

Unveiling the Controversies; an Analysis of the Causes of Conflicts between Communities and Local Authorities in Zimbabwe: A Case of Binga Rural District Council.

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Abstract

The research is tied on the recurring conflicts that continuously spill between communities and Binga Rural District Council (BRDC) in Zimbabwe. Researchers engaged the qualitative approach in data collection and presentation from both primary and secondary sources. Despite the divergence of the understanding of conflict, it is never spared in Zimbabwean communities. In Binga, some conflicts are traced back to the pre-independence era when BaTonga people, who marks the population of Binga, were evacuated from the Kasambabezi River. With time conflicts arose on land for farming and settlement, poor service delivery, high taxes and lack of follow up on good governance principles. The paper highlights the brief historical background of Binga starting from the time of resettlement in 1957 by the Rhodesian Regime. The conflicts between Binga communities and RDC have negatively affected the relations; further crippled service delivery which subsequently dropped back development of the area. However, the conflicts are functional as they enable responsible authorities to realise their mistakes so as to devise strategies and measures to improve. Lawyers, through high courts have been engaged from time to time to resolve conflicts. On the reverse side, only a handful of consultations were done by BDRC to make communities participate and get involved in council affairs, except for the

minister responsible for Local Government. Conflict management mechanisms, diversifying income generation projects, following the principles of good governance, community participation, engagement and involvement and community awareness and empowerment may not stop conflicts but at least minimise them for the benefit of the district. The research is summarised by recommending for the need to study more on the land issue as the major conflict in Binga.

Introduction

The word conflict can merely be understood as disagreements between or among individual or a group of people or institutions. Pickering (1999) coins that Daniel Webster defines conflict as competitive or opposing action of incompatibles, antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests or persons), struggle resulting from incompatible needs, drives, wishes or demands and hostile encounter. In essence, conflict exists when two or more competing responses or courses of action to a single event are considered. Conflict does not necessarily imply hostility, although hostility can certainly become part of the situation (Pickering, 1999). Conflict has neither been solely bad nor absolutely good, but there is strong call for conflict management and resolution in Zimbabwean local authorities. It is one of the inherent

aspects characterising the existence of the traditional and modern institutions, both public and private. In this particular aspect, this paper unveils the conflicting situations and circumstances between Binga Rural District Council (BRDC) as a local authority and the communities which are predominantly occupied by BaTonga people. Local authorities are the major agent for service delivery with communities as the major stakeholder in the paradigm of human existence and development in the district. The major conflicts in local authorities in Zimbabwe include political polarisation, politics of administration, land use, power politics, and institutional governance among them. In Binga district, as elsewhere the causes of conflict range from differences in interest basing on resource usage; historical background of BaTonga people that left bleeding wounds; legal environment which is not understood by communities; political environment and differences between traditional and elected appointments. Highlighting conflict can be problematic politically, yet an awareness of the nature, causes and potential results of conflicts must be a part of effective development planning (Blench, 1996). The paper is hinged on the concern of the conflicts that continue to increase between communities and local authorities. Hence, this paper's mandated effort is giving an outline of conflicts and its causes in Zimbabwean local authorities, taking a case of Binga; analysing the harmful and remedial effects of the conflicts on service delivery, development and public relations of communities and local authorities, hence leading to the road of designing the correct recipe for improved service delivery mandate of local authorities. Therefore, in the specific terms, the paper addresses the three major objectives and these are: to identify the conflicts between the communities and local authorities in Binga; to trace the root causes of the conflict between communities and local authorities in Zimbabwe; and to give a critical

analysis of the causes of conflicts in order to provide recommendations to prevent, manage or deal with conflicts in future.

Key words: conflict, communities, local authorities, service delivery, development

Brief background of Binga

People of Binga also known as the River Tonga (Tremmel, 1994) stayed along the *Kasambabezi* (well known as Zambezi River) from the pre-colonial era. Oral tradition among the BaTonga reveals that they are the pioneer settlers of Zimbabwe, despite many historical contestations that may be aroused by both communities in Zimbabwe and scholars in the academic field. The BaTonga were not visible as they were isolated and it is up until the colonial times in the mid-20th century (1957) that they were evacuated from the banks of *Kasambabezi* River by the colonial government, then Rhodesia. BaTonga people had a 'splendid' isolation since time immemorial. They enjoyed the relations with the Zambian counterparts. They were under the rulership of *basimabbuku* (village/ kraal heads) and *basimwami* (chiefs) under the traditional authority. Resources were communally owned. Their trade links were with the Zambian people, although stories were told where others went to as far as Bulawayo on foot to search for employment. BaTonga lived in a strongly traditional way which they really enjoyed. They had no access to social services like school education, health care delivery, and modern agriculture. The BaTonga utilised the resources sustainably as they supported and were supported by the environment.

