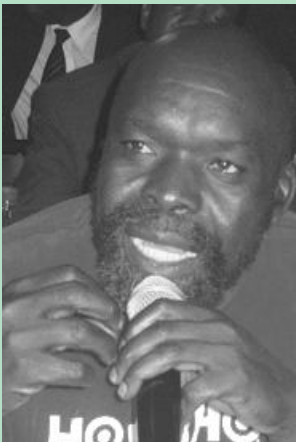
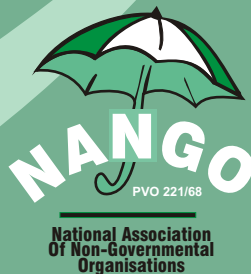


NATIONAL SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY CONFERENCE

21-22 June, 2007, Crowne Plaza, Harare



"Citizens have the Right to
Demand
Accountability;
Public Actors have the Obligation
to be Accountable to Citizens"



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Social Accountability Conference that was convened by the National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO) provided a much-needed 'safe' space for individuals and the civil society to deliberate frankly on current national challenges. The structure of the conference allowed for different voices to be heard, and these included the voices of people with disabilities who gave compelling evidence on the nature of discrimination that they face in their daily lives. Mr. Farai Mukuta, from NASCOH, especially pointed out that people with disabilities face major challenges when it comes to securing jobs, even if they have the requisite qualifications. He also noted that accessing information on HIV and AIDS is particularly challenging for the visually impaired and the deaf and dumb, many of whom are not even aware of condoms.

Informal traders were another voice that was heard at the conference. They too gave a moving account of the difficulties that they are facing as they try to make an honest living for themselves and their families. The charging of passport fees and visas in foreign currency and the unavailability of identification papers and emergency traveling documents were said to be some of the greatest hindrances to informal traders. They lamented that the informal sector is often treated as a peripheral economy, and yet it is arguably the biggest employer in the country at the moment. The conference was persistently haunted by the spectre of Operation Murambatsvina, whose impact on ordinary Zimbabweans is still felt quite strongly, two years later. It was evident from the discussions that there is a lot of raw anger amongst Zimbabweans, many of whom view the exercise as epitomizing the height of government's arrogance and total lack of respect for the democratic principles of upholding justice and human dignity.

While it was evident from the deliberations that participants clearly understand the concept of social accountability, it was also quite apparent that there was no corresponding clarity on to how to seek redress for the injustices being experienced. Participants, including parliamentarians, noted that repressive legislation in the form of POSA and AIPPA and the increasing preference for military intervention by the government are all major obstacles for civil society. The total co-option of the media has not helped either. Unfortunately, not enough time was given to discuss possible solutions to the crisis. The last session of the conference was rather brief and hurried, which therefore only allowed for the collection of ideas without developing a concrete action plan to implement the recommendations. The conference's greatest utility was that it created a unique opportunity for individuals, activists, civil society organisations, parliamentarians and senators to meet, under one roof and share ideas and strategise together on a way forward. The opportunity to brainstorm on solutions and develop a coordinated plan of action was, however, not effectively taken advantage of, and this was perhaps the greatest limitation of the conference. The absence of government representatives at the conference was the other major limitation. Notwithstanding these two challenges, the conference successfully fulfilled its mandate. A key recommendation from participants was that NANGO should produce a position paper, based on the conference proceedings and presents it to the government. A sub-committee was appointed to refine the recommendations and work on the position paper. Participants also strongly recommended that NANGO inspects the voters roll and takes the lead by fundraising for nationwide, intensive voter education so that ordinary women and men are informed of their rights as voters. Finally, NANGO was challenged to be more visible and more vocal in condemning injustices being perpetrated by the government and other duty bearers.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO) convened an historic, two-day conference on National Social Accountability, from the 21st to the 22nd of June 2007. The conference was held at the Crowne Plaza and was very well attended by over 172 participants who included Senators, Members of Parliament, chiefs and leaders from civil society and the NANGO Board and Secretariat. A total of eleven presentations were made by representatives from the following social groups: people with disabilities, people living with HIV and AIDS, the youth, women, the church and the informal sector. Unfortunately, the invited government representatives failed to make it to the conference, hence the 'government perspective on social accountability' presentation was not made. The conference was facilitated by Mr Farai Mukuta, the Executive Director of NASCOH.



