

INFLUENCING INCLUSIVE GROWTH THROUGH PEACE BUILDING AND RECONCILIATION

David Takawira



Case Study
N° 4

SYNOPSIS

The impact of violence, torture and conflicts on communities striving to make a living remains undocumented in many parts of contemporary Zimbabwe. This case study seeks to share the other half of the story to violence, torture and conflicts: the story of what it takes for young people to learn to live again, to rebuild destroyed lives and homes, to restore communities, to address the lingering wounds of post-electoral violent experiences, while struggling to create new avenues for peace. Through the support and initiative of the Collaborative Development Foundation (CODEF), young people and women in Epworth took it upon themselves to re-build their community one step at a time.

Introduction¹

Zimbabwe entered a state of violent political crisis before and in the aftermath of the presidential elections held on March 29 and June 27, 2008. The highly contested elections between the ruling party ZANU PF led by President R.G. Mugabe and MDC led by Mr. Morgan Tsvangirai left many communities reeling from physical and emotional pain and torture inflicted by various youth militias. A community situated about twelve kilometers out of the Harare City Centre, was not spared. Epworth's poverty and urban slum status became a breeding ground for youth militia feeding into a national web of systematic violence. With nearly 150,000 residents, life in Epworth revolves around under-age prostitution, open drug peddling and mafia-like street gangs, illicit beer brews and the availability of the infamous Krango, a highly potent alcoholic drink high in methanol, to the more than 70 percent unemployed adults, leading to violent crimes, rape and general lawlessness.

Thus young people in Epworth were highly exposed to the political violence that engulfed the nation as

perpetrators (receiving beer in compensation) and victims of violence. According to the Zimbabwe Peace Project, more than 16,400 cases of political violence were recorded between January and April of 2008, while over 4,900 victims accessed medical treatment in March of the same year, most of the injured women, men and youths in Epworth reported loss of property, from looting to burning of homesteads, and destruction of livestock.

Given the above background, a group of six young people saw the need and importance to re-build a community torn by election related violence. The need to re-join broken home-steads, find common ground for brothers and sisters to re-unite and work together once again. Thus the project was committed to telling the other half of the story to violence, torture and conflict: the story of what it takes for individuals to learn to live again, to rebuild destroyed lives and homes, to restore communities, to address the lingering wounds of post-violence/torture experience, while struggling to create new avenues for peace and growth.

¹ This study has been prepared by David Takawira in anticipation of the "Youth for Results Knowledge and Training Event" (Tunis, April 2nd-4th 2014).

INFLUENCING INCLUSIVE GROWTH THROUGH PEACE BUILDING AND RECONCILIATION

About the Collaborative Development Foundation (CODEF)

CODEF is an organization that facilitates “youths as active agents of social transformation”, by harnessing youth power in order to achieve sustainable development. Anchored on four programming focus areas: Governance Development Initiative, Social Integration Program, Environment and Health, Entrepreneurship and Skills Development and the Zimbabwe Youth Think Tank, CODEF seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- 1. To provide information and information sharing platforms to youths on developmental processes both at local and national levels.**

Information is a key ingredient in local and national development. Therefore to be meaningful in the development process, one has to be well conversant with prevailing development trajectories. Development information has to be disseminated to young people. In addition a platform has to be created for information sharing between these young people. These platforms will aid the organization in terms of wide coverage and reach. Information sharing methods will include theatre, poetry, music, road-shows, banners, pamphlets, internet, blogs, and website among others. Information will be conveyed with methods that are relevant and significant to the target audience.

- 2. To build youth capacity to achieve sustainable development.**

- ▮ Achieving sustainable development requires building capacity in young people. This will make youth pro-active and reactive in tackling emerging issues. An under-capacitated youth has no voice and, even when given the platform, meaningful contribution is difficult to come by. Capacities have to be built in key human development areas, such as leadership and entrepreneurship skills, peace-building and conflict management skills, participation in local and national government (teaching youths how to lobby to cabinet ministers, parliamentarians, local authorities, heads of government departments and how to influence decision-making). Issues of climate change or

environmental education and awareness raising e.g. refuse collection and its effects, HIV/AIDS awareness raising, cholera, combating crime in rural and urban areas will be tabled for capacity building. The mentioned issues are neither indicative nor exhaustive; capacities have to be built in domains where there is need.