In the 1950s the BaTonga were forcibly evacuated from the Zambezi to make way for the Kariba dam which has grown into a lack today. Some of the BaTonga people stay in what is Binga today which is adjacent to the Zambezi River. From the 1950s to date the tale of conflict became an unceasing major concern

to the BaTonga people not only in Binga but also elsewhere where BaTonga communities can be found in Hwange, Gokwe and Kariba districts in Zimbabwe. People in Binga were denied access to major social services until late 20th and early 21st century that the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) community started and continued to eye for the place for development programmes. In the past they (BaTonga people) were largely cut off from the benefits that accrued to other Zimbabweans, especially those in urban areas (Kuthan: 2010). Moreover, until the early 1980s, which saw the building of schools, clinics and roads, these benefits all but completely by-passed the Tonga (Kuthan: 2010). However, to date poverty is still a status quo in Binga, attributable to what other scholars and researchers regard as 'marginalisation'. The communities in Binga are still conflicting with the district's highest authorities.

Established in terms of the Rural District Councils Act Chapter 20:13, Binga is one of the 61 rural districts in Zimbabwe currently. Its geographical location is at the edge of the southern part of the Zambezi River in north western Zimbabwe. BRDC was established on the 19th of September 1980. It is one of the biggest district in Matabeleland north province with a population estimate of 139 092 involving 75 356 females and 63 736 males (Zimstat Census Report, 2012). The district is divided into Binga north and Binga south constituencies. The north constitutes 15 and the south 10 of the 25 administrative wards in the whole district. Binga district is occupied by the BaTonga speaking people who are known with rich conservative culture and peaceful co-existence. Of the Binga population as depicted in the 2012 population census, 37,5 % are communal farmers; 92,5 of households do not dwell in units with electricity; and 96,2% are rural dwellers. In terms of employment status there is 62, 5 of employed people and 37, 5 in communal farming. Most people in Binga (66,

8%) are in the agricultural sector and 4,3% are occupied in the education system. Of late, because of the population dynamics highlighted above it is of no question why among the major conflicts between communities and BRDC, the land issue is at its peak as will be presented forth.

BRDC is a local authority responsible for transacting development aspects of the district. It has its three sub-offices one located in Siabuwa, a cotton growing area almost 100 km east of Binga centre; the other at Mlibizi which is a tourist resort and fishing area and Lusulu which is well known for cereal crop growing. The sub-offices were put to enhance effectiveness in administering the much demands of the fast growing district in terms of population and demand for good quality services. In a bid to endeavour the transformation of communities, BRDC and the community are found at logger heads. Hence, the marrow of this paper unrolls the origin of the misunderstandings and tracing the resultant effects both in delivering services, development and in terms of public relations.

Theoretical framework

The understanding of conflict yield long debates among theorists across disciplines in the academic discussion. This research adopts the Dahrendorf's conflict theory. On the basis of his assumptions, Dahrendorf argues that society can be split up into the "command class" and the "obey class" and class conflict should refer to situations of struggle between those with authority and those without (Tittenbrun, 2013). Dahrendorf claims for the universal historic existence of the conflict classes. Hence, the theory is based on the relations of authority, which differ between the two classes, the subordinated and the superior. The two classes are regarded by Dahrendorf as part of the social structure which further permeate the sprouting of the group conflict. Hence in this context, conflict has universal

existence and hence inevitable among social groups.

