

GOVERNMENT-LED DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN ZIMBABWE

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INTRODUCTION

This portfolio explores Zimbabwe's various efforts to spur development and how those efforts abound with good intentions, some of which are hampered by unintended consequences and constrained by tensions. In each of the initiatives discussed, the government has been primarily concerned with economic development and growth. I begin by providing a foundational analysis of Zimbabwe's colonial history and Robert Mugabe's aim to liberate the country; I make this analysis through the lens of Amartya Sen's and Paulo Freire's understandings of freedom. Next, I argue that participation in the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) led to structural violence in Zimbabwe, particularly in the fields of health and education. Furthermore, SAPs caused the reversal of some of the advancements made by Mugabe in the 1980s. Thirdly, I examine Zimbabwe's Harmonized Social Cash Transfer Program, which has been largely successful and demonstrates that cash transfer programs do not need conditions to produce the desired outcomes. After that, I explore the CAMPFIRE program – aimed at providing economic incentive for conservation – and the degree to which it has shifted resource management authority and benefits to local communities. Lastly, I review Zimbabwe's approach to gender and how efforts have focused on women and girls as a strategy for economic development yet have overlooked men and gender relations.

Conversations about and approaches to development often center around how outsiders – Western countries, international financial institutions, NGOs, volunteers, and other actors – can help a Third World country develop. In this portfolio analysis, I am interested in what the national government of Zimbabwe has done to promote its own development. Mugabe's long-term rule as the revolutionary leader who rebuked British colonial rule and promised Zimbabweans autonomy creates special interest in examining national development efforts. The country, however, has not acted in a vacuum. Factors such as a colonial past, the global dominance of neoliberal economic principles, hegemonic assumptions about the poor, and international discourse about the role of women in development have all influenced Zimbabwe's development policies and initiatives.

How the “Colonized Mentality” has Thwarted Development in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe gained freedom from British colonial rule nearly forty years ago. Since then, it has received billions of dollars from foreign aid agencies. Despite this aid, the country's poverty levels remain high and the quality of life for its citizens has seen little improvement. Why is this? Zimbabwe's history cultivated a “colonized mentality” that allowed for continued oppression under the rule of Robert Mugabe. While Zimbabwe has

made strides forward since colonial rule, achieving greater development in terms of overall well-being will require increasing citizens' freedoms.

Zimbabwe has a history of oppression and underdevelopment. British colonists arrived at the end of the 19th century and ruled the country (then Southern Rhodesia) until 1980. Following independence, Mugabe, an African nationalist, largely controlled the national government. Mugabe served first as Prime Minister from 1980-87 and then as President from 1987-2017. While the country has an election process, it often has not been free and fair (Banerjee, 2018). Mugabe resigned from office following a military coup in November 2017. Although some celebrate Mugabe as a revolutionary against British rule, and his economic and social initiatives brought varying degrees of improvement to people's lives, he also perpetuated systems of oppression and eventually became a despot (Chandler III & Chandler, 2013).

While Mugabe liberated Zimbabwe from colonial oppression, he also embodied the "colonized mentality," feeling both contempt and admiration toward the colonizer (Freire, 2005). The former president's need for the support of and control over Zimbabweans caused him to lose sight of his goal of restoring the humanity taken under British rule and to instead use violence and fraud to remove opposition and maintain his power for four decades (Frankel, 2017). Freire's theories in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* explain Mugabe's apparent hypocrisy and elucidate why liberation did not replace oppression in Zimbabwe when British rule ended. Initially, the oppressed almost always become the oppressors, because oppression is their only model and they fail to fight for true liberation. Revolutionary leaders forget that their main goal is to fight "for the recovery of the people's stolen humanity, not to 'win the people over' to their side" (Freire, 2005).

The continued oppression in the country has stunted its development. Amartya Sen defines freedom as both the ends and means of development, arguing that "the instrumental role of freedom concerns the way different kinds of rights, opportunities, and entitlements contribute to the expansion of human freedom in general, and thus to promoting development" (Sen, 1999). He says "instrumental freedoms" – political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency, and protective securities – build upon one another and lead to development. Mugabe limited access to and expansion of instrumental freedoms under his dictatorial rule. For example, opposition to the former president was met with violence and election fraud, while Mugabe's policy of complete redistribution of white-owned land led to famine and poverty (Frankel, 2017). Mugabe promised liberation but instead traded colonial oppression for autocracy disguised as democracy.

