against such a backdrop that this paper argues that social service delivery in Zimbabwe is a fiercely contested terrain. It is thus worthwhile noting that the relationship between people living in informal settlements who are popularly labelled as squatters and the city council has been that of perpetual antagonism. In Zimbabwe, most informal settlements were and/or are the epicenter of the worst communicable diseases like the cholera epidemic, diarrhea and of late typhoid.

In the midst of the country's economic and political quagmire the government unleashed the Operation Murambatsvina which further exacerbated the proliferation of informal settlements and heightened the struggles for basic amenities. The UN-HABITAT (2005) estimated that Operation Murambatsvina (Restore Order) left more than 1, 5 million people homeless in Zimbabwe. This Operation was meant to get rid of informal structures that had sprouted around urban areas. Over the past few years informal settlements have however continued to resurface and grow in terms of population and size. Despite this growth, there has never been a proportional improvement in the provision of basic social services and infrastructural amenities. The provision of infrastructural services such as water supply, proper sanitation, electricity and waste disposal, are among the areas of great concern in human settlements. Consequently, the quest of this paper is to explore the various struggles for the accessibility of such basic social services and amenities. The coping strategies and mechanisms that informal settlement dwellers employ in negotiating for these basic social services and amenities are also explored in this paper. The UN Commission on Sustainable Development(UN-CSD,(1996) describes informal settlements as residential areas where a group of housing units has been constructed on land in which the occupants have no legal claim, or which they occupy illegally and/or unplanned settlements and areas where housing is not in compliance with current planning and building regulations. Both definitions provided seem to be informed by the tenure status of the settlements. This paper adopts the UN-CSD definition of informal settlements as its operational

definition for analysis. In this paper the term informal settlers is used interchangeably with squatters.

In many Commonwealth countries, town planning was initiated by the colonial government, which also created embryonic planning departments. Gukurume (2011) noted that the Rhodesian urban planning blueprints have continued to be followed for many years after independence in Zimbabwe and other former British colonies. These adopted colonial standards have rarely been revised and yet they prohibit affordable housing, hence the perpetual existence of informal settlements as a means of survival by the urban poor. Moreso, these inherited colonial standards are often so high and demanding that it is almost impossible for urban authorities to condone the existence of informal settlements in urban areas, let alone providing basic services and amenities to them. Thus, in such a case informal settlements are regarded illegal and undeserved in terms of infrastructural development and access to basic amenities. Since their construction is viewed as informal and unguided by urban planning by-laws, there is a near total absence of basic amenities necessary in all human settlements. This mismatch between the old colonial standards and the urban poor's lower levels of affordability, all lead to unsustainable urban development and growing exclusion, compounding the proliferation struggles over social services and amenities. It should be underscored that such constraining standards have been perpetually reproduced over time to exclude the poor from accessing basic social services and amenities, especially dwellers of informal settlements. It is a paradox that whilst there has been a growing body of literature pertaining to informal settlements, certainly not enough has been done in studying the emergent trends of social service struggles pitting residents of informal settlements, the city council and official residential areas. Notwithstanding the fact that these settlements lack basic amenities and services, little if any research has focused on the coping strategies devised to deal with the challenges that come with lack of these services and amenities. Most studies of informal settlements tend to portray people living in these settlements as passive victims thereby undermining the agency of these people and by extension the various coping strategies manifesting in various struggles they engage in to access basic amenities and services. Whilst most studies in this subject tended to take Structural Adjustment Policies as the thrust of their understanding and analysis of informal settlements as highlighted by the studies of (Davies,

