



# Illegal street vending and national security in Harare, Zimbabwe

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to examine the link between political and socio-economic dynamics of illegal street vending and national security in Zimbabwe using the case of Harare. Scholarship has increasingly focused on the interface between the urban informal economy and politics in Zimbabwe. However, the nexus between illegal street vending and national security emerges as a major gap which this article attempts to fill. Using the human security concept as its framework for analysis and relying on data collected through focus group discussions, observations and interviews with street vendors and different officials as well as content analysis, the article argues that the illegal street vending's negative effects on human security threaten national security. On the whole, the negative effects of illegal street vending that have the potential to prompt national insecurity include lawlessness, environmental pollution and public health hazards as well as, though arguable, providing a ready recruiting ground for violent mass protests which attract the attendant police violence thus generating social unrest. The article concludes that the deterioration of human security conditions due to illegal street vending endangers national security.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 11 March 2019  
Accepted 18 May 2019

## KEYWORDS

Zimbabwe; illegal street vending; negative effects; national security; human security

## 1. Introduction

In this article, we deploy the human security concept to analyze the link between the political and socio-economic dynamics of illegal street vending (ISV) and national security in Zimbabwe using the case of Harare after 1999. By ISV we denote the unlawful selling of goods and services on the streets by informal traders. It is different from legitimate street vending which is a registered activity, and works within a government or local authority planned framework (Jimu 2004, 19). In the Global South, street economies are shaped by various socio-economic, political and cultural dynamics with far-reaching consequences on the spatial regulation and other functions of cities and towns (Hansen, Little, and Lynne Milgram 2013). The growth of opposition political parties and their control of cities in Africa witnessed the link between politics and the urban informal economy

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developing into a significant area of study (Resnick 2014; Muchadenyika and Williams 2016, 2018; Ndawana 2018). As a result, intensely disputed politics is often blamed for the mismanagement of urban informality. Broadly, the informal economy denotes economic activities that are not official as approved by government policy (Wilson 2011, 212). In Zimbabwe, previous studies generally discuss evictions, relocations and daily struggles in the informal economy (Kamete 2006; Potts 2006; Musoni 2010). More recently, scholarship increasingly focused on the interface between the urban informal economy, including ISV and politics in Zimbabwe (Kamete 2010; 2017; Muchadenyika and Williams 2017; Ndawana 2018). Most scholars attribute urban informality, in particular ISV to the struggles to dominate urban areas between the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the Movement for Democratic Change led by Morgan Tsvangirai (MDC-T) since 2000.<sup>1</sup> While the extant works on Zimbabwe provide useful insights on the interface between politics and the urban informal economy, they demonstrate the absence of the nexus between ISV and national security, a gap this study seeks to fill.

It is important to note that while ISV is discussed in this article as a product of political and economic interaction, it can also be seen as the result of historical and cultural processes of socio-spatial complexity (Hansen, Little, and Lynne Milgram 2013, 3). Although at independence in 1980 Zimbabwe's urban informal economy was relatively low at around 10%, it had grown to 20% by 1986 (McPherson 1991, 1). Essentially, the removal of some laws such as the Urban Areas Registration Act of 1946 which had effectively racialised urban areas and the Vagrancy Act of 1960 which regulated the movement of males to urban areas on the basis of employment availability witnessed huge numbers of Africans migrating to urban areas looking forward to better employment opportunities (Patel 1988, 22–23). When these migrants found available opportunities not matching the demand for jobs they were forced to join the informal economy. Among other issues, the Zimbabwean government's adoption of unsustainable policies such as the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme in 1991, the payment of unbudgeted gratuities to war veterans in 1997, involvement by the Zimbabwe Defence Forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo war in 1998 and the fast track land reform programme of the early 2000s severely reduced economic performance plunging the country into serious economic decline from which it is yet to recover.<sup>2</sup> It is also noteworthy that the socio-economic problems faced by Zimbabwe in the late 1990s and the often violent state responses led to the formation of the MDC-T party in 1999 marking the beginning of an intense struggle for political power (Mlambo 2017, 106).<sup>3</sup> The last 18 years witnessed a phenomenal growth of ISV in Zimbabwe's urban centres. In 2015, out of a total of 6, 3 million working people, 5, 9 million (94.5%) were in the informal sector (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency 2015, 82). In 2016, the Harare Central Business District (CBD) alone had about 20 000 street vendors (*Daily news*, November 15, 2016). With the vendors keen to defend their sole source of livelihood, both the government and the Harare City Council (HCC) fruitlessly made efforts to address the ISV challenge by removing the vendors from the streets by force (Kadirire 2017a). Thus apart from politics, the broader macro-economic environment in the country epitomized by widespread unemployment remains at the centre of generating and sustaining ISV.

In its efforts to contribute to our understanding of the intricate linkages between ISV and national security, the research sought to answer the following three key questions:

How has national politics in Zimbabwe impacted on the ISV phenomenon? In what ways using a case study of Harare do the effects of ISV on human security affect national security? What are the possible ways to mitigate the ISV problems in Harare in order to enhance human security and the attendant positive effects on national security? The study argues that ISV's negative effects on human security endanger national security. The negative effects of ISV that have the potential to cause national insecurity include lawlessness, environmental pollution and public health hazards and though arguable, providing a ready recruiting ground for violent mass protests and the attendant police violence that ultimately generates social unrest. The article concludes that the deterioration of human security conditions due to ISV contributes to national insecurity. Thus, the study kindles more debates in the area of state-society interactions in an economically unstable urban environment. Overall, the study's findings are beneficial to both the Zimbabwean government and beyond as well as the academic world because it encourages further discussions concerning the relevance of cautious approaches by governments when dealing with the informal sector. In as much as the informal sector plays an important role in alleviating the plight of poor citizens in times of economic instability, it can also be negative where it contributes to the declining human security conditions which in turn undermine national security.

In terms of its structure, the article provides a conceptual framework that informs this study. While the second section provides the methodology used, the third section articulates the potential of ISV in endangering national security using a case study of Harare. At the end, the study provides a conclusion and recommendations.