(left) Mildred Sandi-NANGO Chair; (centre) Cephas Zinhumwe-NANGO Executive Director and (right) the MC Farai Mukuta, NASCOH Exec. Director



Conference participants

Aims of the Conference

- To enhance civil society organisations' understanding of social accountability from the civil society, private and public sector perspectives
- To discuss accountability challenges and opportunities in various sectors, including gender, HIV and AIDS, human rights, disability, labour and the informal sector
- To come up with concrete ways of enhancing social accountability mechanisms in Zimbabwe
- To enhance the capabilities of civil society organisations and public officials to use modern social accountability tools and methodologies
- To discuss accountability challenges and opportunities in post-Operation Murambatsvina Zimbabwe

What is Social Accountability?

NANGO has recently just completed the production of a manual on Social Accountability Tools and Methodologies. The manual provides insights into the meaning of social accountability and highlights the various ways that the concept can be applied to different contexts. The manual is meant to be a toolkit that civil society organisations can use in their various constituencies to demand for accountability from public officials. Mr Muchabaiwa, the NANGO Programmes Director, gave a brief presentation on the tools and methodologies of social accountability. These are the key points he highlighted:



Part of the NANGO Secretariat. On the far right is the NANGO Vice Chairperson

- Social accountability is about answering for the decisions and actions that one makes to specific stakeholders. It has two components, namely *taking responsibility* and *being held responsible*.
- From a rights-based approach, accountability can be defined as the obligation of power-holders to take responsibility for their actions.

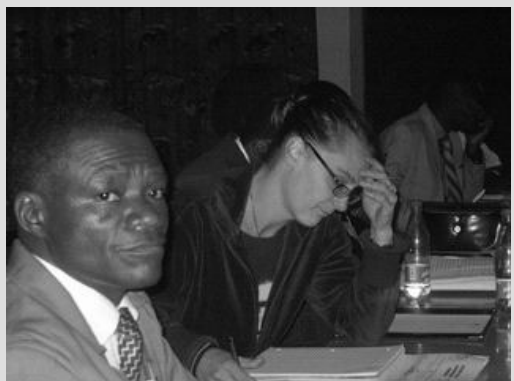


Types of Accountability

There are four main types, namely, representative, principal/agent, mutual and inclusive/collaborative accountability. Social accountability is based on inclusive/collaborative accountability, whose core rationale is individuals have the right to ask questions because all decisions that are made will affect them in some form or the other.

Key tenets of Social Accountability

1. It is *demand-driven* and operates from the bottom up.
2. It involves the *direct participation* of citizens and the civil society in public decision-making processes.
3. It is about *people getting together* to demand accountability in an analytic and systematic manner through exchanges of information.
4. It is a system that allows *government and civil society to work together* towards achieving transparency, efficiency and effectiveness in public resource use.



Detailed information on the concept can be obtained from the NANGO Social Accountability Manual, which is available from the NANGO Offices.

1.0 ADDRESS BY NANGO CHAIR, MS MILDRED SANDI

Are we afraid of accountability?

Mrs Sandi began her address by acknowledging the different funding partners who had contributed to making the conference a reality. These included the Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), the Frederick Neuman Foundation (FNF), MS Zimbabwe and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

Mrs Sandi noted that the conference was the first of its kind in Zimbabwe. This is because most people talk about social responsibility rather than social accountability. In her address, she underpinned the importance of social accountability at all levels of society and she particularly challenged civil society organisations to be just as accountable as they expect the government to be. She explained that civil society is accountable to its employees, the government and the regional and international community. Mrs Sandi observed that civil society often does not understand that it too has to be accountable hence NANGO had produced the Social Accountability Manual to assist civil society organisations in this regard.



MILDRED SANDI
NANGO Chairperson

Social accountability demands that the powerless are heard and that those in power listen to, and respond efficiently to the needs of the powerless. Social accountability is about sharing successes and challenges and turning these into opportunities for sustainable development. Social accountability is about finding mutually beneficial ways of sharing the development space as civil society, the government and the international community and holding each other accountable for our actions.

