

## OPTIMISING AGRICULTURAL LAND USE IN THE CITY AREA

### Assessing Access to Land by the Urban Poor in Harare, Zimbabwe; Experiences and Reflections<sup>1</sup>

By Percy Toriro

*The paper draws some information from the research project on access to land which the author is a team member and link-person in City of Harare.*

*Outline of the short paper on my experience with strategies to enhance access to the urban poor and development and application of by-laws norms and regulations.*

The first part of the paper will discuss experiences on alternative strategies to enhance access of the urban poor. It will show that not much has been done by the authorities to improve access to land by the urban poor. Worse, competition for the land that the urban poor was utilizing for UA has increased over the past few years as the not-so-poor have begun to engage in urban farming due to the deteriorating economic conditions. [been worsened by the current economic downturn which has also driven the former middle class to competing for the same land].

However the paper will illustrate that the poor urban communities are getting organized into groups and cooperatives with the purpose of improving their access to land as they negotiate as a group. This has been possible with technical support from local and regional partners.

The paper will also assess the potential for the poor to gain access to land for urban agriculture under the ongoing land reform programme. *Another opportunity that may also be exploited by the poor is the land that is being made available due to the on-going land reform programme.* Further, the paper will analyze the potential impacts of the recent formal recognition of urban agriculture in Zimbabwe [at municipal, national and regional level] that brings hope for recognition of the practice as a legitimate land use strategy for poverty alleviation.

*Capacity building will be put as one critical way of enhancing the poor's access to land and other resources.*

In developing the paper, local experiences will be shared on the development and application of legislation in urban agriculture in Zimbabwe. It will show that legislation is not the major handicap in promoting urban agriculture particularly crop production. Instead, it is the interpretation and subsequent application of by-laws, which has been inconsistent, ad-hoc, and contradictory. The paper will also demonstrate the role of personal attitudes in the enforcement of by-laws. Attempts will be made to attach annexes of the relevant principal and subsidiary legislation.

In conclusion the paper will show that there is hope for the urban poor to gain more access to land for UA accessing land in Harare due to the following reasons: political support; *officials* are slowly embracing urban agriculture; and there are increasing economic challenges.

***The Author: Percy Toriro is a practising Town Planner. He is also the current Coordinator of the Zimbabwe Urban Agriculture Stakeholders Forum [which was established with technical and limited financial support from MDP], a part-time university lecturer in Planning, a member of the Harare Research Team on Access to land for UA [implemented by MDP], and the current Vice President of the Zimbabwe Institute of Regional and Urban Planners (ZIRUP).***

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<sup>1</sup> *The outline presented above was discussed with Shingirayi Mushamba, of MDP and a member of the UA Magazine Editorial Board.*