## 2. Conceptual framework

The human security concept appears useful in analyzing ISV's negative effects on human security and the related consequences on national security. This is because the effects of the ISV phenomenon and the different security challenges it engenders cut across both the freedom from fear and want strands of human security. Again, ISV is one aspect that has complex effects (both positive and negative) on the survival of both the individual, society (including the business community) and the state at large.

Human security is aimed at revealing new global security challenges and the substance of dealing with persistent threats to human life (Jolly and Ray 2006, 14). It redefined security to include non-state centric security issues including hunger, disease, and repression and hurtful disruptions in normal daily life patterns be it in homes, jobs or communities (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] 1994, 23). Human security has been described as denoting freedom from fear and want. The 'Freedom from Fear' school limits the concept of human security to protecting citizens from violent conflicts which are linked to poverty, lack of state capacity and other forms of inequities. It points out that restricting attention to violence is a realistic and workable strategy towards human security (Bah 2004, 7). On the other hand, the 'Freedom from Want' school advocates for an all-encompassing strategy in accomplishing human security on the economic and social front covering hunger, disease and natural disasters (UNDP 1994, 23–33). Contrary to freedom from fear, freedom from want broadens the focus beyond violence with focus on development and security aims. However, it is essential to note that these two schools of human security are interrelated (Goucha 2008, xxii). Consequently, we engaged these two strands

of human security in our analysis of ISV's negative effects on human security and the attendant national security concerns.

Scholars continue to debate the link between the environment, disease and national security. From a human security perspective, infectious diseases such as acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) have increasingly been considered as national security threats because of the disrupting and weakening capacity they have on government and society (Peterson 2002; Heymann 2003). However, other scholars such as Deudney (1990) and Levy (1995) have starkly denied the link between environmental degradation and security on the grounds that the human security perspective considers everything as a security threat and obscures security. In fact, it is this shortcoming in state-centred notions of security prioritizing physical threats to security that has prompted the human security paradigm.

Peterson (2002) observed two key underlying mechanisms through which infectious diseases can threaten national security. First, infectious diseases may generate violent conflict by shifting the balance of power among states, encouraging foreign policy clashes, or producing economic and political insecurity; and secondly, infectious diseases can change the result of interstate conflicts either intentionally, via the use of biological weapons or the aiming of public health, or unconsciously, by undermining military readiness (Peterson 2002, 45). Accordingly, we found ISV's contribution to environmental degradation and disease outbreaks in the domestic context somehow in sync with Peterson's ideas. Thus, we argue that ISV does not necessarily cause but can contribute to public health hazards through environmental pollution and the quick spreading of diseases, particularly typhoid and cholera with profound negative effects on national security in Zimbabwe. These diseases have the capacity to weaken the preparedness of the country's security sector through spreading health challenges that apart from affecting the serving members and their families, also affect the citizens as well as draining the state's resources. Consequently, we expose the different national security challenges engendered by ISV activities cutting across both the freedom from fear and want strands of human security which takes the totality of human experience as a security concern. Among other issues, we assert that although marred by challenges, the HCC and government are justified to call for order and tidiness in the way street vending is done because if left unchecked it really constitutes a threat to national security.

In the contemporary world, the security of the individual doubtlessly guarantees state, regional and even international security (Goucha 2008, xxii). As De Rivera (2004) observed, although human security diverges from national security,

It suggests attention to the security of all people rather than simply the security of those within a given nation state, and it enlarges the scope of security to refer to far more than protection from enemy attack. If we include security from disease, starvation, and poverty, the concept has the potential to attract both those interested in issues of national defense and those interested in economic development. (De Rivera 2004, 532)

The above view categorically denotes a shift from the traditional belief whereby national security was largely viewed as the ability of a country to defend itself from external aggression, that is, an attribute of the state meaning absence of military conflict- military security. In this light, this study considers national security to encompass a condition where Zimbabwe's most 'treasured values and beliefs, democratic way of life, governance

institutions, welfare and well-being as a nation and its people are lastingly safeguarded and constantly enhanced' (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998, 1). The fundamental values and beliefs include but are not limited to socio-economic and political stability, survival of the nation, maintaining domestic order and rule of law, territorial integrity and sovereignty enhanced by military strength, energy security, and environmental security and ensuring conditions conducive for a good quality of life for all and national development. The reference objects for security and analytical purposes include the state, society and individuals.

Without rejecting the differences that exist between human and state security (see, for example, Abad 2000; Roznai 2014), we subscribe to the idea that human security and state security can strengthen each other. According to Abad (2000), state security can generate a conducive environment that is favourable to promote human security. This occurs when national security permits nation states to pursue sustainable national development programmes without fear of being troubled by conflict and adverse shocks both from inside and outside the nation state. It enables states to allocate their resources to industrious sectors in place of military hardware procurements. Consequently, national development produces opportunities that can advance the lives and situations of the citizens resulting in national security leading to human security. In contrast, human security affords a solid basis for national stability (Abad 2000, 1). As Gasper (2005, 224) observed, 'state security will be precarious and expensive – and empty – unless based on and consistent with the security of individuals.' More so, Roznai (2014, 100) asserts that both national and global security can be vague without giving due commitment to human security by valuing basic human rights and freedoms. Viewed this way, the deterioration of human security conditions due to ISV activities actually threaten national security as is elucidated in the section that comes after the methodology section below.

### 3. Methodology of the study

This is a qualitative case study of the complex links between ISV and national security in Zimbabwe. The qualitative case study approach was adopted in order to explore the ISV phenomenon and its effects on human security and national security in its context using different sources of data thereby enhancing the trustworthiness of our findings (Yin 1994, 94). The research deals with the vending activities occurring in the post-1999 era in Harare's CBD. Harare was chosen to illuminate the dynamics and costs of ISV vis-à-vis human security and national security because it is the capital of the country where key state security stakeholders are found and its space is highly contested not only among street vendors but different political groups as well. The main data gathering techniques that were employed are unstructured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), observations and content analysis.