The conference was therefore meant to provide a platform to debate the concept of social accountability and to devise strategies on how civil society and the government can both be held accountable for their actions as a key tenet of sustainable development. The questions to ask oneself throughout the conference were threefold, namely: how do we account; when do we account and what do we account for.

Mrs Sandi concluded her address by welcoming all the participants to the conference and inviting them to participate actively during the proceedings.

1.1 The Key Note Address by Luta Shaba

In her keynote address, Ms Shaba flagged a number of key issues for consideration, such as citizenship, development and empowerment.

She noted that citizenship has always been understood narrowly in terms of individuals' rights to vote and stand for public office. The exercise of these rights once individuals make it into public office or have voted is never focused on. Ms Shaba also observed that citizens become estranged due to the militarization and personalization of the public space. The public is where all the action takes place and this is where the powerful can write off



Luta Shaba
Executive Director, The Women's Trust

some individuals as 'illegitimate'. There has been some naivety around the concept of citizenship, the belief being that all citizens are equal. In reality, there are powerful and privileged citizens who do not have to negotiate for their rights, while other citizens have to. Common examples of marginalized groups are people with disabilities, women, people living with HIV and AIDS and so-called minorities. It is therefore important to understand that citizenship is not a neutral concept and can be used to both include and exclude people from certain national processes.

She proceeded to question the meaning of development and the redistributive role of governments. Ms Shaba pointed out that social accountability entails being able to answer one simple question '**What exactly do people want?**' She indicated that she had asked this question to some women that her organisation works with, and their answer was a deceptively easy one: *we want to live a good life*. What does this translate to? For Kofi Annan, a good life means having access to safe water, being safe from violence, having enough food and shelter for one's family, being able to send one's children to school and having a non-oppressive state that responds to the needs of its citizens. Kofi Annan asserted that an appreciation of these needs had the potential to revolutionise development work. The good life is about sustenance, self-esteem and having choices. Ms Shaba noted that development is everyone's responsibility and should not be left to non-governmental organisations alone.

The third concept that Ms Shaba touched upon was empowerment. She noted that empowerment is bandied about without an interrogation of its actual meaning. In fact, while it has become a catch-word in development circles, very few people can actually operationalise it. Empowerment is about participation and inclusion. Empowerment is about increased control and decentralization of power. It is also about transformation and agency. When a people have been empowered, they see themselves as entitled to participate at all levels of decision-making and they can demand to be included in decision-making processes. Empowerment, as a concept, is based on the understanding that power is not a finite resource. It is based on the infinitely fluid notion of power *with*, power *in* and power *to* rather than the limiting concept of power over, which implies that power can never be equitably shared.

Ms Shaba drew attention to people-centred development, upon which rights-based approaches to development is predicated. She explained that every culture espouses the principles of human dignity and social security. Therefore when human dignity is violated, the very fabric of humanity is itself violated. She cautioned participants from the confining legalistic definition of rights, and argued for a more people-centred definition. People often know when they have been violated and that is what governments and civil society should always be responding to. The key components of people-centred development, against which governments should be held accountable are: subsistence, protection against violence and violation, participation in processes, identity and self determination, leisure, creation or artistic development, information and transcendence or the need for spirituality, however it is defined. It is everyone's role, and government's especially, to ensure that suitable conditions exist in order to facilitate the attainment of these rights.

In conclusion, Ms Shaba summarized social accountability as involving revisiting the job descriptions of public officials. When people are elected into office, they make many promises to their constituencies, and it is their successes and failures in delivering on these promises that should be used to hold them accountable. Ms Shaba pointed out that being held accountable is a normal requirement of any person's job, and that performance reviews are part of employment contracts. She therefore proposed that similar work ethic standards that are required of employees in industry should be used to hold public officials accountable.

Discussion I

The keynote address was well received by participants who were of the view that it flagged critical issues on social accountability and set the right tone for the rest of the conference. It was evident from the onset

that participants were keen on finding solutions to Zimbabwe's multi-faceted crises, particularly as they related to holding the government accountable for the prevailing economic and political situation. Below is a summary of some of the main issues raised following the keynote address.