1993; Mashora 2003). This paper however departs from this by considering a plethora of forces that include the Operation Murambatsvina (Restore Order), declining economic performance and skyrocketing inflation as the thrust informing the service delivery struggles in most urban areas in the country. Moreover, the common trend observed from several authors has been one of lumping Informal settlement dwellers into one homogeneous category of the urban poor (Patel 1989; Huchzermeyer, 2006; Chinyenze, 1999; Mhlanga et al, 1988). The author however contends that this does not do justice to the sheer complexity and heterogeneity that characterizes Informal settlement dwellers. Roberts (1995) noted that not everyone living in informal settlements is poor and not all poor people live in informal settlements, as other authors like Huchzermeyer (2006) largely portray in their studies. The author has noted with great concern the bias that these previous researchers had on the phenomenon of Informal settlements and thus this paper sought to demystify these misconceptions that previous studies had on informal settlements and the people residing in these settlements. Most authorities resort to demolition of Informal settlements rather than addressing the underlying causes of the problem. Davies (1993) notes that destroying Informal settlements is like attempting to hide poverty, since housing is a highly visible dimension of poverty. Therefore, by destroying shacks, authorities are trying to hide poverty but in actual fact they end up increasing it as well as intensifying struggles for service delivery in urban areas. Nomdo (2002) argued that some political elites simply want to bulldoze informal settlements out of existence and suppress their struggle for accessing these services, but this treats the symptoms of urban poverty no case. Of note is that the struggles mainly emanate from the misdistribution of basic services as well as chronic exclusion of the urban poor from basic services and amenities. The problem of rapidly growing urban populations has further contributed significantly to the increase in the demand and struggle for basic amenities and services in the country's urban areas. It should be underscored that the service delivery struggles are a direct manifestation of the current service delivery catastrophe that characterise most urban areas in the country. This study was motivated by the fact that squatters are chronically excluded from accessing basic services and amenities and hence they tend to be perpetually seating on a health time bomb. Moreso, the incidences of clashes between residents and the city council in issues pertaining to accessibility and affordability of service delivery has further given impetus

for my carrying out this study to explore the inclusion – exclusion politics surrounding access to basic services and amenities in the country's urban areas.

### **Positioning the urban poor in struggles for basic services and amenities**

It has been observed that many excluded urban poor engage in a multiplicity of struggles for access to basic services and amenities. Most of the urban poor draw on their vulnerability and exclusion to organise collective struggles for basic services and amenities. Thus, their exclusion and marginalisation becomes a rallying point tool that they use to organise and fight for their right to these basic services and amenities. It is of paramount significance to note that the mere construction of informal settlements by the urban poor is in itself a coping strategy to the housing shortages being experienced by the urban poor. Contrary to many writers' views on informal settlements and the people residing thereof that they are passive victims of their vulnerability, it is important to highlight that squatters rationally and strategically position themselves in a way that enables them to access basic services. This showed that, while the urban poor may be victims of poverty and vulnerability, they are also actors who devise strategies that enable them to transcend the various predicaments that confront them such as exclusion from accessing basic amenities. Despite the fact that most informal settlements have no access to clean piped water, proper sanitation and healthcare services, these people devised strategies that enable them to access these services. It was discovered that self-help projects enabled residents to engage in progressive mobilisation of resources. The squatters employed a collective response to their problems and this collaboration went a long way in ameliorating such problems. These struggles for basic amenities should be considered as a manifestation of coping strategies developed by groups marginalised from the urban growth process under extremely adverse conditions. This is consistent with Mashora (2003) who portrayed the urban poor as havens of creativity. In spite of their scant income levels and an almost non-existent capacity to save, informal settlers are compelled to engage in negotiations with various stakeholders in order for them to access the basic services and amenities such as clean piped water. The lack of basic health amenities and services that resulted from regressive forms of distribution of basic social capital investments

completed the picture of marginalization that imposed pragmatic coping strategies as the only visible alternative of survival for the informal settlers. What is more is that squatters combine their capabilities, skills and knowledge with the limited resources at their disposal to create activities that enabled them to achieve the best possible livelihood for themselves. Contrary to the conclusions made by Huchzermeyer (2006) and Hardoy (1989) that squatter settlers are helpless second class citizens, findings imbued in this paper espoused agentic activities which enabled them to cope with absence of basic services and amenities. In one instance, Thomas and Mbuya Musvava who were interviewed noted that they would be denied access to water and had to fetch water at the middle of the night when the people were asleep. They noted that this was the only way they could access clean piped water from the tapes. In the FGDs conducted, many respondents noted that they would join certain organisations like churches as a strategy to access basic amenities and services. To this end, Gutkin (2004) noted that the urban poor are not just victims, but also rational actors who can manoeuvre through constraining structures by engaging in protracted struggles with the city councils to provide basic services and amenities in their settlements. In fact, the informal settlements demonstrate how the urban poor fight for survival and recognition, how they strategise, how they struggle for services and amenities and how they create their own opportunities and transform their environment for livelihood. This view is also shared by Chinyenze (1999) who noted that informal settlers portray loads of innovativeness in pursuing basic social services such as clean piped water. In this vein, one can thus note that despite their deprivation and exclusion in accessing basic services and amenities, the informal settlers devised strategies that helped them cope with such exclusion. The development of the site and services scheme in most urban areas is evidence of how the urban poor struggle for accessing basic services and amenities. In Zimbabwe places like Epworth and Hatcliffe used to be informal settlements but due to protracted struggles with the city councils they have successfully lobbied for access to basic services and amenities and are now formal residential areas. Moreso, these struggles have also led to a paradigm shift in how the city council relate to urban squatters as well as the policies they take to deal with the problem of informal settlements. This shows that squatters are not only “*structured structures*” who are passive victims of the city building by – laws and policies such as the Vagrants Act but are also “*structuring structures*” who through various struggles compel policy changes towards dealing with informal settlements

and service delivery. Such protracted struggles portray the rational ingenuity of squatters in the struggle for basic services and amenities in the country.