All the interviews were conducted between May and October 2017 within Harare's CBD and its immediate environs which have a high concentration of ISV activities. These include the Copacabana Taxi Rank, Fourth Street Taxi Rank, the blocks around the Market Square Taxi Rank and the areas around the Town House and Rezende Street. Although the study cites 26, we conducted unstructured interviews with at least a sample of 50 participants of street vendors purposively selected from within an approximately nine square kilometre area bounding the CBD or part of thereof. Of the 50 participants, 25 were females while the other 25 were males and most of them (45 out of 50) had

attained secondary education. Regarding age, 20 were in their twenties, another 20 were in their thirties while 10 were above 40 years. An average of five street vendors in each approximated square kilometre was interviewed. Additionally, seven key informants from the HCC officials and some government officials, formal traders, health workers, political parties and organizations that represent the interests of street vendors were also interviewed. We sought key informants' views because 'key informants, as a result of their personal skills, or position within a society, are able to provide more information and a deeper insight into what is going on around them' (Marshall 1996, 92).

The researchers also facilitated at least three FGDs with the street vendors from different areas of the Harare CBD. The first group comprised six participants of which three were males while the other three were females. The second group had seven participants and consisted of three females and four males while the last group had eight participants with four females and four males respectively. The timeframe for the three sessions ranged between one and half hours and two hours per session. FGDs were useful in that, as Finch and Lewis (2003, 171) stated, they give a better understanding of the social structure and social fabric of the community in which a researcher conducts research and a more in-depth understanding of how opinions and knowledge are formed within that community. In addition, FGDs facilitated individual responses to become improved and refined, and shifted the discussion to deeper and more painstaking levels. Although the observation method was mostly concentrated during the time the researchers were interacting with the research participants, that insights were drawn from the researchers' observations cannot be underestimated. This is because all the researchers have been residing in Harare for more than 10 years and on almost everyday basis witnessed first-hand the dynamics of the ISV problem in the CBD which made the observation method of data collection not problematic to engage. The purpose of the interviews, FGDs and observations was to identify the effects of ISV on human security and the attendant effects on Zimbabwean national security. Because the topic under discussion involved sensitive issues, the researchers did not use participants' real names or places which might reveal their identity and responses. Instead, pseudonyms have been used. However, respondents participated without being forced or tricked by the researchers. More so, the confidentiality of the data the researchers gathered was ensured to the extent possible.

Further, the researchers read and analyzed relevant literature on ISV in Harare CBD and its effects on human security and the related implications on national security with the aim to identify the gaps, giving the background and comparison of what other published works on the topic and related topics say (Yin 1994, 85). Documentary analysis also permitted the gathering of data beyond Harare. Thus, the research specifically made use of information drawn from sources that include but are not limited to books, journal articles, reports of nongovernmental organizations and newspapers. The information gathered through content analysis was crucial because it provided important insights for the construction of interview questions without unnecessarily replicating what is already in the public domain, corroborating and augmenting the data gathered from interviews. Overall, the case study approach immensely benefited from the use of a combination of different sources of data which reinforced the validity and reliability of the study's findings. The collected data was processed, analyzed and presented in themes.



## 4. The national security implications of ISV

### 4.1. Lawlessness: politics scuttles HCC and government efforts to implement by-laws

Apart from the centrality of the macroeconomic environment in Zimbabwe being conducive for the emergence and continuation of ISV, the influx of informal street traders was partly politically driven and couched in a discourse of human security. This was evident when the then First Lady, Grace Mugabe condemned the police efforts to drive away vendors from the CBD to designated sites during her countrywide rallies in 2014. She encouraged the vendors to continue making a living through selling their wares in the streets contrary to government and HCC policy that wanted them to be removed and go to designated places (Matenga 2015a). Grace's position was also echoed by the National Vendors' Union of Zimbabwe (NAVUZ), led by Stendrick Zvorwadza who in 2013 contested primary elections in the MDC-T, emphasising the fact that the street vendors should continue doing their business to sustain their lives (*The Herald*, June 24, 2015). Admitting that politics was at the centre of the elusiveness of the management of the ISV issue, an HCC Town Planning official said:

This (ISV) is becoming political. At one point we wanted to remove them (street vendors) completely but then the First Lady 'vakati hapana vendor rinodzingwa, pakatanga "munhu wese kuna Amai"' slogan. So us as HCC tinogumirwa (when the First Lady said no vendor will be removed from the streets everyone started to chant the slogan 'Everyone belongs to Mother, First Lady Grace Mugabe' as HCC we are left with nothing to do).<sup>4</sup>

As a result, attempts to drive out vendors from the streets have been futile partly because politics has reigned supreme. This is because the large numbers of street vendors represented a powerful constituency that had the potential to hold sway in the then forthcoming 2018 elections.

Similarly, among the vendors who responded to the question regarding whether the vendors and their businesses were affected by national politics, politics was strongly portrayed as central to scuttling efforts to handle the ISV challenge. Among other views, statements like the following ones were common: 'Sometimes the HCC officials come to take our goods but then political figures at times stop them. Like how Amai Mugabe (Mrs Mugabe) told them to let the vendors sell their products'<sup>5</sup>; 'Politics affects everything'<sup>6</sup>; and 'Sometimes politicians use vendors to gain popularity and in return vendors get favours such as not getting arrested'.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, people at some places such as Copa Cabana in Harare CBD used politics and political structures as an expedient way of accessing vending licences and even getting involved in ISV activities (Matenga and Nyavaya 2015). These were aligned to the ruling party and included the Grassroots Empowerment Flea Market and Vending Association Trust operating at Copa Cabana (Matenga and Nyavaya 2015). On the other hand, ZANU-PF also accused the opposition of abusing the vendors' issue. For instance, a ZANU-PF official said, 'Opposition political parties have penetrated the vendors and as a result, they tend to politicise everything'.<sup>8</sup>