- ***Who defines development and for whom?***

There was protracted debate on the meaning of development. Participants noted that poor people are never invited to define what development means for them, and that it is always the elites, who include development practitioners, who decide what development is and should be. Some of the views expressed on this issue included the lack of an enabling environment in present day Zimbabwe to critique development agendas and hold politicians accountable when they err. The common person is not given an opportunity to interrogate politicians as intimidation and threats are used at political rallies to prevent ordinary citizens from making choices on who they want to represent their interests.

- ***Role and relevance of civil society in present-day Zimbabwe***

Participants puzzled over how to give life to the issues raised in Ms Shaba's presentation, given the prevailing political and economic situation. Concerns were raised on the role, relevance and vibrancy of the Zimbabwe civil society in holding public officials accountable to the ordinary Zimbabwean citizen who is grappling with survival issues on a daily basis. Observations were made of the hyper-inflationary environment which has contributed to unprecedented price hikes, almost on a weekly basis. Civil society, through NANGO, therefore needs to define its space and role as a monitoring body whose mandate is to ensure that government remains accountable to its citizens. There was a sense that civil society is failing to respond creatively to the new forms of structural violence, as represented through various restrictive legislations, such as POSA, AIPPA and the Interception Bill. Civil society was castigated for not exploring informal ways of demanding accountability from the government, outside the rubric of formal elections which are only held every five years. How do we hold the government accountable in between elections? Public opinion polls, demonstrations and various forms of media were mentioned as some of the ways of holding government's accountable.

- ***What is the way forward?***

The question of how to operationalise the concept of social accountability in the Zimbabwean context was a major talking point. Participants were reminded that Ms Shaba's presentation was meant to simply flag critical issues for discussion rather than proffer solutions. Participants were assured that the last day of the conference would be devoted to mapping concrete strategies on how to hold the government and civil society accountable to ordinary women and men in Zimbabwe. The absence of any government officials at the conference was noted and commented upon.

EIGHT WAYS TO BE SOCIALLY ACCOUNTABLE

1. **Revisit** the fundamentals e.g. reverence for constitutions
2. Collectively **re-define** accountability from a rights-based approach
3. **Re-humanise** citizens i.e. the state should be accountable to its citizens
4. **Freedom** of speech
5. **Separation** of political functions
6. **Accountability** to institutions
7. **Clarity** on the social agenda
8. **Engagement** with the state in whatever form

2. SECTOR PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

2.1 The Labour Movement's Perspectives on Social Accountability

Mr Mutemero highlighted the various ways that the current government has failed its people and for which it should be held accountable. He prefaced his presentation by thanking NANGO for acknowledging the important role played by the labour movement. Mr Mutemero criticized the stifling political environment in the country which is making it increasingly difficult for workers to articulate their concerns without putting themselves at great personal risk. He observed that the absence of the government at the conference symbolizes its arrogance and its unwillingness to be held to account for its actions.

Mr Mutemero noted that the politicization of everything in Zimbabwe was one of the main ways that the government is using to stifle individuals and workers in the country. He commented on the absurdity of the narrow definition of politics that government uses, and instead underscored the political nature of everything human beings do. Life is political and everyone is a politician. Everyday, when we sit with our friends or family members and discuss the hyper-inflationary environment or when we worry about where to get money to pay our bills, we are engaging in highly political issues. When we vote in elections we are being political. When we question and challenge decisions, we are being political.



Elijah Mutemero - ZCTU

He further noted that the ZCTU is a political organisation, whose role it is to question and demand answers from those who have been voted into public office and entrusted with the country's development agenda. Mr Mutemero indicated that the labour movement was demanding accountability from the government on the condition of the Zimbabwean worker, who is today the most overworked, overcharged, underpaid and highly informalised worker in the world. The role of the employee is to produce high quality goods while the employer is expected to pay a wage that allows the employee to live, save and invest. This is not the case in the country today and government needs to account for this.

Normal societies are characterised by three major social classes: the rich, middle class and the poor. In Zimbabwe, there are only two classes-the super-rich and the super-poor. These discrepancies need to be accounted for. Parliament needs to be held accountable too, as it does not seem to be actively questioning how companies can be making profits of over one thousand percent, while the impoverishment of employees worsens. The transparency with which public funds are used is another issue of concern. Mr Mutemero pointed out that ZCTU is the largest contributor to NSSA and to the AIDS Levy, but it was never invited to sit on the boards of either NSSA or NAC so that it can participate in decision-making processes over how these funds should be used.

