

Full Length Research

The Winding Road to Stabilisation: Application of Post-conflict Recovery Responses and Frameworks in Zimbabwe

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Key bilateral and multilateral actors approach post-conflict peacebuilding from multiple perspectives without a common definition or doctrine of peacebuilding. Peacebuilding interventions since the early 1990s have exhibited common characteristics. Zimbabwe are currently in a deep political and socio-economic crisis. The citizens are victims of political instability and socio-economic disturbances, similar to conflict ravaged countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan, Mozambique, Libya, and Ethiopia. Any local, regional and international development strategy in the country must be informed by recent post-conflict experiences. Accordingly, this paper argues that Zimbabwe needs a post-conflict recovery response and identifies priority actions to support a political evolution and socio-economic recovery. The study further suggests immediate steps donors and policy makers can take to heal the wounds of Zimbabweans and lift the majority from miserable poverty. While peacebuilding is a multi-faceted process requiring holistic approaches, it needs to be guided by a hierarchy of priorities established in response to the specific needs and political dynamics in a given context. Establishing such a hierarchy requires an overall political strategy. The people of Zimbabwe like any other post-conflict society must own the reconstruction process. This must go beyond common rhetoric. They must be actively involved in setting the agenda and leading the process, which is a highly political process complicated by the deep wounds of the conflict.

Key words: peacebuilding, conflict, crisis, violence, Zimbabwe

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INTRODUCTION

Peacebuilding is a Multi-dimensional enterprise with several pillars. While various actors define these pillars differently, there is consensus that peacebuilding has political, social, economic, security and legal dimensions, each of which requires attention. Distinguishing it from conventional development, peacebuilding is understood to be a highly political project involving the creation of a legitimate political authority that can avoid the resurgence of violence.

Zimbabwe is in a state of decline. The political and socio-economic situation in the country is fragile and untenable. Political tensions are high. The economy is stumbling. The Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU PF), as the ruling party is to blame for political and socio-economic decay in the country. The party should reform or sink. In any case, this paper assumes that Zimbabwe needs a post-conflict recovery response to heal the nation and promote peace and sustainable development. The Southern African Development Community (SADC), African Union (AU) and

the international community should also play a central role in normalising the political and socio-economic climate in the country to help set Zimbabwe on the right path to sustainable peace and recovery.

While peacebuilding is a multi-faceted process requiring holistic approaches, it needs to be guided by a hierarchy of priorities established in response to the specific needs and political dynamics in a given context. Establishing such a hierarchy requires an overall political strategy. Given the dire political and socio-economic conditions in Zimbabwe today, post-conflict recovery strategies should be broad-based; they should not be confined to traditional development practice only, but must be informed by recent post-conflict experiences from countries such as Bosnia, El Salvador and Liberia. First, this paper unpacks key concepts, namely conflict, peace and security, as well as development. Next, the paper explains why Zimbabwe should be treated as a post-conflict situation. The paper also provides a framework for regional and international support for Zimbabwe's political and economic recovery. It also explores crucial political and necessary economic support.

Literature Review

This section unpacks key concepts that are critical for this study.

Conflict

The term conflict is relative. It is defined in various ways by different scholars. Dodo (2010, p. 4) defines conflict as 'a relationship between two or more parties who perceive they have incompatible goals or means of achieving those goals'. Dodo (2010) further affirms that conflict can be a simple misunderstanding between two or more parties whose goals and languages are different. To Onekalit (2008), conflict is normal, endemic, inevitable, dynamic and complex. It involves parties and is not synonymous with violence. These tenets characterise conflict in any form or setup.