The role of political influence to the ISV activities was also acknowledged by the then mayor of Harare, Bernard Manyenyeni when he noted that:

Council has an anti-noise pollution commission on its own. We are never in favour of polluting the environment in any way but when we talk about vendors specifically, they are a

reality that we have had to face in such a difficult economy. It is also a reality that we have to manage in terms of the influence around the vendors. We sense a political hand in the vendors. Yes there is the economic sense, but we sense a political hand too. So managing them will always be very delicate. (Kunambura 2015)

From a planning and technocratic viewpoint, the procedure of acquiring a vending licence in Harare's designated areas is elaborate: one must formally apply to the city council and pay the necessary fees as indicated in the Harare (Hawkers) By-laws 2013 (Mbanje 2013) and Harare Vendors By-Laws, 2014.<sup>9</sup> However, this only matters where the ruling party, ZANU-PF and the MDC-T, opposition party which runs the HCC have no interests. As one street vendor, revealed, 'Politicians always try to manipulate the common people that is why vendors are sometimes used by politicians for the latter's publicity'.<sup>10</sup> This dovetails with earlier studies which observed that the employment of ZANU-PF youth and followers to grab land in cities devoid of council sanction demonstrates that where the ruling party has interests, law would be ignored (Kamete 2008). Critically, the MDC-T also sought to replicate the ZANU-PF strategy using the ISV issue with far-reaching implications for order and sanity in the HCC and national security in general.

A narrow analysis of the foregoing promotion of lawless vending activities for political ends by political actors can be viewed as not necessarily supportive of our argument that ISV threaten national security. This is because one can argue that by promoting ISV political players enhance human security and by extension national security by generating an opportunity for economic gain amidst poverty and massive unemployment. Moreover, political elites might actually be preserving a government that could otherwise become easily destabilized due to its inability to provide human security by making jobs, public goods and services available for the citizenry. As a result, it can be possible that ISV is merely a proxy for unemployment and economic troubles thereby limiting its negative implications for national security because it enhances human security. However, by promoting lawlessness among other human insecurity conditions ISV indeed threatens national security. It confirms a lack of state capacity (variously labelled weak state or very weak state depending on the level of lack of state capacity [Buzan 1991, 99–101]) to maintain law and order and provide public goods as well as protecting the citizens from any security threat. In fact, lawlessness and disorder per se constitute human insecurity and are a recipe for national insecurity due to human insecurity conditions that make citizens always live in fear of others.

The promotion of ISV for political ends and the resultant national security costs were apparent in the failure of the HCC and government to find solutions to the ISV problem. In 2015, two distinct camps, that is, pro-MDC-T and ZANU-PF camps developed when the HCC tried to discuss how to implement a government directive to remove street vendors from the CBD. They all failed to agree on how to handle the matter. The ZANU-PF group used the then First Lady's public statements and declared that they were going to remain in the streets although some of their colleagues were disagreeing saying that people were misrepresenting her and had better to move to designated spaces (Matenga 2015b). On the other hand, the huge number of the MDC-T councillors making the HCC were sympathetic to the position of the vendors to carry on doing their business (*Newsday*, July 1, 2015). Thus lawlessness was promoted by both the MDC-T and ZANU-PF in their pursuit of power retention and seeking agendas in which the former wanted to continue dominating the city council while the latter wanted to get back



control of the city it lost since the year 2000. This had national security implications in that apart from promoting criminal behaviour and disorder, the lack of social cohesion and harmony as well as policy inconsistency between central government and the local authority made the collection of revenue from formal businesses more difficult as they also contemplated joining the free-for-all kind of doing business.

Some formal business people were considering boycotting paying their rates using the presence of street vendors as justification. The street vendors negatively affected the formal businesses through unfair competition besides littering the front of their shops which partly contributed to the decline in their sales and subsequent closure of some shops.<sup>11</sup> An HCC Town Planning official admitted that ‘formal shops are suffering loss and face closure because the vendors have brought unfair competition. They sell their wares at low prices because they do not pay tax and rentals.’<sup>12</sup> Obviously, if the formal business’ boycotts were to be sustained coupled with the closure of some it meant a depletion of the HCC revenue base and more challenges to the unemployed individuals and central government thereby vindicating our assertion that ISV has far-reaching negative implications for national security. Again, the culture of lawlessness extended to other sectors when Zimbabwe experienced high cases of illicit trafficking and smuggling of different kinds of goods at its borders and corruption by traffic police on the country’s highways among other government officials leaving the country without the much needed revenue to fund its operations (Moretti 2017, 26–27). Among other things, all these different kinds of lawlessness left the state overburdened to meet the demand for public goods and services when its agencies and local authorities collected no meaningful revenue thus endangering national security.

However, a different view of the criminalization of street vending in Harare by both the government and HCC can also be seen as more of a class clash than security problem. This is because of the fact that the huge unemployment rate in the country, as shown in the introduction, has created insecurity for the individuals, society and the state at large. Consequently, any discussion of ISV in any country suffering from high unemployment like Zimbabwe should raise the argument beyond the elitist explanation of ISV and state security. Thus it is important to reiterate that apart from the political factor, the resilience of the ISV phenomenon in Zimbabwe is the product of the failing macro-economic environment. Despite that, it is undeniable that the human insecurity conditions generated by ISV endanger national security.