A revolutionary leader that frees the people is a false hope. Freire (2005) argues that overcoming oppression requires *conscientizacao*: critical social consciousness; the oppressed must first recognize their humanity and how they have been dehumanized. Once they have attained consciousness, then they can seek liberation together with those

committed to freeing the oppressed. Liberation, then, is a mutual process rather than a gift or self-achievement (Freire, 2005). In trying to give freedom in a top-down, controlled way, Mugabe left a legacy of violence and greed and deprived Zimbabweans of the very liberation he promised them (Frankel, 2017).

While Mugabe did lead many efforts to develop the country, particularly through economic means, he failed in many ways to support full instrumental freedom for Zimbabweans. The colonized mentality has slowed development in Zimbabwe, where underdevelopment has manifested in the lack of instrumental freedoms laid out by Sen (1999). As Freire (2005) argued, true liberation will only come when Zimbabweans have attained *conscientizacao*.

Impacts of Structural Adjustment Programs in Zimbabwe: Health & Education

In the early 1990s, Zimbabwe participated in the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), which allowed countries to restructure debt. The neoliberalist tenets of deregulation, privatization, production, and decreased social spending underpinned SAPs, whose conditionalities required debtor countries to shift towards a free-market economy. Contrary to the intended goals, SAPs had social, political, and economic impacts for developing countries that resulted in a “new intensity of immiseration” (Pfeiffer & Chapman, 2010).

In 1991, Zimbabwe announced its participation in a SAP, called the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP). The Program aimed to promote growth while reducing poverty and unemployment, but it came with hidden costs. The World Bank backed the ESAP agenda with \$175 million in structural adjustment credits and loans to support deregulation, trade liberalization, and reduced public spending (World Bank, 2012). International financial institutions protected the interests of creditor countries by enforcing economic policies that would lead to revenue generation (Graeber, 2017), which often meant that countries abandoned social programs to be able to pay back the debt. Graeber described this system as a more sophisticated form of colonialism. In Zimbabwe, the SAPs had a particularly negative impact on the health and education sectors.

Following independence in 1980, Mugabe’s government devoted significant resources to the health sector to address socioeconomic inequalities; accordingly, social indicators improved (World Bank, 2012). The 1991 introduction of ESAP in response to the economic crisis, however, led to job cuts in the healthcare sector and imposed service fees which negatively impacted the poor who could not afford to pay for services (Pfeiffer & Chapman 2010). Nurses and female community members noted that quality of care (e.g. clinic fees, wait times, and staff and drug shortages) worsened following the implementation of ESAP (Bassett, Bijlmakers & Sanders, 1997). Farmer (1999) would define this situation as structural violence, in which social institutions and structures deprive individuals of access to their basic needs and rights. SAPs affected Zimbabwe’s

healthcare system in a way that negatively and violently impacted health, particularly for the poor. Clearly, the government did not meet its goal of reducing poverty and suffering.

Much like the health sector, the education sector in Zimbabwe flourished under increased investment in the 1980s (World Bank, 2012), and the government introduced free universal primary education. However, many of the gains made in education were lost under the implementation of the SAPs. The government faced debt-servicing obligations and pressure to decrease public funding for social services. From 1991 to 1994, per capita spending on education declined by 32 percent; the reduction impacted primary education in particular (Gordon, 1997). The cuts in public funding transferred the cost burden to citizens. The government imposed tuition fees in urban areas and applied exam, sports, uniform, and other fees in all areas (Gordon, 1997). Increased school fees posed a barrier to education for students of all ages. For example, in 1996, costs accounted for 65 percent of the unenrolled students aged 13-17 not being in school (Gordon, 1997). The imposition of school fees represents another form of structural violence that disproportionately impacted the poor.