In conclusion, Mr Mutemero vowed that labour would continue to question, challenge and demand accountability despite various forms of government intimidation.

2.2 The Informal Sector's Perspectives on Social Accountability

Mrs Mugijima gave a very passionate presentation in which she challenged the marginalization and silencing of the informal sector. She particularly touched on the negative impact of the infamous Operation Murambatsvina, and noted how the government has still not been held accountable for its actions under this programme. Ms Mugijima castigated Senators and Parliamentarians for not holding the government accountable in its treatment of informal traders.



Mrs Mugijima - Informal Trader

Among some of the key concerns for the informal sector are:

- The destruction of informal markets continues and none of the traders who were displaced during **Operation Murambatsvina** have been allocated new places to sell their wares despite the new houses being built under Operation Garikai. The poor, who are meant to be benefiting from the Garikai homes have been sidelined. Instead, it is politicians and their relatives who are being allocated these homes.
- The suppression of organized activity, under POSA, shows how out-of-touch the government is. People are forming associations because they want to survive, not because they want to go into party politics. POSA is therefore making it hard for individuals to pursue alternative ways of sustaining themselves and their families.
- The difficulty of acquiring important documents, such as birth and death certificates, identification papers and passports has risen to incredible levels. Mrs Mugijima especially noted the fact that application fees for passports are now being demanded in forex. This is despite the fact that forex is not available at all in the country, so where are ordinary women and men supposed to get this scarce commodity?
- Privileging of foreign informal traders over local ones. Mrs Mugijima highlighted a worrying phenomenon in which local small business traders are being evicted from their business premises, which are then subsequently allocated to Nigerian and Chinese business people. She noted that the government appears to be reserving the CBD for foreign businesses. The most recent affront to informal traders is the plan to relocate the Harare Street 4th Street bus terminus, which is said to have been sold to a foreign investor.

Mrs Mugijima concluded her presentation by observing that the above examples are just some of the few ways in which the grassroots has been made invisible and excluded from mainstream development concerns. It is for this and many other issues that the government should be held accountable.

Discussion II

- ***We are all Zimbabweans. Nothing for us, without us'***

The mood of the conference was heightened after the two presentations from labour and the informal sector. This was partly because people could relate to the issues raised and also because of the tone that the presenters set. The presenters were forthright and tabled their concerns in an unapologetic manner. As with the previous discussion, participants were impatient to find solutions to the problems identified in both presentations. Concerns were raised to the effect that the challenges plaguing Zimbabwe are well known and have been over-analysed. What is missing is corresponding action on the ground. Members of the informal sector who were in the audience echoed some of the issues raised in Mrs Mugijima's presentation. They commented on the militarization of wealth in the country: ordinary people, trying to earn a living are systematically being dispossessed of their means of

livelihood. Examples include the already mentioned 'Nigerianisation' and 'Chinarising' of the CBD and the prohibition of small scale mining of diamonds and other precious minerals in Marange and other parts of the country through Operation *Chikorokoza Chapera*. The informal traders in the audience reiterated their leaders' calls for action.

- ***Role of Parliamentarians in the crisis***

An opposition MP took great exception to the charges leveled against parliamentarians, noting that there are two types of MPs in parliament. There are those from the ruling party and those from the opposition. He pointed out that opposition MPs always demand accountability from the government but are unable to effect much change because they constitute a minority in parliament. The MP cautioned participants not to forget these divisions that exist in parliament.

There was further debate on the role of parliamentarians. A participant insisted that parliamentarians were not visible in their communities and he therefore questioned whose views they represent when they are in parliament. The participant further lamented that Zimbabweans are too trusting of politicians and have entrusted them with all decision-making. As a result, few individuals are actually being proactive in finding solutions to the Zimbabwe crisis while the rest are complacent and waiting for politicians to solve the crisis. It is now time to act, and every Zimbabwean must be proactive.

- ***Role of private sector in the crisis***

A participant was of the view that current activism has been focused on the wrong target. He argued that it is the private sector that is profiteering in the current situation, and yet demonstrations have targeted the government. He further opined that it is the same private sector employers who buy expensive cars for themselves who are paying their employees 'peanuts as though they are monkeys'. Demonstrations should therefore target the private sector and employers, rather than the government.