#### **4.2. Unemployment, ISV and protests**

Although we are mindful that not all protests are violent and the Zimbabwean constitution’s section 59 (Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act 2013) provides that every citizen has the right to protest as long as it is done peacefully, we argue that ISV in Harare has provided a ready recruiting ground for violent protests with profound consequences on human security and the attendant effects on national security. ISV’s negative effects on national security were more conspicuous in cases where opposition political parties effortlessly used street vendors instead of other groups, sometimes under the veneer of economic protests in which the vendors were at the forefront. While the ZANU-PF government got into power in 2013 largely based on its promise to generate jobs and even provisionally allowing people to continue selling their wares on the

streets, fear of Arab Spring style revolts witnessed it turning against them (*Daily news*, June 3, 2015). The wave of protests that rocked the country in 2016 exposed the degree to which ISV and the huge numbers of vendors in the streets of Harare provided a ready recruiting ground for protests. The protests encompassed political and economic demonstrations and the government responded by arresting, harassing and threatening those who criticized the then President Robert Mugabe and the government including civil society activists, political rivals, and some outspoken street vendors (Congressional Research Service 2016, 11). As a Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) Harare Province official noted, 'Mainly the vendors and their organisations are anti-government and pro-opposition. In this respect, street protests and demonstrations have to a larger extent been instigated by vendor organisations with external influence'.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, an HCC Town Planning official said,

Yes. Activists are taking this opportunity (the prevalence of vendors) to recruit followers and #Tajamuka/Sesijikile is a good example. It clamours for the over 2 million jobs promised and vendors are a ready recruitment ground because most of them are unemployed graduates.<sup>14</sup>

What comes to the fore from the above two views is that although there were genuine concerns for people to protest such as the need for employment, the government did not view the protests as such but as a direct threat to its power. More so, most of the protests in 2016 were violent culminating in the government responding with a combination of hard power and soft power to deal with them where among other things it temporarily banned protests and suspended the citizens' access to social media platforms such as WhatsApp (Shapshak 2016).

The government response must be seen in the context that since it was the ZANU-PF government in office every demonstration signalling disagreement with some policy issues or other issues, represented 'oppositional forces.' According to a NAVUZ official,

ISV has been greatly influenced by national politics, with pressure groups and the civic society propping up demonstrations against the use of force to remove vendors from the streets. ZANU-PF has been allocating marketplaces on a party basis where opposition members have no access.<sup>15</sup>

To this end, government reaction though unproductive was not unsubstantiated because the ruling party was blamed for the unrelenting economic state of affairs in the country and the organizers of the anti-government protests were prominent anti-government political-cum-civilian activists. These included but were by no means limited to the opposition political parties, civil society and vocal vendors such as Stendrick Zvorwadza (*Daily news*, June 3, 2015). It must be noted that since 2014 there was an increase in protest activities culminating in the more threatening ones in 2016. The 2016 protests were unique in several respects. First, the protests were large and had an increased rate of recurrence and geographic coverage as they extended to small towns across the country. Second, the protests, against lack of accountability, corruption and a failing economy, were organized by people from different backgrounds including the vendors who were joined by civil servants and other interested groups largely made up of youths such as the Occupy Africa Unity Square, Tajamuka Campaign and #ThisFlag Movement, though arguable, mostly with marginal opposition political party influence. Finally, apart from their magnitude, rate of recurrence and largely non-partisan nature, the protests were

also extraordinary in that the restraint and risk aversion a lot of Zimbabweans had exhibited in previous waves of protests was declining with many showing a high degree of willingness to explicitly criticize the then President Robert Mugabe and other ZANU-PF leaders using social media which when combined became highly threatening to national security (Moody 2016; Musarurwa 2016). As a result, at the end of 2016 one of the scenarios with a high risk of resulting in mass atrocities was linked to ISV. It was justifiably observed that the ever more threatening anti-government protest activities were in a position to produce a sharp intensification 'in violent repression by government security forces, informal militia, or both against a widening circle of people associated with the protests' (Saki, Woocher, and Solomon 2016, i).

Furthermore, the vendors in the face of government efforts to remove them from the streets vehemently queried why the ruling party wanted to be vindictive to them when there were no jobs it had promised. They even vowed that they were going to revenge in the upcoming 2018 elections (Matenga and Nyavaya 2015). In fact, it was the failure to deliver on its promise of 2,2 million jobs since 2013 that the ZANU-PF government was, with a great degree of justification, blamed for the vending challenge by both the labour unions and opposition political parties (Matenga 2015a). Consequently, prior to his death Morgan Tsvangirai in solidarity with the vendors used the same argument to score a political point. Mostly bent on wooing political support from the vendors, Tsvangirai censured the government for wanting to drive away the vendors without creating the promised jobs first (*Daily news*, June 3, 2015). Vindicating this viewpoint, an MDC-T official succinctly noted that:

Anyone who tries to remove the vendors will be perceived as heartless and anti-people. If one stands on the side of the vendors, he/or she scores huge political points. The vendors have also become a ready constituency available for the opposition when it wants to confront the government.<sup>16</sup>

The foregoing quotation makes it clear that electoral populism, ranging from the promise of the creation of employment to absorb the vendors to promises for greater recognition and protection of those in ISV was going to make one gain massive support from the vendors. This somehow makes correct a ZRP Harare Province official's observation that 'the opposition and other anti-government groups have hi-jacked vendors for political reasons.'<sup>17</sup> However, missing from his observation and essential to bring an end to the politicization and mismanagement of the ISV issue was the genuine lack of the promised jobs and that the ruling party itself was largely to blame. Accordingly, had jobs been created the ISV challenge in Harare and its attendant generation of human insecurity conditions that threaten national security, as in other small towns in the country, would have been different, in both its existing form, scope and magnitude.

#### **4.3. Threats of violence and the potential for ISV-bred instability**

The potential for political instability emanating from the ISV activities was evident in the responses of the street vendors whenever government promised to remove them from the CBD. The street vendors threatened the HCC and government and dialogue was not near their options to respond to their planned ejection. For instance, in 2015 the Director of one of the street vendors' representative bodies, Zimbabwe Informal Sector Organisation,

Promise Mkwanzani, a former MDC-T youth official ridiculed government plans to evict vendors from the streets as ‘inhumane.’ He said:

Removing vendors from the streets is just satanic and we are not going to allow that. Vending is now the biggest employer in Zimbabwe because of mismanagement of economy by the sitting government. We are not going anywhere, will stay put. (Mpofu 2015)

Another vendor, a 40-year-old widow, Rita Mhembere who solely relies on vending as a source of income asserted that: ‘Even if they bring armed soldiers we are prepared to die. If I stop street vending my family will starve’ (Mpofu 2015). In January 2017, another vendor, Garikai Zvasara revealed his inability to stomach government and HCC directive that the food vendors should stop selling their wares. He said:

I am better off dead than to live and watch my family languish in poverty because of an insensitive government that wants its people to suffer for its own mistakes. I am prepared to fight them to the end because they are not offering us any alternative means of livelihood. (Mahove 2017)

With hindsight, because the Zimbabwean political and socio-economic milieu has for years been largely pregnant with deep-rooted objections the government was right in its temporary cancelling of the forcible eviction route and avoided social unrest as the vendors might have turned their words into action. The vendors’ violence and the attendant police violence they invite would generate social unrest thus representing a serious threat to national security. In fact, there was, though negligible, loss of life whenever the police tried to eject vendors and when the latter attempted to resist in defence of their sole source of livelihood (Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights 2018).