Conflict threatens peace and security. Ilesanmi (2014) defines peace as a political condition that ensures the promotion, protection, and upholding of basic human rights and security. He argues that in a peaceful environment, people should enjoy basic and fundamental human rights of health, security, education, food, clean water, and clean environment. Miller & King (2003) also identified peace as a political state that guarantees justice and social stability through formal as well as informal institutions, practices, and norms. To Bangura (2011), peace does not insinuate the absence of war. It does not also connote the absence of violent conflict shooting from political, cultural, ethnic, or religious differences (Ibeanu, 2006). For Barash & Webel (2009)

and Bakut (2006), peace is the synchronised presence of human security, harmony, social justice, and equity. Miller & King (2005, p.70) define security as 'a subjective state in which an individual or collectivity feels free from threats, anxiety, or danger'. States must ensure their citizens are free from political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental threats. Quaker-Dokubo (2006) characterises peace and security as safety for people from both violent and non-violent threats. He also affirms that socio-economic security, national security, and food security are all about peace and security.

Development

Another key concept in this study is development. Various scholars define it in different ways. To Ojo (2000), development is the materialisation of change in the unique character of a phenomenon, resulting in qualitative and quantitative enhancement in the conditions and/or nature of the phenomenon. Development can also be defined as a multi-dimensional course of action involving changes in social structures, national institutions, popular attitudes, the acceleration of socio-economic growth, the reduction of inequality, as well as the suppression of poverty. This definition links development to modernisation. It reveals that development is the ability to provide people with their basic needs such as sufficient food, free education, shelter, health care, and protection. States that have not yet achieved these objectives are said to be less developed or underdeveloped. For Todaro and Smith (2011), development is attaining sustainable rates of growth of income per capita to allow the country to expand its output faster than the population. This definition, however, fails to take into consideration problems of discrimination, poverty, unemployment, and income distribution.

Todaro and Smith (ibid) differentiate development and underdevelopment using three (3) key questions: What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening with inequality? They underscore that if poverty, unemployment, and inequality have declined from higher levels, then this has been a period of development. If one or more of these problems have been growing worse, then that would be a period of 'underdevelopment. As for Augustine (2018) and Acheoah (2018), low per capita income/Gross Domestic Product, low literacy levels, the prevalence of rural and agricultural populations, and the dominance of inferior technology are signs of underdevelopment. Augustine (2018) and Acheoah (2018) further posit that underdeveloped political culture, weak political and economic institutions, and the dominance of ruling elite that rationalises values that are incompatible with political, economic, and social development also signify underdevelopment.

Interrogating Zimbabwe as a Post-Conflict Situation

Zimbabwe gained her independence in 1980, but experienced fairly low-level upsurges of socio-political violence that never approached a full blown civil war. However, the country exhibits extreme characteristics of a society in violent conflict (Moss & Patrick, 2005). For instance, the collapse of Zimbabwe's economy since 1999 is worse than was seen during full-scale civil wars in some African states. Currently, most youth are living in poverty. Unemployment is high. Industry is operating at less than 30 percent capacity. As in war situations, most Zimbabweans now operate in the informal sector. The decimation of the country's middle class has forced more people to turn to the black market to survive.

Scholars like Mude & Chigora (2013) assert that Zimbabweans are living in fear of organised violence and intimidation by the state. The security and intelligence services and government-backed militias have terrorized civilians, committed gross human rights violations, and been deployed to infiltrate and disrupt the opposition (Sachikonye, 2011). Civilians have been displaced. Political violence and social trauma have produced high levels of suspicion, low levels of trust, and a steep deterioration of social capital in most parts of the country (Mude & Chigora, 2013).

To Dube & Makwerere (2012), the breakdown of basic services also depicts Zimbabwe as a country in violent conflict. The country, which was once a jewel of Africa, is now in tatters. State social services are no longer functioning (Sachikonye, 2011). The erosion of state social services has further contributed to deterioration in already low human development indicators. Most professionals, especially health practitioners fled and are still fleeing the country while resources for the health sector have collapsed.

The erosion of economic foundation such as agriculture also exposed Zimbabweans to abject poverty. The Zimbabwean economy is agro-based, but this backbone of the pre-crisis economy is a shell of its former self (Chigora & Guzura, 2008). Crop and livestock production have dropped dismally since 2000. From the bread basket of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Zimbabwe is now begging food and waiting for hand-outs from non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Most citizens in both urban and rural areas are food insecure. The volume of tobacco exports also dropped by more than 60 percent since 2000. The mining industry has also suffered massively. The dearth of economic foundation was the result of the land reform programme and the departure of the country's commercial farmers.