Neoliberalism asserts that the free market will allocate goods and services in the most equitable way. The impacts of SAPs in Zimbabwe, however, serve as one case among many that shows this mechanism of debt repayment failed to improve circumstances for developing, debtor countries. Ironically, SAPs in Zimbabwe served only to dismantle gains previously made in health and education, imposing forms of structural violence that worsened conditions for the poor and led to increased inequality and the intensified immiseration Pfeiffer and Chapman (2010) describe.

Zimbabwe's Harmonized Social Cash Transfer Program

Cash transfer programs have arisen as a development strategy over the past few decades. Both conditional (CCT) and unconditional (UCT) cash transfer programs provide a social safety net and are currently seen as effective approaches to poverty alleviation (Son 2008). The development community continues to debate about which approach is preferable. Zimbabwe's Harmonized Social Cash Transfer (HSCT) program demonstrates that positive impacts can largely be achieved without conditions. Furthermore, HSCT provides a means for examining how conditions more broadly contradict principals of human rights and reflect particular assumptions about the poor.

In 2011, Zimbabwe's Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW) introduced the HSCT program, a UCT program for food-poor, labor-constrained households. The program covered 10 districts (16,600 households) in 2012; it then expanded to cover 20 districts (55,500 households) by early 2014 (FAO, 2015). Using \$10-25 cash transfers, HSCT aims to increase consumption and make education, basic services, and opportunities more accessible to the very poor (Angeles, 2018). Zimbabwe severely needed this program, considering 78 percent of the population lives below the poverty line and 55 percent falls below the food poverty line (Angeles 2018).

Opponents of UCTs argue a lack of conditions will not create sustained poverty-reduction, “hence, the idea is to transfer cash to the poor ‘on condition’ that the poor will commit to empower themselves and help bring future generations of poor families out of poverty” (Son, 2008). The implementation of HSCT in Zimbabwe, however, demonstrates the poor do improve their circumstances without the imposition of conditions. While HSCT has not achieved all its goals, it has shown: increased ownership of livestock/chickens; significant impact on agricultural activities; eased financial constraints; and a positive impact on food security, nutrition, and dietary diversity (FAO, 2015). Furthermore, the transfers resulted in: households’ reduced dependency on family and neighbors; decreased debt; a 1.47 spending multiplier of the transfer amount; improved material well-being for children; and increased protection of youth (Angeles, 2018).

The impacts of HSCT demonstrate that the poor will act to improve their circumstances when given access to money. The “poverty trap” of no assets and negligible income – not a lack of understanding – prevent the poor from escaping poverty (Hanlon, 2009). The beliefs that the poor are responsible for their own poverty, waste money given to them, and must be taught to be “better” people are rooted in 19th century thinking and were revived under neoliberalism starting in the 1980s (Hanlon, 2009). Proponents of UCTs, on the other hand, trust that individuals know their own needs best and view conditionalities as demeaning coercion of the poor (Son, 2008).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights names an “adequate standard of living” as a universal right and provides a rationale for cash transfers (Hanlon, 2009). The government of Zimbabwe shares the values of this human rights framework, as reflected in the MLSW’s vision of “a social protection system that promotes a decent standard of living for all people in Zimbabwe” (MLSW, 2018). Attaching conditions to cash transfer requires the poor to act in particular ways, making the cash transfer something that must be earned rather than an entitlement.

When an adequate standard of living is framed as a human right, conditionalities become unwarranted control mechanisms over the poor. Evidence shows conditions have little impact on the performance of recipients (Hanlon, 2009), and Zimbabwe’s program has done well without them. Given these considerations, conditions on cash transfers lack compelling justification.

CAMPFIRE: Local Benefit from Resource Management & Conservation?

Zimbabwe is one of the top five African countries for international tourism (AfDB, 2018), much of which revolves around its national parks and wildlife. Following liberation in 1980, the state sought to reverse locals’ dispossession of land that occurred under colonial rule (McIvor 1994). The goal of Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources’ (CAMPFIRE) is for local communities to benefit from natural resource use. In assessing resource control in Kenya and Indonesia, Peluso (1993) finds

that (1) power struggles exist between the state and communities over resource control, access, and allocation, (2) conservation efforts often benefit the state over local people, and (3) locals are blamed for destroying nature. Zimbabwe provides the opportunity to see if these findings hold true in another context.