- ***People deserve the governments they get'- Winston Churchill***

Another recurrent idea was the role that individual women and men were playing in perpetuating the Zimbabwe crisis. There was a sense that there is much cowardice among most people, who prefer to interrogate and analyze issues without taking the necessary actions needed to rectify the situation. Reference was made to the activism that characterised the late 1990's, when civil society and labour worked together and successfully resisted the proposed new constitution. There was also much activism between 2000 and 2002 which led to the opposition grabbing many seats in parliament. Unfortunately, this activism has died away completely and people seem content with the status quo. Calls were made to revisit history and learn from past successes. Until action is taken, we have only ourselves to blame and 'deserve the government that we have'.

2.3 The Church Perspective on Social Accountability

Rev Dr Zinyemba presented on behalf of Rev Muchechetere who could not make it to the meeting. Rev Dr Zinyemba introduced himself as an Organisational Development Consultant who has been working closely with the church under the Save Zimbabwe Campaign. In the presentation, Rev Dr Zinyemba showed what the Biblical perspective on leadership and accountability is. He drew heavily on the concept of stewardship and illustrated how this role was defined for Adam, after he was declared the ruler of all things on earth by God. The Biblical take on social accountability brought a new and interesting perspective to the topic. Below are the main points of the presentation



Reverend Dr Zinyemba - Consultant

Stewardship

Genesis 1:26-28. Here, God makes man in his own image and gives him dominion over everything on earth, which includes the animals, the plants and the seas. But what does this mean? Does it mean that man can deny the fish access to water? Or demand that birds stop flying?

Leadership and Social Accountability

Genesis 2:15 Here God clarifies what he means when he makes Adam the ruler over all earth. God instructs Adam to 'dress it and to keep it'. This implies that Adam is there to tend to all the living things on earth and that his key role is 'to serve' not to dominate. Whatever he does should always be in the best interest of preserving the earth as it was designed by God. In Luke 2, God reinforces the definition of leadership as one of serving others, not dominating others.

Leaders are therefore there to protect and hold in trust existing resources for the present and future generations. They will have to account for their actions at some point. Therefore, Biblically, accountability lies at the heart of leadership. It is a core principle, hence the led have the right to ask and demand their leaders to account for their actions. There is nothing sinister about this.

Participation

This was a third key concept that Rev Dr Zinyemba touched upon. He alluded to Martin Luther King who commented that 'without participation, there is no democracy'. People have the right, and the duty to participate at all levels of society. This means that decisions should be made as close as possible to where they will be implemented. Individuals and communities should be given first choice in finding solutions to their problems before the government comes in and takes over. This is what the principle of subsidiary implies.

What does this mean for Zimbabwe?

Rev Dr Zinyemba explained that Zimbabwe is the Garden of Eden. The government and civil society are the leaders who have been appointed to tend to and serve this garden. Are we participating in how this garden is being tended to as Zimbabweans? And are we accountable to the inhabitants of this garden as civil society?

The Zimbabwe We Want Report, which was crafted by a consortium of church groups, namely the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, the Ecumenical Federation of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops, documents the church's perspective on what the government needs to be held accountable for. Among some of the issues of concern raised in the report are:

- Total lack of accountability by the government, as illustrated by declining social services, power outages by ZESA, Gukurahundi, Operation Murambatsvina, ZINWA lack of capacity to provide clean water nationwide and many more examples.
- Total despondency and national despair among Zimbabweans.
- Systematic usurping of local leadership as most of the people in positions of leadership are government or political appointees. These people are obviously only accountable to those who put them into office.

All hope is not lost

Rev Dr Zinyemba concluded his presentation on a hopeful note. He pointed out that there is increased activism by the church, which has rightfully asserted itself as an agent of change. He further noted that the church agenda is not about party politics, but is centred around making those who are entrusted with leadership responsibilities account for their actions. The church agenda is about healing the nation and restoring people's faith in their leaders. It is also about redefining, in a participatory and inclusive manner, the vision of the country, as the Bible states that 'a people without a vision will perish'.