The groups in society are termed by Darendorf as the Imperatively Coordinated Associations (ICA) or groups which are based on authority. There is existence of group interests which are the major sources that can fuel conflict in society. In the eye of Darendorf, the plurality of society lies between the dominant and the subordinate. The theory incites that structurally fortuitous relations do not manifest conflict but rather it is a result of the exercise of authority. Power and authority are the major concepts impinging Darendorf's conflict theory. The theory propagates that power is factual in a society, and authority is legitimate. Therefore, those on authority are perceived to have control. Classes are deemed to be the social conflict groups. The theory further expresses that conflict varies in its intensity and violence levels. Darendorf shares views with Marx when he gives an argument that society's culture mirrors the interests of the powerful elite, and neither the political interests of those in the middle or lower class of the stratification system. Conflict can be a cost in terms of one's life, money, infrastructure and other resources. Class conflict in Darendorf's conflict theory is related to the three varying factors and these include technical, political and social conditions; the effective regulation of conflict within society; and the level relative deprivation. In relation to this research, Darendorf's conflict theory is adopted as it gives a picture on why conflicts exist between communities and local authorities. With regard to this article, the theory is adopted as it expresses the reality of the two groups, BRDC as in authority, and the communities who are of the other class. The two institutions have different interests which fuel into conflict. The conflicts between local authorities and communities have some historic origins as Darendorf expresses. It is upon this theory that the article is coined.

Overview of conflict situation in local authorities in Zimbabwe

Conflict manifests itself as a difference between two or more persons or groups characterized by tension, disagreement, emotion or polarization, where bonding is broken or lacking (Kohlrieser, 2007). Conflict is the result of opposing interests involving scarce resources, goal divergence and frustration (Swanström and Weissmann, 2005). Such antagonistic circumstances are rampant between communities and local authorities to date. The term local authority denotes administrative bodies that are officially responsible for all the public services in specific geographical areas such as cities, towns, municipalities, counties and boards. Local authorities are tasked with ensuring provision and maintenance of public services to local residents through the utilisation of funds generated from the local communities, in addition to loans and grants from the central government and other sources (Zimbabwe Institute, 2005 quoted in Gideon and Alouis, 2013). In 1985 the Zimbabwean Prime Minister offered a directive of decentralising local government functions. This was a greater move in the political and administrative dispensation of Zimbabwe. The directive was primarily and deliberately incepted to allow local authorities to run administration at local level. Such decentralisation brings an important dimension of good governance, accountability and transparency (Gideon and Alouis, 2013). The proximity of local government to consumers of their services can easily make them accountable to them and compel them to be transparent (Chigwenya, 2010 quoted by Gideon and Alouis, 2013). The Government of Zimbabwe (2013) provides the principles of public administration and leadership on section 194 of chapter 9 of the constitution. However, in a bid to render the mandated services to communities, the decentralised entities (local

authorities) and communities are found in confrontation of disagreements and accusations. Some of the contestations do end up in high courts in a win-lose situation as the culture has usually been.

With specific reference to Zimbabwean local authorities conflicts with communities originate from scarcity of resource, poor service delivery by councils to the masses, land issues, fiscal contributions among them all. Corruption which is also rampant in local authorities in its distinct forms has been also part of the analytical literature in the current world's state of affairs. Land use planning and natural resource usage are the major conflicts underpinning rural communities and local authorities. In some cases, available literature records conflict between animals and local communities like in areas surrounding Hwange national park across the Zambezi valley. 'Binga files counter court application to evict villagers' is a headline in the Chronicle of 11 May 2015 by Netsinda. The article sheds light on the conflict existing between Siansundu community in Binga and Binga Rural District Council as the planning authority. The conflict has some historical connotations that the master plan dating back to 1996 calls for establishment of rural service centre in Siansundu ward. In many RDCs communities are at logger heads with the local councils although not much documentation is available for scrutiny.

In both pre and post-independence Zimbabwe local government has been a terrain for sub-national governance conflicts and innovations (Chatiza, 2010). Although not much was published on conflicts between communities and local authorities in Zimbabwe, the media provides a strong platform to inform about this status quo. Sunday News of 12-18 July 2015 page 8 has a headline 'Hwange RDC fails to complete stand servicing' by Muponde (2015). Here, Muponde (2015) reports that servicing

of stands started last year (2014) despite protests from villagers and human rights organisations which view the displacement of villagers to pave way for the suburb inhumane. The same paper gives that there are also reports that the local authority is also facing problems in relocating the affected villagers, since it has not been allocated land to settle. On the same note, Bulawayo 24 News (2013) has a headline 'housing stands scandal rocks Nkayi council'. Here the local authority is accused of corrupt activities and unclear proceedings in allocation of stands. The Sunday news of 24-30 May 2015 includes a headline 'illegal Binga lodges owners nabbed'. The story reveals of seven home owners in Binga who have been fined and arrested for running unregistered lodges after turning their star-graded posh houses into commercial accommodation facilities for tourists in Mlibizi.