- 3. To develop and support youth community structures/groups.**

- ▮ Youth participation and capacity building need institutionalization. In this case the development of local institutions is of essence. These will aid in the monitoring, evaluation and implementation of capacity building programs and facilitating the process of participation. Local community structures are not only effective in managing, but also widely accepted and respected by communities. In this vein, CODEF will facilitate and aid the development and sustenance of local community structures.

- 4. To participate and influence local and national policy-making processes.**

- ▮ The main outcome of information dissemination, capacity building and supporting community structures is to enable youth to participate in local and national processes. This will be done by CODEF facilitating dialogues, debates, engagements, and lobbying platforms. CODEF will strategically formulate where and when this form of engagement will be done.

Presentation of the case study

Young people and women in Epworth were emerging from adversity and a culture of suspicion and divisiveness, with no immediate platform for dialogue, participation or ability to influence community development. Six young people, having visited friends in Epworth saw the need to facilitate community reintegration, reconciliation and peace building. To achieve this, the group of young people undertook to understand emerging community issues, concerns, challenges and fears. During these consultative processes, it was noted that, there was an absence of an enabling platform for dialogue, community building, healing and development. Each community member lived in fear of the other. An important result of the community consultations was the need to use CODEF's collective skills

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towards initiating a project that would contribute to community development, community healing, reconciliation and peace. Thus, the project sought to achieve the following objectives:

- To create and support community learning groups of youth peace ambassadors towards securing the sustainability and medium-term impact of the project.
- To strengthen the role of young people and women in identifying and speaking up against human rights violations, including discrimination and hate speech.
- To facilitate livelihood skills training for young people and women in Epworth.

Project outline

The project was organized in four phases.

Phase 1

The selection of wards was done during this phase. The primary aim was to establish contact with community leadership and community organisations working in the community. In this phase, consultative meetings were held with community leaders, young people and women. A key output of this phase was the initial establishment of a grouping of no less than 25 household's representatives to form two learning groups.

Phase 2

An introductory workshop with the title 'Breaking the Silence' sought to provide an uninterrupted opportunity for community members to share their stories, reflections, fears, joys and aspirations. A key outcome of this workshop was the immediate identification of common needs and fears. The second part of the workshop focused on transferring community mobilization, organizing skills to the two core groups comprising of focal persons and committees. As a result of the training, forty participants (twenty from each ward) were tasked to mobilize their community into forming sub-learning groups and would report back after three months.

Phase 3

This phase involved monitoring and evaluation of the learning groups. Documenting most significant stories from community learning groups and the best case practices was done over three months. Follow up exchange visits for the groups were a key learning platform and collaboration point not only for the groups but also for the surrounding communities. This phase was critical for the two learning groups, as they managed to share amongst themselves, while documenting their challenges and success stories. As part of documenting best case stories, it was hoped that the phase would offer a chance for recording into a short film these emerging case studies through story telling.

Phase 4

The community learning groups in two wards of Epworth were re-united to learn what each group had been doing, share success and challenges. It was also at this stage that the CODEF started building the capacity of the learning groups in income generating projects, saving clubs to mention just but a few. A critical outcome for this phase was the unity exhibited by former enemies, victims and perpetrators in working together towards saving clubs or income-generating activities, such as rearing chickens and pig farming.

Justification of the action

The need for a community-home-grown solution towards reconciliation and healing in Zimbabwe could not have come at a better time. Community learning groups become a tool and platform for reconciliation at community level, which cascaded to other areas such as Chinamhora in Domboshava. Having communities discuss about what happened at community level outside the influence of other communities or societies helped the community of Epworth identifying solutions that work best for them and share the experience through documentation of best cases and practices.

Epworth was mainly chosen as project area based on a baseline survey carried out in three different

INFLUENCING INCLUSIVE GROWTH THROUGH PEACE BUILDING AND RECONCILIATION

areas that included Hatcliff and Hatfield area. Key findings pointed to a more serious threat to peace in Epworth as compared to the other two areas. In addition, it was also noted that, Epworth had too limited spaces or platforms to engage on development issues. As highlighted above, the community of Epworth unlike the other two communities is fast degenerating into a peri-urban

slum with little structural organization; levels of violence and crime are very high. Youths spend most of their time in the streets, drinking beer and young women selling themselves to prostitution. A more grounded background to why we chose Epworth was horrific testimonies we received both from friends and during the consultative processes.



This knowledge series is intended to summarize good practices and key policy findings on managing for development results. The views expressed in the notes are those of the authors. Notes are widely disseminated and are available on the website of the Africa for Results initiative (AfriK4R), at: www.afrik4r.org/page/resources