Though the country is in a dire political and socio-economic crisis, it has an ample stock of talented human resource. Accordingly, the foundations for rapid institutional recovery are available, a much easier prospect than trying to build from scratch.

Framework for Regional and International Support of Zimbabwe's Recovery

The revival of Zimbabwe's political and socio-economic climate requires many elements typically associated with a strategy for post-conflict reconstruction. The first steps should be from Zimbabweans, in sync with 'African solutions to African problems'. The issue of ownership of the reconstruction and peace building process comes to the fore. The people of Zimbabwe must own the reconstruction process. They must be actively involved in setting the agenda and leading the various processes at multiple levels even the highly political processes complicated by the deep wounds of the previous conflicts from the liberation struggle, the Gukurahundi and 2008 political violent conflicts.

With regards to external actors and given the fragility of societies emerging from conflict, support from external actors is critical for post conflict reconstruction, yet on the other hand external assistance is never neutral. External actors come to post-conflict peacebuilding with multiple agendas and motivations which are not necessarily compatible with or driven by the political realities on the ground. In no small way, in Zimbabwe, proper mechanisms need to be established to ensure that external and internal actors work within a coherent strategy, establish priorities, and mobilize the necessary resources. As a SADC member-state, regional partners should chip in and offer political and socio-economic support. SADC and AU should engage the international community and encourage good diplomatic relations. International donors like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations (UN) agencies also need to play an active role in shepherding and supporting the locally-owned recovery strategy.

All post-conflict recovery strategies should be informed by recent experiences from other countries as they provide important lessons about the priority tasks for promoting peace, stability and economic reconstruction. Priority tasks relevant for Zimbabwe include establishing security and the rule of law; fostering political reconciliation and legitimate institutions of government; rebuilding the institutional capacities of the state; and encouraging a comprehensive economic recovery, including timely normalisation of relations with the international community and rapid support comprised of aid, debt relief, and private finance.

Crucial Political Support

Cain (2015) attests that Zimbabwe's problems are political. Indeed its post-conflict recovery processes face still birth at the political level. As such, getting the politics right is a necessary precondition for recovery. Consequently, the key interventions where regional and international groupings can support Zimbabwean efforts

to improve governance include being ready to provide assistance to smoothen the political transition. While peacebuilding is a multi-faceted process requiring holistic approaches, it needs to be guided by a hierarchy of priorities established in response to the specific needs and political dynamics in a given context. Establishing such a hierarchy requires an overall political strategy. The Second Republic is the carbon copy of Robert Mugabe's politics and it should change a lot of things if the country is to solve its political problems. SADC and AU need to create a regional framework similar to the '6 plus 2' formula for Afghanistan, to help nurture the internal political process and focus international attention.

Security sector reform is also of paramount importance (Chitiyo, 2009). SADC and AU should thus help to reform the security sector. Corruption and the politicisation of the security and judiciary sectors have undermined what were once professional and highly regarded institutions. There is need to persuade the ruling elites to move from a culture of violence and impunity to one of the rule of law. These regional bodies should also support a thorough reform of the security sector, including restructuring the 'power' institutions such as the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA), Central Intelligence Officer (CIO) and the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), vetting officials for past abuses, training officials in civilian policing and criminal justice, mainstreaming human rights, and disbanding paramilitaries.

Chitiyo (2009) also postulates that justice and reconciliation are also key. Zimbabwe is polarised and a critical dimension in recovering from crisis is coming to terms with the past and seeking accountability for past crimes and abuses. The ruling elites need to resolve the *gukurahundi* issue where more than 20 000 people in Matabeleland were killed during the period 1982 to 1987. The country needs a truth and reconciliation commission to solve all atrocities that happened since 1980. A truth and reconciliation commission was adopted in South Africa and it helped to solve all the crimes committed during the apartheid era.