### **Social identity, labelling and Otherizing: Their effects in accessing amenities**

In this paper, it is strongly argued that identity played a prominent role in as far as negotiating access to basic amenities and services is concerned. Moreso, from the narratives given by respondents it was clear that identity was used as a tool for exclusion and inclusion in service delivery accessibility and delivery. Several participants noted that they were labelled as “masquatters” and whenever people are fetching water ‘squatters’ would be chased away. From the way they narrated it looked as if neighbours would always be on the look out for informal settlers at their water taps. Conburn (2001) noted that identity covers the whole gamut of social exclusion and social inclusion in accessing basic amenities. A number of the respondents expressed concern that even the local municipal authorities were also using the identity labels to justify their discrimination of them in service delivery. Of note is the fact that due to these labels informal settlers could not be allowed to fetch water, instead they had to fetch water at night whilst people were asleep to avoid being chased away, stigmatised and at worst assaulted. Furthermore, they were even ‘banned’ from using public toilets during the nationwide cholera outbreak as they were perceived as part of the uncleanness that caused and exacerbated the spread of the disease. This equates to Conburn’s (2001) argument that identity plays a significant role in accessing resources and opportunities in society, and in this case, identity became a mechanism for discrimination that foiled any hopes of accessing vital amenities. Identity was also critical for mobilisation in the ensuing urban struggles for basic services and amenities. This identity became a resource that squatter residents agitating for service delivery drew on in airing the grievances to the city council and other stakeholders.

Ideologically, the informal settlers were viewed in the light of negative social perceptions as criminal, violent, eyesores and irrelevant to development and at worst as a threat to urban planning and policy. This negative stereotyping was socially and economically disempowering and ultimately degenerated into a self-fulfilling prophecy. In some instances informal settlers had to recreate their foiled identities to remedy the many problems that came with their residing in an



informal settlement. Tinashe's case portrays one such strategy where, for him to access health amenities, he had to join the Scripture Union and other church organisations. This was a strategy which most young informal settlers used to access health amenities and services as well as other related benefits. It is thus against this background that social identity played a crucial part in determining the chances of an individual informal settler in accessing amenities. Gukurume (2011) noted that foiled identities, like that of squatters, resulted in entitlement failure and forestalled capabilities. However, it should be noted that despite this discrimination and marginalisation, squatters devised strategies to agitate for access to basic services and amenities.

### **Community Cohesion and Collaborative Struggles for basic Amenities and Services**

Community cohesion in this paper refers to the aspect of togetherness and bonding exhibited by members the informal settlements, it epitomizes the "social glue" that holds a community together. This includes features such as a sense of common belonging or homogeneity. The various collective strategies salient within the research findings point to the fact that community cohesion/solidarity helped in absorbing shocks that came as a consequence of lack of access to basic amenities and services such as health challenges. This was shown by the pooling of resources by the informal settlers, and how they organised themselves to engage the NGOs and other non state actors to lobby for assistance and recognition. People in informal settlements organised and engaged various actors such as NGOs and the city council in order to access basic services and amenities. This testified that cohesion and collectivity can be a panacea to addressing problems that confronted people living in informal settlements. The findings bear testimony of the redeeming feature of the indomitable urge and ingenuity of the informal settlers themselves to struggle for survival in the midst of exclusion and deprivation. The ability by the informal settlers to (re)create and strategize their own 'structures' which they can manoeuvre through gives credence to Giddens' view that structures are both enabling and constraining and Bourdieu's intuitive, inventive and strategising agents, (Giddens, 1984). Thus, the author argues that although informal settlers survived in a context of vulnerability and exclusion, those very same people had access to certain assets which enabled them to engage in protracted struggles for basic amenities and services. In this paper informal settler's households combined personal energies, personal knowledge and many other resources so as to change the form of resources

into new and more useful forms. It should also be noted that some of the resources mobilised are converted into investments in housing and infrastructural facilities such as water and sanitation.