Relief web (08 October 2013) has a headline that 'illegal land sales driving rural vulnerability in Zimbabwe'. In the paper Chombo, the then Minister of Local Government, Public Works and National housing commented that 'many rural municipalities have worsened the situation for villagers by expanding into villagers' land to build houses for employees, local businesses and workers at rural business centres'. 'Nyanga rural district council up in arms with villagers' is a story in the News Day of July 11 2015 by Manayiti. In the paper is a statement which reads 'the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) has intervened to save close to 20 villagers in Nyanga who are up in arms with their local authority for seeking the services of the army and the police to evict them from Sarutani village'. ZLHR argued that in terms of section 74 of the constitution, no person may be evicted from their home, or have their home demolished without an order of the court made after considering all relevant circumstances, the report says. Another case is reported on Radio Dialogue by Harris on

March 31, 2014 head lined that ‘Tsholotsho villagers, council clash over timber concessions’. The paper has an introductory statement that locals in Tsholotsho are unhappy with their rural district council, accusing it of making independent decisions without consulting them regarding the use of proceeds gathered from the sale of timber’.

Manayiti in Newsday of 13 April 2012 tells a story with a headline that ‘villagers drag Chombo to court’. The paper says that Local Government, Rural and Urban Development Minister Ignatious Chombo has been dragged to the Bulawayo high court by Matobo villagers for appointing five ZANUPF activists as special interest councillors to their local authority. The villagers were challenging the appointments, which they described as illegal. Parliament of Zimbabwe (2012 p. 5) report of the Portfolio Committee on Local Government, Rural and Urban Development on service delivery by the local authorities of Gutu and chiredzi confirms that “sometimes clients paid money to the Council but they were not allocated stands at all. This only helped to make the community lose confidence in the housing delivery system of the Gutu Rural District Council. It was also bound to cause unnecessary conflict and acrimonious relations”.

Some of the conflicts between communities and local authorities emerge from some development interventions. However, “pursuing development projects without addressing the root causes of the challenges is likely to exacerbate conflicts. Development must therefore be pursued in a way that does not increase the conflict potential within these areas” (Centre for Conflict Management and Transformation; 2014 p. 8).

Methodology

Data collection was done in a couple of phases. The first phase involved desk review of secondary literature. In the second phase primary data was collected by employing the interviews with the Local Government staff, local councillors, communal farmers, district level government officials and the general community. Respondents were purposively selected basing on the knowledge of researchers so as to control the quality of research results by targeting the relevant informants. A mixed approach was used to solicit research results in relation to the research objectives. The research was more qualitative in nature. Qualitative research method involves data collection methods which usually involve close contact between the researcher and the research participants, which are interactive and developmental and allow for emergent issues to be explored (Moriarty, 2011). One of the reasons for using qualitative research is to understand any phenomenon in its complexity, or one that has been dismissed by mainstream research because of the difficulties to study it, or that has been discarded as irrelevant, or that has been studied as if only one point of view about it was real (Ospina, 2004). As such, qualitative approach have been realised as relevant to meet the objectives of this kind of research. Ethics were prominently observed during the collection of primary data. Relevant authority was sought by researchers from the institution under study. Consent was sought for from the respondents before giving any answer. Therefore, participation of respondents in the study was voluntary. Confidentiality was solely maintained as informants were not encouraged to disclose their real names, and neither have they appeared in this paper. All secondary data was well acknowledged herein. A case study approach was selected since it helps coming up with the deeper understanding of the phenomena under study. (Simons 2009, 21quoted in Moriarty, 2011) defines a case study as “an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the

complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a 'real life' context".

Findings and discussion

Community understanding of conflict

The research indicated that the community understands conflict as a misunderstanding between or among people, or institutions due to different perceptions. In this instance, the community pointed out that conflict can come in two folds which are anti-development and pro-development. One key respondent expressed conflict as a clash of interests of individuals or groups in communities. Most respondents said the failure or lack of communication between two groups in a community can engineer conflict in one way or the other. Though many definitions have been given in trying to describe conflict, there is a notion that conflict can be a result of cultural diversity which is a characteristic feature of the population of Binga district leading to disagreements that are an indicator of conflict.

