

COMMUNITY TOLERANCE RECONCILIATION AND DEVELOPMENT (COTRAD)

PROGRAMME REPORTS

Overall objective: Create a multi stakeholder input in the combating of political violence in Masvingo Province.

- 1 Venue: Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union (ZCTU Hall)
- 2 Date: 03 August 2012
- 3 Attendance: 16 (Female 7: Male 9)
- 4 Activity: Dialogue Meeting
- 5 Objectives:

- a) To create synergies and develop a framework with relevant stakeholders in the mitigation of political violence by 30 June 2013.
- b) To design programmes that exhibit socio-economic and political tolerance in order to mitigate political violence and achieve social change in Masvingo Province by 30 June 2013.

c) Introduction

The resurgence of the militia bases and the rapid increase of cases of politically motivated violence in Zaka, Gutu, Mwenezi and Chiredzi is a threat to peace and security, thereby requiring long lasting solutions from all the stakeholders. The youth, political parties, tradition leadership and war veterans have been responsible for championing politically motivated violence since January 2012 in Masvingo province. There has been a sharp increase in assault, intimidation, discrimination and politicisation of grain loan scheme. The districts that have recorded rise in cases of socio-economic and politically motivated violence are Zaka, Masvingo, Gutu and Mwenezi..

COTRAD facilitated a dialogue meeting with representatives from Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee (JOMIC), Traditional Leaders, Zimbabwe Republic Police,

MDC-T, MDC-M, ZANU-PF. Chivi Youth Forum and Gutu Youth and Chiredzi Youth for Democracy were part of the Community Based Organizations in attendance. The dialogue meeting was aimed at creating mechanisms to mitigate politically motivated violence by 30 June 2013.

Methodology

The Dialogue meeting pursued a participatory approach in a bid to promote action and community level change. The motive was aimed at gathering the perspectives and insights of all stakeholders and making them responsible for analysing the information and generating recommendations for societal change. The approach offered interaction and networking amongst the stakeholders and placed strong emphasis on building the capacity and commitment of all stakeholders to reflect, analyse and take responsibility for implementing any recommendations.

Results of the activity

Participants knew their obligations in guarding against human right violations, curbing socio-economic and political violence across the levels of leadership and authority within the society from the grassroots level to the highest levels of leadership in order to promote co-existence. The stakeholders understood their roles as institutions in the development of sustainable democracy leading to the acceptance of political multiplicity, multi culturalism and equitable distribution of socio-economic benefits entitled to Zimbabweans.

Participants noted the need for rule of law in the communities depending upon a legal system that provides access to justice for all citizens, administer justice fairly and guarantee constitutional protections for people's individual rights. Stakeholders agreed to create frame works that can foster peace in these localities through the provision of community policing that will ensure the development of a systematic security tree to ensure the security of all persons with more emphasis on young people. Part of the initiative would entail the establishment of human rights watch committees aiming to look into issues of violence ahead of future polls.

Participants highlighted the need to institutionalise the traditional courts that had become non functional. Traditional courts would be premised on three principles of fairness, transparency and equality. Traditional chiefs and the police force were tasked to work hand in glove in prosecuting and documenting the perpetrators of violence respectively. Traditional

institutions as the primary source of socialization were highlighted as omnipotent in the fight against political violence. The aim being to preside over matters of violence in the different localities coupled with a community policing strategy aimed at criminalizing perpetrators of political violence. The participants noted the need for depolarisation of traditional institutions such that they become custodians of the people and reduce levels of structural conflict through promoting and protecting human rights.

Stakeholders agreed tolerance exhibition to socio-economic and political diversity presents co-existence in communities marred by violence. Periodic calls for peace were fostered upon the traditional leaders as part of the information dissemination strategy to promote violent free communities.

Stakeholders acknowledged the increase in politically motivated violence in the 7 districts of Masvingo province. JOMIC noted the meeting as a welcome development to a holistic approach in the fight to end political violence; the institution noted that efforts to solve conflicts were underway in most of the conflict prone areas. Most notably some of the cases went unnoticed as no reports would be made to the Police. Participants noted partiality as why some of the cases are not reported to the police as some of the perpetrators are still walking Scott free after reports were made. The Zimbabwe Republic Police got a call from all the stakeholders to act professionally in combating political violence ahead of future polls. The police encouraged stakeholders, victims to report to nearest police stations, use of police hotlines and the members of the neighbourhood watch to help curb politically motivated violence without fear or favour.

The meeting highlighted the need to enhance information dissemination to the youths with regards to issues of political violence so as to strengthen their capacities in making informed decisions that will make positive societal transformation.

OBSERVATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT

Stakeholders engaged in self actualisation and mutual criticism in a bid to flash out violence. Participants noted the need for increased constructive interaction amongst stakeholders. Institutions agreed that, the existing capacities were not enough in combating political violence. The general consensus seemed to point at young people being the major tools in the spread of political violence in the communities. Politicians were seen as funning violence to protect their positions and preserve status quo. Institutions pointed Intra-party violence in

Masvingo province as responsible for the increase in levels of politically motivated violence. The non development of mechanisms to combat intra party violence would serve as a trajectory to an increase in violence if more political players become involved in a new form of violence inter party violence.

Youth organizations were not well represented in the meeting as part of the strategy to create tools aimed at curbing violence as most of the perpetrators seem to be youths. Traditional leaders seemed as if they aligned to a certain political part thereby creating problems in demilitarising the traditional institutions. There is need to continuously engage the traditional leaders as most notably it seemed as if they purport agendas of political parties not representing the needs of their communities. The dialogue meeting was a welcome development as it managed to bring together various players, political parties, traditional leaders, the Police and youth Community Based Organizations and it managed to provide a non partisan platform where stakeholders unanimously agreed that their concerns were to stamp out violence in its forms hence the need to agitate for immense societal transformation. The various institutions in attendance were broadened with the activity and some stressed there was need for more meetings like these to effectively create synergies in fostering peaceful communities. Participants expressed fear that young people needed more one on one civic engagements in a bid to accurately socialise them into the mainstream society where they are aware of their societal obligations

Challenges Met and Solutions Made

CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
Some of the invited stakeholders not attending the meeting.	The dialogue meeting went ahead irrespective of the absence of many Members of Parliament as most of them had representatives in attendance.
Political parties not willing to participate in the dialogue meeting.	Most of the invited political parties participated in the dialogue meeting however Zanu PF was underrepresented in terms of house constituting. There is no solution at the moment but to continue engaging political parties and inculcate a culture of political good will amongst the political players.

Hostility within the meeting	The meeting was well structured and had a facilitator who continuously brought sanity in the house. The meeting was held at a high level platform, participants knew their roles and obligations within the meeting.
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Recommendations and Way forward

Youths are pivotal in the promotion of sustainable peace and acceptance of political multiplicity in a bid to promote violent free communities. Youth organisations in Masvingo province have a surmountable task of reaching out to young people as part of the mitigatory strategies in combating politically motivated violence. There is need for rigorous anti-violence awareness campaigns throughout the rural areas of Masvingo Province as well as enlightening young people on issues of democracy and good governance in Zimbabwe. Traditional leaders should be encouraged to preach message of tolerance, peace and unity across political diversity whenever they address the people under their areas of jurisdiction. The youths and the general populace should make use of the police suggestion boxes and the police hotlines to report cases of politically motivated violence in the communities. The engaging of all stakeholders should be a continuous process as it provides platforms for constructive dialogues.