Due to inadequate toilets, most people living in informal settlements used the bush for defecation as well as the public toilets. All this is tantamount to collective effervescence and group cohesion in dealing with livelihood shocks in the form of inadequate health amenities and services. From the various informal conversations that the researcher carried, the informal settlers noted that if they were guaranteed security of tenure they could collectively construct better facilities for themselves like toilets, wells and makeshift mobile clinics.

In this study social cohesion manifested itself in the several collective activities that the informal settlers employed to cope with their exclusion and deprivation of health amenities and services. For example in Mangwandi and Ma R, saving schemes and money go rounds were clear evidence of community cohesion. Trust was the central component of social solidarity and the cement used to produce cohesion within the social networks that composed the structure of the society. This supports Huchzermeyer (2004).argument that the community as a whole benefit by the co-operation of all its parts, while individuals will find in their associations the advantages of help, sympathy and the fellowship of their neighbours as evidenced by Lovenes's networks in e which assisted her getting water and employment opportunities, the same with Mbuya Musvava whose networks also enabled her to access healthcare services and other amenities.

### **Contestations and Negotiations in accessing basic services and amenities**

Social capital entails the quality and quantity of associational life and the elated social norms (Narayan & Pritchett, 1999). The concept connotes complex sets of relationships between members of social systems at all scales, from interpersonal to international. From the research findings, informal networks formed an important part of associational life in most informal settlements. This gives credence to Tostensden et al's (2001) argument that social capital determines one's ability to organise and lobby for improved service delivery. In informal settlements social networks are a living reality and a crucial element in the coping strategies of the informal settlers. Informal settlers exploited their existing networks, not only for resource mobilisation but also for survival and accessing basic amenities and services. Thus, in this case,

the author contends that social networks constituted a ‘productive resource’ to the dwellers of the informal settlements. This is clearly illustrated by VaMlambo’s case who established links with various stakeholders as a strategy to access healthcare services. Tostensden et al (2001) noted that being embedded in webs of social relationships, people gain access to niches of the urban life and help in finding places to live as was the case with Tinashe’s narrative.

It is significant to note that social capital reduced the vulnerability of informal settlers and helped them recover from livelihood shocks such as lack of health amenities and services. The author thus argues that it is precisely the *ad hoc* nature of social networks that helped maintain flexibility and widen the range of coping strategies and options available to informal settlers in such circumstances. The research findings also point to the fact that social networks enabled informal settlers to be dynamic and highly adaptive in the face of livelihood threats like deprivation of healthcare services and amenities. This shows that human beings have an inherent potential deriving from strong social networks in the face of adversities. Despite the fact that the informal settlers were enmeshed in a vicious circle of mutually reinforcing traps in which they seemed to have no discernible route to escape, social networks enhanced the ‘ontological security’ of these informal settlers. This argument gives credence to Bourdieu’s notion that social capital is used by people in pursuit of their livelihood objectives. It should however be noted that within these networks, reciprocity was of paramount importance in keeping the relationship going. Ellis (2000) noted that the idea is that the denser and more diverse the networks in a community, the more likely that its citizens will be able to co-operate for mutual benefit. The research also discovered that some people formed perverse networks that promoted criminality and corruption owing to their embeddedness in clientelist political institutions and dysfunctional cultural values. This confirms Barr’s (2004) finding that despite their importance, social networks sometimes foster parochial and redistributive logic that tended to exacerbate the marginalisation of informal settlers. This led to the rise of networks that operated as ‘shadow structures’ of patronage criminality. Bayart & Daloz (2002) support this by noting that social relations are embedded in ‘cultural repertoire’ of clientism, corruption and absence of public morality. This is clearly revealed in the case of council officials who receive bribes from squatters for them to access services and amenities. As Bayart puts it “....the social capital of

Africa appears to display a marked affinity with the spirit of criminality”. The case of criminal gangs as alluded to by VaMlambo testifies Bayart’s conclusions on social networks. Of note is the fact that people from disadvantaged backgrounds were generally dependent on the moral sting of affective loyalties to access basic services and amenities, leading to the emergence of a patronage and clientship relationship. Barr (2004) referred to this as ‘risk-reducing networks’.