Major conflicts and their causes

The major conflicts that exist between local authorities and the communities in Zimbabwe are in poor service delivery; distribution of resources by the local authorities; poor infrastructure which is a common indicator of development in Africa; land allocations and boundaries of settlement, agricultural and conservation areas; and property ownership among others. It is beyond a reason of doubt that the conflicts have emanated from the uncorrected resettlement of BaTonga people since the 1957 evacuation from the Zambezi valley. Some of these conflicts emerge due to poor communication and lack of consultation by the local authorities. Although resident in Binga, immigrants rarely acknowledge Tonga leadership. They regard the Council, entirely Tonga, as tribally biased against them and also

as inefficient (Dzingirai And Madzudzo, 1999).

Binga is the scene of many disputes related to land and natural resources. This is partly a result of the increasing demand on these resources as a result of population growth, but also is a result of the continued depletion of these resources in both quantity and quality due to degradation, overuse and over-harvesting, and governance deficits. People were placed in poor arid and waterless areas during the 1957 evacuation in paving way for the Kariba Dam construction. The population that depends on agriculture for livelihood has increased, but the areas under cultivation remains the same and continuously degraded. This has led people to migrate towards the abundant places like Nsungwale, Nkalange, Kamalumbu, and Songo, the idle uncultivated lands with reliable sources of water. In Luunga ward, villagers have abandoned their old farm land and got into the conservation areas where they are denied by the local authority since the areas are under the concession with Carbon Green Africa (CGA), an organisation that is based in conserving vegetation. For such instances, the local authority planned to evacuate people from Sinakatenge area to Gungwe which is an area reserved for the Sinakatenge chieftainship. One key informant revealed that "people are settling in conservation areas in the name of cultivation because their lands are infertile". However, people disagree, noting that the area is poorly developed as noted by lack of clinics, schools, road network, potable water, electrification and other social services necessary for human life. They also ask on how many times they should be resettled, fearing the similar consequences as of the past where they were told 'water will follow you' but it never followed them. Such a sponge of conflict remains an unresolved puzzle.

The major conflict that has and is still continuing between the Local authorities and

the communities is the allocation of natural resources and public funds such as in the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) funds in 19 wards of Binga. Not all parts of the BaTonga community have access to the resources although they are abundant in existence. This has torn the relations between the common peasant population and those controlling the resources. People had hope that they would benefit at large under the scheme *Banyama Mbibesu*. However, they were startled to find out that the endangered species are being swept by our neighbours from the north (Zambia) and those from the eastern part of Zimbabwe. One key informant mentioned that “some communities resettled themselves on the game areas in search of good land for agriculture thereby doing poaching which is illegal”. Moreso, the concessions which used to operate in these communities have left nothing tangible for the communities except their shadows. This became a driving motion for people settling in conservation areas which seem to be the major sources of revenue for the local authority, and hence generating possibilities of further conflicts.

One of the key informants concurred that there is poor and inefficient service delivery by the local authorities leaving most of the people waiting for more to come from the local authorities. One of the key informants in the administration department of BRDC echoed by saying that, “for what is collected, people want to see tangible evidence of utilisation of collected revenue of which it is not enough for that”. Most people expect the local authority to develop their districts through good service delivery and tangible structures such as schools, clinics and roads. However, the local authority has proven this to be a hard granite ground for them. The senior officer at BRDC revealed that the local authority is not getting enough grants from the government. This is a clear sign of dependency syndrome where local authorities rely on government to provide

funds. Due to the failure to deliver services the people no longer have faith and trust in the local authority with the fact that more is collected from them in the form of taxes and levies and little is done in their wards. This misunderstanding is endemic and unabated by local authorities.

On the other hand, the major conflict in Zimbabwe between the communities and the local authorities has been observed in unclear definition of boundaries, and lack of understanding of land ownership in communal areas. The Local authority has failed to give a defined distinction of wards. The Dobola ward case has enlightened the challenge in the allocation of resources due to undefined ward boundaries. In this instance, Dobola ward is divided into the lower and the upper. One respondent argued that “wards are divided, like lower and upper Dobola, but they are counted as one ward; this creates a challenge in sharing resources where the other part of the ward fails to benefit”. The conflict of boundaries is more pronounced to communities that are settled near to conservation zones identified as wards 5, 6 and 12 in Binga north among them. On a different note, people are moved from their communal areas without their consent as what became a court case at Siansundu community against the ministry responsible for Local Government in general and Binga RDC in particular. The issue of Local Government minister’s extended hand is now a pandemic disease in local authorities of Zimbabwe as the minister does as he deems necessary, with interference in the allocation of land for residential, commercial and recreational purposes, as empowered by the local government legal status. This is pathetic to find out that local authorities have a tendency of relocating the people to infertile lands when they pretty know that the populations solely depend on subsistence and peasantry farming for survival. This conflict will not decay as long the councils in Zimbabwe continue the Hitler

styles of implementing their projects in their districts.