The ISV problem in Harare CBD spawned the potential for the youthful members of the street vendors to partake in anything that can generate income including any possible recruitment by dissident groups. Asked whether the street vendors and their businesses were affected by politics many dodged the question saying: ‘I don’t think they are’<sup>18</sup>; ‘I am not sure if they are we just do things to provide for our families’<sup>19</sup> and ‘I do not know’.<sup>20</sup> However, some of those who responded to the question did so bluntly and some of the responses were that: ‘Some vendors are used by politicians for their own benefit’<sup>21</sup>; ‘Is there anything that is not affected by politics?’<sup>22</sup> and ‘We got the chance to be on the streets selling our products due to politics. Yes, sometimes politics helps vendors to be on the streets’.<sup>23</sup> In this regard, it is the failure to fulfil the long-held expectation that attaining a better education guarantees one good employment opportunities and long-term economic growth that frustrates many educated youths. Consequently, the Zimbabwean government should seriously reconsider its employment creation policies. This is because the Arab Spring in 2011, among other cases of unrest, was a true testament of how being educated and unemployed can encourage the youths into violently demanding jobs and ultimately changing or destabilizing the government because of its inability to create the jobs (Hoffman and Jamal 2012; Hove and Ndawana 2017). The provision of alternative income-earning opportunities to the youths by the government beyond those offered by any other group to the youth will better assist to stop them from being involved in violence. However, the tricky issue in the Zimbabwean case is the failure by the government to address the underlying reasons which embody, lack of formal jobs- for the increase in the ISV activities and this points to a lack of appreciation of the centrality of human security in guaranteeing national security.

#### **4.4. Typhoid: dynamics and consequences of ISV-induced environmental pollution**

The public health and environmental hazards ISV partly generate and essentially spread and the resultant deterioration of human security conditions endanger national security. Although ISV was contributing to the spread of public health hazards, it was also essentially helping make ends meet for poor people who sold convenient meals and fruits at affordable prices and created employment for the swarming urban populace given the socio-economic conditions prevailing in the country epitomized by widespread unemployment. Among other things, the food which was sold by street vendors included but was not limited to: fruits and vegetables such as oranges, lemons, bananas, fresh mushroom, carrots and tomatoes, green, roasted or cooked maize, fresh, roasted or stewed meat (beef, chicken, pork and goat), sadza (thick porridge) and rice. Most of the vendors affirmed that the selling of stuffs such as fruits, sachet beverages (such as maheu and freezits), biscuits, and cosmetic merchandises immensely contributed to littering as customers carelessly disposed the waste on the pavements.<sup>24</sup> More so, in preparing and selling their food and fruits, the vendors did not take heed or pay attention to hygienic concerns. Most of them did not have protective clothing that include chef's hats, gloves and aprons.<sup>25</sup> Again, most of the street vendors carried out their businesses in areas that did not have potable water, provisions for cleaning kitchen utensils and waste removal. Most of the consumers also showed no interest in good hygiene practices.<sup>26</sup>

There was widespread and deliberate negligence of respecting the importance of conserving the environment and adhering to by-laws by the street vendors. As good examples, the vendors admitted that they did not care about the environmental implications of their activities. They said: 'ISV negatively affects the environment and health conditions and standards in the CBD but who cares all we want is money'<sup>27</sup> and 'Look at the rubbish around us. But we cannot worry about rubbish when our kids are hungry and not going to school'.<sup>28</sup> Notwithstanding the failure of the HCC to provide service including regular collection of litter, the above sentiments clearly show that the ISV activities contribute to environmental pollution. This dovetails with what was observed by Rheinlander et al. (2008) in urban Kumasi city in Ghana that it is difficult to practice hygiene at the street level particularly in relation to food hygiene.

The intermittent outbreaks of cholera and typhoid were a genuine cause for concern to the government and HCC because they were the outcome of hazardous environments partly generated by ISV. In January 2017, challenges of typhoid were at the centre of the debate to outlaw ISV. About 22 cases of typhoid were established in Harare and 250 cases of the disease were examined (Ndebele 2017). Typhoid fever entails a contagion triggered by the bacteria salmonella typhimurium and is transmitted by soiled food and water. Its transmission between individuals is through direct contact with the faeces of an infected person (Ndebele 2017). Devoid of quick treatment, typhoid can cause severe problems and can even cause death.<sup>29</sup> In this light, ISV's causal role in affecting national security does not lie in the fact that health inspectors or an independent laboratory test essentially traced a typhoid outbreak to a particular market or street vendor. Rather ISV is often singled out by officials for contributing to the outbreak and quick spread of the disease because it promotes unchecked food vending and leaves garbage everywhere producing unhygienic conditions amid high population movement (Lee 2017). In January

2017 HCC acting town clerk, Josephine Ncube noted that the eviction of vendors was necessary because:

Preliminary investigations have[had] shown that the key drivers of typhoid and any other water-borne diseases are issues related to personal hygiene, unregulated vending of foodstuffs such as vegetables, meat, fish (cooked and uncooked) and inadequate water supplies. (ANA Reporter 2017)

Indeed, a combination of poor hygiene, unreliable supply of clean water, supply of unclean drinking water, burst sewer pipes and rampant food vending was cited as responsible for the recurrent outbreaks of cholera and typhoid in Harare (Ndebele 2017; Muchemwa 2018).