In the same vein of social capital, the research findings showed that the informal settlers drew on their social resources in pursuing basic services and amenities .Most participants indicated that they actively engaged themselves in some social networks and enjoyed some degree of connectedness .Relationships of trust and reciprocity such as residents’ associations were evident. It is thus, worthy highlighting that social capital played a significant role in the informal settler’s struggles for access to basic services and amenities. Their involvement in social networks enabled the informal settlers to adjust and adapt to their disenfranchisement in accessing amenities and services. Most informal settlers showed innovativeness and through their astuteness and adaptation managed to cope with their lack of access to basic services and amenities. Thus, in a way this confirms Giddens’ main thesis that far from being docile dependent and helpless, informal settlers are adaptive and competent fellows who can carve their niches even in a debilitating environments. Thus, to this extent, it can be inferred that the presence of social networks and lack thereof played a crucial role in the informal settlers’ capacity to pursue successful accessibility of basic amenities and services. This further confirms Mutangadura’s (2001) claim that social capital enable households to draw support from friends, family, community institutions and informal organisations. It is thus against this background that my research findings corroborated with earlier findings (studies) by Patel (1989) and Huchzermeyer (2004). One striking observation that the author made was that social capital was a crucial resource for the informal settlers in their coping strategies.

Despite the informal settlers being constantly pulled into the orbit of a vicious circle of poverty, exclusion and discrimination, the informal settlers always devised ways of dealing with such adversity. In this pursuit the informal settlers employed a wide array of coping strategies in a bid

to access basic amenities. It is however, paramount to note that there are also limits to the assistance obtained by the informal settlers from or through social networks. As Baylies (2002) noted, social capital denotes “safety nets with holes”. In this paper it is salient that social capital safety nets were uneven in their accessibility to informal settlers, and even when available, they sometimes tended to systematically discriminate against some potential beneficiaries. It is against this scenario that entitlements can be said to vary with one’s place in the network web, with some benefiting more than others. Some were more connected than others as shown by the fact that while others accessed clean water, others were unfortunately being denied access. This forced them to employ other means of accessing clean water, such as going at night to fetch water. To the author this portrays a rational coping strategy of accessing clean water. Of note is the fact that the informal settlers pursuit of basic amenities and services through the use of a plethora of capital assets and capabilities does not occur in a social vacuum, but rather within macro (structural), political, legal and institutional environments that either enable or constrain the informal settlers in their daily routinized activities. Agency is salient in this study as informal settlers’ devised strategies like social networking in an attempt to negotiate for basic services and amenities.

In spite of glaring evidence of individual and community responses, it should be kept in mind that there is a dialectical interplay between the macro and micro dimensions of informal settlers’ coping strategies. Thus, in this paper the structure shaped the nature of coping strategies employed, while simultaneously those very same strategies shaped the structure. Against this backdrop, strategies and struggles of squatters for services and amenities cannot however be conceptualised outside the context of the very structural systems in which it is displayed. In the current milieu informal “squatter colonies” are rendered as heterotopias of deviation and immorality “...sites where behaviour and meaning are deemed deviant in relation to a mean or norm” (Foucault, 1980). My findings however partially contradict this perception of informal settlements and the people who live in them. Instead of lumping informal settlers monolithically as adopting illegal coping mechanisms, it should be noted that not all employed illegal or criminal strategies. Most of the cases portrayed in this paper points to the fact that strategies devised were largely legal. The author does not however seek to dismiss other illegal strategies

that are sometimes used, but rather to neutralise the over-emphasis portrayed by (Hezermeyer, 2004) that informal settlers largely employ illegal and sometimes criminal survival and coping strategies.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is salient from the foregoing treatise that most informal settlements lack access to basic amenities and services; hence residents of these settlements are engaged in long and protracted struggles for accessing these basic services and amenities. Lack of critical healthcare amenities and services was a cause for concern for many squatters and other stakeholders such as human rights pressure groups. It should also be noted that social networks and/or social capital played a prominent role in as far as negotiating access to amenities and services is concerned. Social capital as established by the study was both enabling and constraining in the sense that whilst it enabled people to access basic health services and amenities, it simultaneously promoted corruption and other criminal tendencies. Ontological security was thus achieved by routinising relationships with ‘significant others’ and informal settlers as actors became attached to those relationships. Such relationships also supported the cause of squatters to access basic services and amenities. It was also observed that informal settlers as rational agents made purposive choices in consequentialist terms, weighing alternatives and then directing action toward a set of internally consistent ends collectively. When there was ontological insecurity the people’s energy was collectively consumed in negotiating access to basic amenities. Social identity was also important in accessing services and other amenities. The study also found that community cohesion is of paramount importance in dealing with shocks that confront them such as exclusion from basic services and amenities. Most squatters aligned themselves to strategically positioned people and organisations as a coping strategy, fostering some patron – clientship relationship which made it easy for them to adapt. Social networks enabled squatters to grapple with the grueling and perplexing challenges of lacking basic amenities and services.

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