This policy brief is informed by the findings of the ESRC/DFID-funded Consuming Urban Poverty Project (CUP) (formally called “Governing Food Systems to Alleviate Poverty in Secondary Cities in Africa”) on work carried out in low-income neighbourhoods of Epworth, Zimbabwe, in 2016 and 2017. The central focus of the study was to understand the connections between poverty, governance and urban space. This policy brief presents key findings related to multi-dimensional poverty and food poverty in Epworth and makes policy recommendations for improving infrastructure as a lever to address issues of poverty.

Introduction
For nearly two decades, food poverty in Zimbabwe has been consistently high and has sometimes reached epidemic proportions. The food poverty situation in the urban areas of the country is dire. Epworth is a particular case in point: the Consuming Urban Poverty research found that less than 8% of residents of Epworth could be classified as food secure.

This policy brief presents findings on urban food poverty research carried out in Epworth, a large urban centre 15km outside the capital, Harare. This brief draws on findings from a survey of 483 households across Epworth. A key component of the survey, carried out in 2016, was to consider the nature of multi-dimensional poverty in Epworth. The brief argues that normative views of economic improvement will not be adequate to address the high levels of food insecurity and food poverty. Significant structural, economic, planning and infrastructural changes are required if residents of Epworth are to be lifted out of poverty. This brief calls for a significant increase in support for, and resources allocated to, the Epworth Local Board, and the associated government departments so as to enable real development in Epworth.

Zimbabwe’s dire economic and political situation has been well documented, with different actions and phases compounding the challenge. These factors all influence the current situation in Epworth. However, there is a slight window of opportunity to reconsider urban governance differently. The Epworth case offers some insights into what these may be.

Food insecurity and multi-dimensional poverty in Epworth
The basis for the multi-dimensional poverty approach is the assertion that poverty is defined as the failure of some basic capabilities to function, rather than only low levels of income. Not only were high levels of food insecurity recorded in Epworth in the CUP surveys carried out in 2016, but the mean household dietary diversity score was 4.12 out of a possible 12, where an HDDS score of less than 6 is seen as a proxy indicator for malnutrition. Additionally, over 80% of the surveyed households were consuming foods from 5 or less of the 12 HDDS categories. Poverty in Zimbabwe is frequently argued to be linked to the cash shortage and depreciation of the currency. While these factors play a significant role in the poverty of households, other factors deepen poverty in ways that cannot be resolved through conventional economic-recovery interventions. To fully understand poverty levels in Epworth, this CUP study used the Lived Poverty Index (LPI), a multi-dimensional poverty measure assessing access to food, fuel for cooking that food, water, energy, medical treatment, as well as income. As LPI scores increase, lived poverty increases. The respondents

1 This draws largely on Sen’s Capabilities Approach and since the early 1990s has been central to more nuanced – not just income or poverty line-based measures – views of poverty.
were asked if they had ever experienced the parameter “never”, “just once or twice”, “several times”, “many times” or “always”. Across the 482 valid cases included in the calculation of the LPI score, the surveyed residents were lacking all essential goods and services – such as a cash income, fuel to cook with, electricity, medicine, clean water and enough food to eat – but the lack of access differed across parameters and in frequency.

As Table 1 indicates, energy poverty was particularly high in Epworth, with 73% of households always without electricity in their homes. Regarding food, more than one-fifth of the households (21%) indicated that they lacked enough food to eat “many times”, while 27% lacked enough food to eat “several times”. Water is also a challenge in the area. As survey results show, only 38% of the surveyed households reported that they had never experienced shortages of enough clean water for home use. It was observed during the survey that most households were fetching water from open wells. As the settlement expands, increasing demand for water, and as seasonal water table fluctuations become more extreme, there is an increased risk of households being exposed to diseases such as cholera, or other water-borne diseases. When combined, these multiple deprivations shape a household’s ability to ensure food security and dietary diversity. The costs of energy to cook food further curtails food choice, as does access to water to clean and cook foods safely.

A far more encompassing response is required if poverty in Epworth is to be effectively addressed. Limited food access not only affects the poverty challenges but the consequences of malnutrition and limited diets mean that children and infants who do not get the requisite nutrition will carry the consequences of this deficit into later life. This challenge becomes inter-generational. Given the multiple forms of poverty recorded, government and development agencies need to move away from project-based interventions such as well provision and support for urban agriculture projects and consider longer-term systemic changes in infrastructure and service provision.

The Epworth Local Board is in a unique position to respond to these multiple poverty/infrastructure issues. Food offers a unique lens through which to understand the intersections between poverty, food insecurity, infrastructure and economic activity. Food and food system related policy actions often reach beyond just food, enabling far greater policy and development benefits.

**Policy suggestions**

- National government needs to work closely with the Epworth Local Board to consider a long-term development plan for Epworth that factors in the continued growth of the settlement and the associated infrastructure and service related needs that come with this expansion.

- Development interventions need to apply a far more integrated approach, which ensures the combined activation of intersecting projects such as energy and water provision.

- Traditionally, costs of infrastructure investment are recovered, at least in part, through taxes and user fees. Given the high levels of poverty, these forms of revenue collection may not enable adequate cost recovery and funding of necessary maintenance. For this reason, innovative funding and access models are required to meet the development imperative of such actions.

### Table 1: Cases and variables used to calculate LPI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never (%)</th>
<th>Just once or twice (%)</th>
<th>Several times (%)</th>
<th>Many times (%)</th>
<th>Always (%)</th>
<th>Total (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A cash income</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enough fuel to cook your food</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity in your home</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine/medical treatment</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enough clean water for home use</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enough food to eat</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>482</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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