Conservation efforts often rely on moral arguments for protecting the environment, with the underlying goal of maintaining a pristine version of nature “for tourist consumption” (Peluso, 1993). In Zimbabwe, however, an economic argument takes center stage. Zimbabwe’s 1975 Parks and Wildlife Act “gave landholders the right to manage wildlife for their own benefit, thus providing an economic rationale to reinforce the scientific, aesthetic, and moral justifications for wildlife conservation” (Murindagomo, 1990). The Act paved the way for the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management (now the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority) to establish CAMPFIRE in 1989. CAMPFIRE aims to reduce poverty and support the economic participation of rural communities via the sustainable use and management of natural resources (CAMPFIRE Association, 2018).

CAMPFIRE originated within the government and its “original conception aspired to true bottom-up planning with a focus on community input and autonomy” (Logan & Moseley, 2002). The program sought to shift authority over wildlife from the state to citizens and ensure the local community benefitted from the gains from resource exploitation. In reality, however, Rural District Councils (RDCs) control wildlife resources and determine the rights individual households have over these resources (Murindagomo, 1990). Locals possess only partial authority and most remain excluded from decision-making over wildlife management (Mutandwa & Tafara Gadzirayi, 2007).

Results are mixed in terms of who benefits from CAMPFIRE. The government says that “communities will benefit from revenue generated from wildlife-based projects including hunting” (ZPWMA, 2015). In 1990, wildlife (e.g. safari hunting, tourism, etc.) contributed \$250 million annually to Zimbabwe’s economy (Murindagomo, 1990). The annual monetary benefit of CAMPFIRE was approximately \$8.40 per household in 1996/97; only 52 percent of this, however, was distributed to communities, instead of the 80 percent prescribed by the program (Logan & Moseley, 2002). Furthermore, Mutandwa & Tafara Gadzirayi (2007) found that most community members reported that they did not feel CAMPFIRE had meaningfully improved their livelihoods – despite the creation of employment opportunities, building of infrastructure, and dividend payments – because most activities remained with the RDCs.

Conservationists are often framed as nature’s heroes, while locals are seen as its destroyers or combatants (Peluso, 1993). CAMPFIRE’s goals – such as reducing poverty as a necessary condition of conservation – reflect the belief that the poor are “their own worst environmental enemies” (Logan & Moseley, 2002). Poverty and resource management are understood as mutually-dependent. Development actors, public officials, and others commonly believe that conservation cannot be successfully undertaken by the

poor because they do not know how to manage resources on their own and will act out of individual interest at the cost of larger environmental concerns. The Zimbabwean government's desire to protect the environment from the poor motivated the creation of CAMPFIRE.

CAMPFIRE benefits locals more than some other conservation schemes have, yet it still falls short of its aims. Control has been passed to the local level, but decision-making authority and economic benefits fall largely to the RDCs rather than community members. The government must increase trust in locals' and the poor's ability to manage resources and conserve their environment.

The Limitations of Zimbabwe's Approach to Women and Gender

The Zimbabwean government has increased its focus on gender equality and equity in the last several years. It established the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender, and Community Development (MWAGCD) in 2005 and the Zimbabwe Gender Commission in 2015. The new Constitution of 2013 recognizes the right for men and women to have equal opportunities and voids all laws and customs encroaching on the rights of women (UK Home Office, 2018). The National Gender Policy and several other pieces of legislation aim to safeguard women and girls. These measures demonstrate a concerted effort by the government to increase gender equality. However, the government's decision to largely take a Women in Development (WID) rather than a Gender and Development (GAD) approach, could inhibit deep, structural change.

WID focuses on equal opportunity for and economic engagement by *women*, while GAD considers gender roles and social relationships pertaining to both *women and men* within the context of structural and institutional power relations. Although the global discourse has shifted towards GAD, the focus has remained primarily on women, while men and male identities remain in the background (Chant & Gutman, 2005). Within the WID approach, investment in women and girls is framed as a development strategy and a means of combatting poverty. Kristoff and WuDunn (2009) argue that aid seems to work best when focused on health, education, and microfinance and is most effective when aimed at women and girls. Zimbabwe's national approaches to "gender" work reflect global patterns of focusing on female members of society and how they can participate in and boost the economy.