The common communal population has developed some perceptions which make their relations with the local authorities sour. Tax and revenue collectors in their past used to collect money from the people but failed to plough back to their communities. One informant issued that “what is collected is not sufficient even if taxes are increased”. Another key respondent released that “the levies and licencing fees compared to what they are offering is not in line...for example there are high charges of stands but they are failing to service them as a local authority”. One would be justified to say that the people see robbers whenever they see the local authorities in Zimbabwe, thereby increasing the already existing tensions.

The local authorities in Zimbabwe are at some point involved in grabbing community property to increase their income base. The Heifer Project has handed over some cattle sales pens to communities such as Manjolo, but it is a disgust to say that the BRDC has made moves towards incorporating the community property into their inventories. One ordinary community member contested that “the local authority has failed to come up with high sounding projects which can sustain them” and in turn they grab community property. This has in turn increased their lack of transparency and accountability at large, which are among the key principles of good governance. Failure to critically observe the principles of good governance principles further fuel the existence of friction that further strains the relations between communities and local authorities.

Local authorities in Zimbabwe have long failed to provide efficient and effective service delivery though they charge exorbitant taxes. The BRDC has never managed to fully provide clean water in all the wards as said by

respondents that the Kalungwizi community is in dire need of water. Most of the boreholes are not maintained, no new boreholes are being drilled despite the Water and Sanitation Health (WASH) Programmes which happened to benefit mostly areas in Binga South. Though this has not come as a fault finding, one would appreciate to say that most of the conflicts arise due to a failure to provide social services as the rural people still travel long distances to access the substandard health, education and water facilities. As highlighted by one BRDC key informant, the local authorities in Zimbabwe have not achieved their goal of providing the people with services they need, hence people have a right to complain. It was pointed out that the local authorities are failing to provide sufficient services to their communities due to the fact that the government is not unleashing some grants for them to make developments. However this sounds sour to a district like Binga which has more than enough resources to make the projects viable.

In addition, people have not seen a dot of change from the colonial regime and the black man's governance. Many promises have come and gone unfulfilled concerning the construction of roads which can promote the growth of the district. The council has failed to tar even five kilometres of the one hundred and thirty four kilometre road from Siabuzuba to Mulambe (Siabuwa road). In spite of this failure, the gravel road is intermittently maintained which leaves people hopeless of the transparency of the activities in local authorities; and hence conflict existence is not an alarming question of the time.

On another note, conflicts have arisen from the elimination of the general public in decision making made by the local authorities. Most communities are not involved in budget formulations, and are not consulted when policies that affect them are crafted by the local authorities as said by one key informant;

people's emotions are evoked due to lack of consultation by the local authorities. One councillor for BRDC was of the view that "constitutions are written for the people but they are not unpacked for the governed to understand". The legal framework guiding local authority business as part of Local Government in Zimbabwe include but not confined to the following: The Regional Town and Country Planning Act (1976); Provincial Councils and Administration Act (1985); The Rural District Councils Act (1988); The Urban Councils Act (1993); The Traditional Leaders Act (2000); and the Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013). This paper would be void if lack of communication also is not integrated as a source of conflict between local authorities and the communities. There is poor communication between the involved partners. Most peasant population cannot interpret some policies which govern the operations of local authorities including the traditional chiefs. Traditional chiefs believe that they own the land which was left to them by their ancestors, whereas, the local authority has a mandate to manage land and its distribution. This is the key driver of the people denying paving way for development in Siansundu ward of Binga. Another case in Mucheni has erupted where the people have gone into game zones searching for farmlands. If only there was proper communication, all these misunderstandings could have gone long back.

Furthermore, the local authorities have failed to prove feedbacks to the people concerning on-going projects which are sometimes abandoned on the way. It is a public secret to mention that there have never been a few platforms for BRDC and the communities to air out their views and contribute to the development of the district. This social exclusion has obliged people to fail to realise their direct benefits or dividends from the local authorities, one Agritex officer confirmed.