Necessary Economic Support

Economic support is also necessary and SADC and AU should play a crucial role in helping Zimbabwe to revive her economy and transform the lives of the general citizenry (Munemo, 2016). Most Zimbabweans are relying on food hand-outs and humanitarian assistance. This means that the post-conflict recovery strategy in the country should focus on humanitarian assistance, especially on the protection of food and health security. NGO's should be encouraged to continue to support efforts to support human security in the country.

Every move in Zimbabwe should also facilitate an orderly return of migrants and diasporans (Munemo, 2016). About a third of the Zimbabwean population is

currently living abroad. This section should be allowed to vote as well as to return to Zimbabwe to rebuild the country. Even though many Zimbabweans abroad will have means to manage their own return, attention should be paid to the poorest as well as unskilled workers who may be hastily and arbitrarily forced back by neighbouring authorities without the means to resettle and rebuild.

To Munemo (2016), the regional and international community should also help formulate and implement a multidimensional economic recovery strategy. Organisations such as the World Bank, IMF, UN agencies and select bilateral donors should undertake a joint assessment of Zimbabwe's priority needs. These should include evaluations of the infrastructure deficit and other areas that might be privately financed. Any economic recovery should first bring the macro-economy under control by trying to restore basic public services as well as generating jobs. Priority should be on revising agriculture and the mining sector. Focus should also be on improving land use by reinvigorating the agricultural sector in a manner that provides increased employment and productivity (Chaumba, Scoones, & Wolmer, 2003).

Other critical elements

A commitment to local capacity building from the earliest stages is vital for sustainability and Zimbabwe is no exception. Even for high dialogue process needful between warring political parties must be facilitated and incubated by local leaders and local eminent persons who have not only vested national interests but are available for the long haul and have sufficient detail about the local and historical conflict cycles.

More often than not time has two dimensions in post-conflict reconstruction. Timely, opportunistic and quick-impact interventions are critical in influencing peacebuilding outcomes. However, reconstruction itself is a long-term process, that may take a generation to bear fruit. Rapid response is necessary but not sufficient for success. The Zimbabwe political and economic landscape requires that actors be conscious of the importance of time in justice delivery. To spend more years and more terms for the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) still grappling with the *Gukurahundi* issues is to miss out-on the time aspects of post conflict recovery and reconstruction.

Funding of recovery and peacebuilding efforts remains fatally inadequate, unpredictable and inflexible across the whole peacebuilding landscape to fund essential programmes and projects to support post-conflict reconstruction. Appropriate funding mechanisms are indispensable to have impact on the ground in a timely manner and this has evidently remained an albatross in Zimbabwe's bid for post-conflict recovery.

Further, the response levels in post-conflict

reconstruction involve appropriate responses at the local, national, regional and international levels. Zimbabwe has seen too little or too much of the bulk of critical responses amounting to excess such as Operation Murambatsvina and lip service to service delivery across cities. Thus, accountability: given the high stakes in post-conflict environments, the commitment to 'do no harm' while supporting peacebuilding efforts must be seriously checked.

CONCLUSION

As evidenced in this paper, the political and socio-economic situation in Zimbabwe is fragile and untenable. Political tensions are high and the economy is stumbling. Though technically the country could be at peace, it is suffering war-like trauma to its polity and economy. Accordingly, the country Zimbabwe needs a post-conflict recovery response to heal the nation and promote peace and sustainable development. The aforementioned operational principles of Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Frameworks must be applied holistically. In fact, a systems-thinking approach that appreciates that every aspect of development and peacebuilding is vitally important to post-conflict recovery must be applied. No effort should be spared in spite of it lying low on the priorities' hierarchy. While ownership of the recovery process must in its entirety belong to Zimbabweans, SADC, AU and the international community should play a central role in normalising the political and socio-economic climate in the country to help set Zimbabwe on the right path to sustainable peace and recovery. Equally important, post-conflict recovery strategies should be broad-based and should not be confined to traditional development practices only, but must be informed by recent post-conflict experiences from countries such as Bosnia, El Salvador and Liberia.

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