In Zimbabwe, the MWAGCD takes a leading role in women and gender efforts. The Ministry focuses on six dimensions relating to: economic involvement of women (two dimensions); educational empowerment; political empowerment; health and well-being; and community development (MWAGCD, 2018). All the dimensions, except community development, refer specifically to women, but never explicitly mention men. Furthermore, the National Gender Policy (produced by MWAGCD) and several other pieces of legislation aim to protect and/or empower women/girls vis-à-vis issues such as gender-based violence, child marriage, inheritance, and reproductive rights. The WID

approach centralizes a focus on and investment in women/girls because adherents believe women/girls will provide a high return and improve economic performance (Kristoff & WuDunn, 2009).

In 2018, the MWAGCD opened the Zimbabwe Women's Microfinance Bank (ZWMB). President Mnangagwa said the bank will "economically empower and transform the lives" of marginalized women (Home Office, 2018). A member of the UN said the ZWMB will go far in combatting violence against women/girls; economic freedom will lead to social and political freedom (Home Office, 2018). While expanding economic freedom for women may increase women's autonomy, it is not a stand-alone solution. WID approaches, such as this one, ignore the impact men have on women and overlook the fact that women will continue to interact with unsensitized men and within patriarchal structures (Chant & Gutman, 2005). Additionally, approaches that disregard men can undermine male identities and status, marginalizing them within the family and creating a new kind of inequality (Chant & Gutman 2005).

The Zimbabwean Government has undertaken several important efforts to improve women's positions and lives. These efforts, however, focus on women and ignore men and broader gender relations. Gender interventions will only get so far without men, while women-focused interventions can produce male-female hostilities and a "crisis of masculinity" (Chant & Gutman, 2005). The government could enhance its approach by looking beyond economics and women only and by increasing attention on gender relations and on men. A truer GAD approach would allow Zimbabwe to start to address the underlying norms and structures that produce and reproduce the gender inequalities, biases, and violence that negatively impact both women and men.

CONCLUSION

As this portfolio has demonstrated, development initiatives led by Mugabe's government in post-colonial Zimbabwe have varied in their levels of success. The Economic Structural Adjustment Program of the 1990s, heavily interlinked with international debt, failed to develop the country or benefit the poor. In fact, it introduced new forms of structural violence that backtracked previous progress made in the areas of health and education. Conservation efforts under CAMPFIRE and approaches to gender have achieved notable successes. At the same time, however, CAMPFIRE could go further to devolve resource management to local communities and approaches to gender could be broadened to include both men and underlying gender relations. The Harmonized Social Cash Transfer program stands as one of Zimbabwe's most prominent successes. It has provided important social safety nets for the poor, while also demonstrating trust in individuals' capabilities to improve their circumstances when provided with the necessary resources.

Mugabe rose to power as the revolutionary leader that released Britain's grasp over Zimbabwe and brought independence to the country. The initiatives discussed in this

portfolio were led by Mugabe's government and represent efforts to develop the country. In trying to liberate Zimbabweans, however, Mugabe lost sight of the importance of many of the instrumental freedoms described by Sen (1999) and the need for people to play an active role in attaining their freedom (Freire, 2005). The overthrow of Mugabe presents an opportunity for Zimbabwe to become truly liberated and pursue a deeper level of development that offers social, political, economic, emotional, and physical well-being. Zimbabwe, like all places, must begin to understand development in more than purely economic terms. In fact, it may be time to shift away from the "development" discourse and focus instead on the grassroots and social movements that have started to dismantle systems of oppression and inequality in various places around the world (Escobar, 1992).

Questions for further exploration include: Will Mnangagwa's presidency diverge from Mugabe's autocratic rule? In which areas and to what extent have grassroots and social movements already impacted and brought change to Zimbabwe? Where does opportunity lie, or where can it be created, for increased participation by community members? In a time when the world is governed and shaped by entrenched national and global systems and institutions that produce and perpetuate inequality, to what extent can post-development and participatory approaches dismantle the status quo, both in Zimbabwe and the world at large?

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