While the HCC attributed the outbreak of typhoid to the rampant ISV activities in town, the street vendors also blamed the HCC for causing it through the failure to regularly collect rubbish from both the CBD and residential suburbs. The HCC was also blamed for the typhoid outbreak due to its failure to deliver sufficient clean water and sanitary facilities worsened by the lack of attendance to numerous burst sewage pipes around the capital city.<sup>30</sup> We argue that both the HCC and ISV were to blame for the outbreak and spread of typhoid respectively. One street vendor frankly asserted that: 'We do not want to lie to each other vending has caused a lot of environmental problems as rubbish is now everywhere'.<sup>31</sup> However, the rubbish, for instance, of maize cobs among other things did not need only water to have a safe environment but proper disposal in bins that should be regularly collected.<sup>32</sup> In one of the FGDs, respondents admitted that some really knew the environmental implications of their activities and were to a greater degree to blame for the increased filth in the CBD.<sup>33</sup> The ISV contribution to filth in the CBD mostly increased, especially when they were involved in running battles with the municipal police and law enforcement agents.<sup>34</sup> Despite that, the neglect on the part of the HCC manifest in the burst sewers culminated in raw sewage flowing in the streets and the unsafe water people used due to dry taps or sometimes contaminated water from taps was a fertile ground for the outbreak of typhoid.<sup>35</sup> Accordingly, the activities of food vendors can be seen as merely aggravating factors because the prevailing conditions in the city were a ready seedbed for the outbreak of typhoid and cholera (Zuze 2017). In this regard, both the HCC and the vendors who swarmed the CBD were equally to blame because of their acts of commission and omission which created human insecurity conditions conducive for the outbreak and spread of typhoid respectively.

Moreover, the operation of the informal traders at night for fear of law enforcement agents exacerbated the increased accumulation of filth in the CBD. It was this trading during the night that witnessed ISV activities leaving the CBD in a sorry state and an eyesore due to the garbage of the products they were selling ranging from that of green mealies, orange and banana peels, and rotting vegetable matter to charcoal ashes they used to roast maize and meat (Mwanaka 2013). Additionally, night trading gave rise to human excretion and urination in a number of street corners because many of the public toilets apart from being inadequate and not functioning properly were closed (Mataire 2017). While the street vendors assigned the blame for human excretion in the CBD to street kids, it is difficult to also exonerate them because they did not have anywhere to relieve themselves during the night except in street corners. In fact, responses



to the question: How do the street vending population in Harare CBD meet their sanitary needs? revealed varied answers but all emphasising their complicity in degrading the environment. These included that: 'By whatever means they find good for them, be it on the street corners, alleys or in public toilets'<sup>36</sup>; 'We just use what is available though there is not much available'<sup>37</sup>; 'Whatever way available to us'<sup>38</sup>; and 'Public toilets where they are available but most of the time its each man for himself'.<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, while during the day some minimally tried to keep their operating environs clean, the majority did not care about the environment and its cleanliness thereby blatantly degrading the city environment and partly contributing to the outbreak and spread of typhoid and cholera due to unhygienic practices. Clearly, the deterioration of human security conditions due to ISV contributes to national insecurity when diseases such as typhoid and cholera erupt (whatever the causes) and spread easily.

Knowledge of the threats to national security due to health and environmental problems flowing from ISV activities among some HCC and government officials existed. An HCC Health and Social Services Department official said: 'Illegal street vending has negatively impacted on health. Outbreak of diseases such as typhoid and cholera may as well pose a national security threat.'<sup>40</sup> Further, the then City of Harare health director, Dr Prosper Chonzi observed that, to put an end to the typhoid outbreaks, the putting up of essential infrastructure, provision of clean water and sanitation, waste management and the inspection of food sold in the streets needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency (Ndebele 2017). These interventions were to basically deal with some of the major factors that caused the typhoid and cholera outbreaks over the years and ISV activities were unambiguously contributing to the increasing challenges for the HCC in its quest to keep the city clean and avert the spread of diseases.

Further, the national security implications of street vending through health security challenges were laid bare following a High Court ruling that dismissed with costs the Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation (a vendors' association) application challenging the legality of banning the selling of cooked and uncooked food in Harare CBD by the HCC and a ministerial taskforce in the wake of the outbreak of typhoid in early 2017 which killed two people in Mbare. As then ZRP Commissioner General Augustine Chihuri, who was cited as one of the respondents to the court application apart from the HCC and the Ministry of Local Government argued, the vendors were supposed to stop their activities because they were unlawful and the rights they cited were not absolute and were also subject to be exercised with limitation, especially in the face of the public health issue (Kadirire 2017b). As a result, the human insecurity conditions ISV bred via environmental pollution and disease outbreaks had negative implications on national security. Among other concerns, signifying a threat to national security, the resources the government put to treat the typhoid and cholera affected citizens and to stamp out the possible causes of the diseases means that a strain was made on the country's financial and health wellbeing. For instance, if the approximately 60 million United States Dollars that was required to meet the costs of curbing the double outbreak of typhoid and cholera in Glenview and Budiriro suburbs in September 2018 which claimed over 50 lives is anything to go by, although it was mostly funded by well-wishers, it shows that massive resources are diverted from being invested in other productive sectors (Moyo 2018). Additionally, although we did not find a reported typhoid case on members of the security sector, they or their families were among those affected resulting in the weakening

of the preparedness of the national defence and security system through increased health challenges.