Resultant effects of conflicts on service delivery, public relations and development

Mistrust has arisen between the local authorities and the communities. The local authorities appear to be vendettas than service providers to the communities. Most business people and the peasants now avoid paying tax due to the fact that they are not realizing their community share ownership. The communities have come to view the local authorities as unaccountable elephants without control even if they tramp the priceless resources in the districts. Hence, there is lack of cooperation for the common good.

One of the respondents ushered that, "more time and resources has been spent on conflict resolutions than strategizing on developmental activities". On the same note the one key informant revealed that:

The local authority hires lawyers to sue those staying in conservation areas which in turn reduce the finance meant for service delivery. This creates financial burden to the local authority. Funds meant for service delivery are diverted to courts. Communities spend their time to courts instead of doing livelihood activities.

As a result, the quality of health and educational facilities provided are substandard. It is more precise in this case to mention that the education system in Binga is drowning due to poor infrastructure and furniture in newly established satellite schools. The communities turn their eyes to BRDC as the responsible authority, thereby conflicting in the process.

In addition to this, the occurrence of these conflicts has increased the levels of corruption in the management of the district resources. Sometimes these conflicts have negatively

worsened the relations of the communities with the local authorities. A good lookout is the Siabuwa-Kalungwizi ward where the natives are now settling in the Russ-broom concession currently under the guise of Carbon Green. Local authorities are seen to be in favour of investors who fail to plough back to the indigenous communities hence rendering the indigenization policy valueless and dream lime in Binga. The public relations between communities and BRDC are further strained and made sour.

One ward councillor aired out that “development in Binga has slowed down as the local authorities spend much time dragging communities to courts”. He went on to mention an instance where some projects which were supposed to be implemented, say in February 2015 will remain pending and be effected two years later since the courts do take their time to finalise the matters. Therefore community members and local authority’s focus less on carrying out developmental plans and activities. In such case, development is much disturbed. However, some of the conflicts that exist are pointers that help to awaken both parties on issues that need to be addressed so as to attain the development agenda in the district.

Allocation of funds is reduced especially to those communities which could have been benefiting from the allocations previously. This has negatively affected the income generating activities in the communal areas. The local authorities depend on the people for revenue and hence the people no longer pay their dues to the councils. Though the improvements are inadequate, they are seen here and there like a tip of an iceberg. This has brought a parallel relationship between the local authorities and the communities in Zimbabwe.

Conclusion

The central causes of conflicts between the local authorities and the communities in Zimbabwe circulate on the increase in the population size and the degradation taking place on the fertile soils. Most people have been settled in areas with poor soils and poor if not insufficient water sources. This has driven people into conservative areas. Lack of transparency and accountability is another source of the conflict which emanates from poor communication between the local authorities and the communities. Moreso, poor understanding of the Local Government legislation by the communal people is the leading factor to the occurrence of these conflicts. Therefore in order to do away with these conflicts, there is need to educate the communities on legal matters and the governmental land policy as well as land distribution. The PRA approach may have to be taken into consideration in order to deal with the conflicts existing between communities and the local authorities. Local authorities in Zimbabwe need to implement conflict management strategies so as to do away with the negative effects of conflict and reap the blessings that conflict bring. Result of research identifies land issue as the major conflict identified by most respondents. Therefore, this research concludes that there is need to carry another study on the land conflict between communities and local authorities in Zimbabwe.

Recommendations

Development starts from education, which is part of human development. There is need for council to undertake some training workshops to capacitate the local leadership first before capacitating the communal segments. These trainings can be in a position to clarify the expenditure of CAMPFIRE funds and how resources are being allocated in the district. This will promote transparency and

accountability in the scope of the operations of local authorities.

To ensure that the communities are not at war with the local authorities, the peasants may not have to be undermined of their present, that is, there should be consultation and engagement for them to be part of the developmental process. The involvement of the rural grassroots reduces the aspect of planning for the people and hence the people are in a position to have a say of what they need. The Prime Minister's Directives guided the establishment of grassroots participation structures and provided a framework for the coordination of government institutions and participation in rural development (Kurebwa, 2015). Hence development is better achieved if it is community based than being trickled from the top. This can come true by making the bottom up approach practical in the affairs of district development planning.

The local authorities are advised to plan in ways that save people instead of endeavouring on means of evicting the people from the conservative areas. Though conflicts are solved gradually, the councils in Zimbabwe are urged to ensure transparency in policy formulations and this should involve the communities. Most people have shown that they are not aware of the economic and development policies introduced by the local authorities and even those crafted by the central government. Informants accused the local authority for failing to communicate properly with locals on issues affecting their operations. In this instance it was discovered that "communities cannot be blamed because they are not capacitated and have little education...some of the local leadership are involved but fail to discuss with people....local leaders like councillors lack education and they don't understand some of these things", one key informant revealed. Another senior district officer echoed by admitting that the "local authority have done

less on their side since they don't do consultation to communities". Many respondents revealed that neither the community nor the local authority can be blamed, either of the sides has its own mistakes. Hence statutes must be taken to the people for understanding and even the local leadership should get a better interpretation of the acts which govern the operations of local authorities.

The councils in Zimbabwe are recommended to make periodical updates to communities on whatever achievements realised or whatever has caused failure. Moreso, the traditional leaders must also be involved in conflict resolutions such as in the education system where the chiefs have an upper hand in promoting the Tonga language and culture.

There is a suggestion that there be a dialogue where the local authorities and the communities will meet and openly debate on their differences. This will improve communication and awaken the local authorities in their areas of weaknesses. On the issue of land distribution, it seems that the land policy of Zimbabwe is still murky in Binga district. People do not have a full understanding of Land Reform Programme and its distribution too. There is need of clarity on land allocation and distribution before the councils embark on such project. Moreso, the Ward Development Committees (WADCOs) and the Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) should be capacitated to be functional and these platforms can enhance the voices of the communities to be heard.

Participatory Rural Appraisal Approach (PRA) can be adopted by a local authority in order to ensure that conflicts are minimised in the future. Chambers (1992) quoted in Cavestro (2003) has defined PRA as an approach and methods for learning about rural life and conditions from, with and by rural people. He further stated that PRA extends into analysis,

planning and action. PRA closely involve villagers and local officials in the process. Chambers (1994) confirms that PRA focuses on local people's capabilities as a key resource in facilitating their participation. The objective of PRA is empowerment of people. The outcome sought out of PRA is sustainable local action and institutions (Chambers, 1994). Hence, adopting the PRA approach is also recommended as the communities have a chance to participate in whatever they want. In this case, the people have opportunities of understanding the roles and responsibilities of local authorities. Moreso, the people have a chance to consult the relevant consultants whenever they want to air their views and concerns.

Since mostly it is said that the local authorities fail to deliver services because of poor financial funding, the central government is encouraged to unleash the grants in time to relieve the local authorities. These grants can be used for roads maintenance and any other relevant projects as may be stipulated by the people. However, the local authorities are encouraged not to rely much and pin all their hopes from government grants which is a traditional way of getting funds. Rather, they need to invest and utilise the strategic ways of fund raising. Extensive efforts have been made to encourage RDCs to promote local economic development. Some of the initiatives include the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE), Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), more efficient revenue generation, and institutional and organisational capacity building (Kurebwa, 2015). Budget consultation is also encouraged for accounting to what has been done and this helps the communities to be aware of the projects being implemented by the local authorities. Hence consultation should not only be intensified but also strengthened and prioritised with every respect in communities. Kurebwa (2015) argues that the Rural District Councils (RDC) Act gives

rural communities access to the democratic participatory process in local governance and their access to benefit from local development initiatives. Once this is done perfectly, conflicts resulting from lack of consultation may be minimised.

The BRDC is also urged to open avenues of investment to both local and foreign investors who wish to invest in the district. It is at this hour that the local authorities should seek and encourage investment opportunities in the district's natural resources like mineral deposits. For instance, there are abundant deposits of coal in Siabuwa and Muchesu which are untapped. If these are exposed, the natives will have a chance to get employment and reduce the pressure on land and reduce further occupation of conservative areas. However, the other critical issues to note are that the local authorities in Zimbabwe enjoy very limited autonomy. The legal framework confirms that the minister responsible for local government can interfere in the affairs of council. He/ she approve the plans, budgets and control a lot of aspects. Not less than 250 instances as provided in the RDC Act allow the minister to interfere in council affairs. Hence, lobbying for amendment of local Government laws that can suit the demands of communities in terms of local authority mandate may help reduce the frictional forces between communities and local authorities.

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