## 5. Conclusion and recommendations

The study has exposed the potential of ISV to contribute to national insecurity using the case of Harare. The twenty-first century witnessed the government of Zimbabwe facing serious challenges in creating employment and this forced many people to either continue in poorly paying jobs or living without a formal job compelling them to join the informal sector including ISV. National politics impacted negatively on efforts towards finding sustainable solutions to the ISV conundrum. This is because both ZANU-PF and the MDC-T attempted to court people in ISV for political ends. To a greater extent, the findings of the study confirm that ISV's negative effects on human security contribute to national insecurity. This is evident in that political parties' courting of street vendors' support influenced the vendors to participate in unique and threatening protests than before, vendors resisted eviction and police used force resulting in deaths with the potential to cause social unrest and that vendors generated trash and produced food in unsanitary conditions which might have not necessarily caused the outbreak of diseases, such as typhoid and cholera but essentially contributed to their quick spreading. The disrupting and weakening capacity of the typhoid and cholera outbreaks on both society, where many of the security sector members live and government cannot be overemphasized. However, given that poor sanitation and water service delivery emerges as a key contributing factor to the outbreak of typhoid and cholera in Harare the HCC should work hard to provide safe running water and quality sanitation.

In this light, there is an urgent need to cautiously put together sustainable solutions to the ISV conundrum. As a result, the study suggests the following:

- The government and HCC must create a supporting environment for vendors through the provision of suitable infrastructure such as shades, ablution facilities, sanitation and selected spaces where they are able to legally sell their goods and pay tax.
- Politicians among other stakeholders hindering the realization of sustainable solutions should stop abusing or exploiting the ISV issues for political expediency. The health of Harare's populace, which by extension represents the epitome of national security from a human security perspective is more important than the selfish political goals politicians further through promoting lawlessness that has the potential to incite social unrest and environmental and health hazards.
- Individuals in the informal economy should be incentivised and trained to alter their mind-sets from the survival approach to a business mode. Instead of obstructing them, government and the HCC need to help street vendors by putting in place enabling policies to empower them to contribute to national economic development in ways previously not envisaged.
- Street vendors should observe the city by-laws and make certain that they meet the set requirements for them to operate as legal vendors. This is in light of the fact that if well managed, vending is an unambiguously essential part of urban economies globally and provides easy access to a broad range of goods and services in the public arena.

- Employment creation is one major key development that the government need to seriously rethink if the rampant sprawling of ISV is to be sustainably solved. Most of the street vendors are not in vending by choice but they are qualified men and women who have failed to get employment. The young men and women who are in vending as a business are at an advantage to the country than youths who participate in criminal activities. As a result, their industriousness if tapped into the formal employment fields will go a long way in the development of the country.

## Notes

1. For a detailed discussion of the methods ZANU-PF used in order to outwit the MDC-T in urban areas that include but are by no means limited to: centralisation of the provision of land for housing, water supply and vehicle licensing and the role of the Minister of Local Government, amendments to the Urban Councils Act (Chapter 29: 15), and ZANU-PF party organizations, see, Kamete (2008); Muchadenyika (2015); Musekiwa (2012); Musemwa (2010) and Muchadenyika and Williams (2018).
2. For a discussion of the reasons why Zimbabwe experienced an economic meltdown, see, Mlambo (2017; Hove 2017) and Bond and Manyanya (2002).
3. While the Movement for Democratic Change has split more than once since its formation, in this article we use MDC-T to refer to the faction that was led by Morgan Tsvangirai who died in February 2018 which largely dominated urban constituencies since 2000 unless specified.
4. Interview with an HCC Town Planning official in June 2017; in Harare.
5. Interview with AM a Vegetable vendor in June 2017; in Harare.
6. Interview with XM a Herbs and traditional medicine vendor in May 2017; in Harare.
7. Interview with FN a Dvds vendor in July 2017; in Harare.
8. Interview with a ZANU-PF official in August 2017; in Harare.
9. "Harare (Vendors) By-Laws, 2014." [http://www.veritaszim.net/sites/veritas\\_d/files/SI%202014-159%20-%20Harare%20\(Vendors\)%20By-laws,%202014.pdf](http://www.veritaszim.net/sites/veritas_d/files/SI%202014-159%20-%20Harare%20(Vendors)%20By-laws,%202014.pdf). Accessed October 19, 2018.
10. Interview with GM a second hand cell phones and accessories vendor in July 2017; in Harare.
11. Interview with Retail Shop Manager in June 2017; in Harare.
12. Interview with an HCC Town Planning official.
13. Interview with a ZRP official in July 2017; in Harare.
14. Interview with an HCC Town Planning official.
15. Interview with a National Vendors' Union of Zimbabwe (NAVUZ) official in September 2017; in Harare.
16. Interview with an MDC-T official in June 2017; in Harare.
17. Interview with a ZRP official.
18. Interview with MM a fruit and vegetable vendor in June 2017; in Harare.
19. Interview with NM a second hand clothes vendor in May 2017; in Harare.
20. Interview with EN a cooked food and beverages vendor in September 2017; in Harare.
21. Interview with OM a fruit and vegetable vendor in May 2017; in Harare.
22. Interview with GN a shoes and leather jackets vendor in June 2017; in Harare.
23. Interview with DN an Audio and Video discs vendor in July 2017; in Harare.
24. Focus group discussion with street vendors in June 2017; in Harare CBD.
25. Interview with HCC Health and Social Services Department official in June 2017; in Harare.
26. Personal Observation by the authors.
27. Interview with CM a Cds and DVds vendor in July 2017; in Harare.
28. Interview with ZM a second hand clothes vendor in July 2017; in Harare.
29. Interview with HCC Health and Social Services Department official.
30. Interview with an Environmental Management Agency official in October 2017; in Harare.

31. Interview with UM a cooked food and beverages vendor in September 2017; in Harare.
32. Interview with HCC Health and Social Services Department official.
33. Focus group discussion with street vendors in July 2017; in Harare.
34. Interview with AM.
35. Interview with CM.
36. Interview with HM a tomatoes maize vendor in August 2017; in Harare.
37. Interview with NM.
38. Interview with YM a second hand clothes vendor in June 2017; in Harare.
39. Interview with CN an airtime and fruit and vegetable vendor in August 2017; in Harare.
40. Interview with HCC Health and Social Services Department official.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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