2.4 A Parliamentarian's Perspective on Social Accountability

The fourth sector presentation was made by Ms Misihairambwi-Mushonga, who is an MDC Member of Parliament and also the Chair of the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee. Ms Misihairambwi-Mushonga based her presentation on the notion of residual power and she tried to show how power ultimately rests at the grassroots. She also shared some of the strategies that she has personally adopted, as an MP, to ensure that her constituency demands accountability from public officials. She welcomed the opportunity afforded by the conference for civil society and parliamentarians to caucus on issues of national importance.



Priscilla Misihairambwi-Mushonga,
MP

Ms Misihairambwi-Mushonga drew on the marriage partnership to illustrate what accountability entails. She gave an example of how communication and keeping each other informed is an essential part of the marriage partnership. She therefore expects her husband to inform her if he is going to get home late, and she will demand an explanation from him if he does not. This is a basic aspect of accountability-communication and giving each other feedback.

She highlighted that relationships are characterised by inequities and that men usually have residual power as a result of their status in society. Her husband holds residual power by virtue of being the head of the household, while her 13 year old son also has residual power simply because he is male. It is therefore important to understand who has power in any relationship and to devise creative ways of engaging with the powerful. Often, it is the amainini from the 'small house' who is victimised rather than the man, who holds residual power due to his male status in a patriarchal society. Eradicating the 'small house' phenomenon will only succeed by targeting the man and not the amainini. In the same vein, civil society should not spend their time attacking parliamentarians, senators or trade unionists. These are not the power holders, hence they are a wrong target. Power rests with the state in Zimbabwe, so what are we doing to hold the state accountable?

As Zimbabweans, we need to be strategic and timely in our engagement with the power holders. We need to strike when they are at their most vulnerable-just as a wife knows her husband best and will wait for (or create) just the right moment to get him to do what she wants. The wife understands that she has power in certain contexts and she knows when to use it to get things done. Civil society needs to develop similar skills and to use its power strategically.

Finally, Ms Misihairambwi-Mushonga noted that while power in Zimbabwe rests with the state and that even though the state has successfully co-opted the media, civil society should not spend too much time wallowing in self-pity and negativity. She informed the conference that, as a feminist and born-again Christian, she has discovered that negativity is disempowering. Therefore, she now shares the reports that are presented to the Public Affairs Committee with her constituencies so that the grassroots becomes aware of what is happening in government. Given the media gag on the opposition, this is perhaps one of the best ways of ensuring that communities are fed the correct information which they can then use to hold public officials accountable. Ms Misihairambwi-Mushonga offered to make public accounts available to interested civil society organisations and she urged NANGO to create more such forums at community level so that more people input into the social accountability agenda.

Discussion III

Both the church and parliamentarians were heavily criticized for not doing enough to resolve the crisis in the country. Participants worried that the presentations did not offer practical solutions to the crisis. All they did was to underpin, quite cogently too, how those in positions of power were abusing their positions. Beyond this, though, the church and parliamentarians do not seem to be offering much.

On the role of the church

A participant commented that 'the state of the nation reflects the state of the church'. She lamented the rot that exists in the church today and questioned how the church can push the accountability agenda when it is itself not accountable. The church needs to be political and begin to talk about injustice much more openly than it has thus far. The church also needs to start attending to the physical man too, rather than merely focusing on the spiritual man. Can we live on promises of a better Zimbabwe? The participant called for church leaders to ask for revelation on how they can meaningfully engage with the current leadership. She also encouraged the conference to read Romans 1:12 which defines transformative leadership.

Similar sentiments were echoed by another participant who agreed with the Zimbabwe We Want concept. He, however, wanted to know what tangible results the current church strategy has yielded, and if the strategy is working at all. He further noted that Adam and Eve were made accountable by God after they had eaten of the forbidden fruit. How then does the church hope to make this recalcitrant government accountable?

In response, Rev Dr Zinyemba agreed that the church does need to be more practical. He pointed out that everyone needs to make a difference in their own little worlds, and that cumulatively these little actions would eventually coalesce into nation-wide activism.

On the role of parliamentarians

Equally harsh words were voiced on the role of parliamentarians, who were accused of being "bench warmers who speak good English and drink lots of beer". The participant also noted that parliamentarians are themselves not accountable as they are selective in what they choose to comment on and question. He particularly took Ms Misihairambwi-Mushonga to task for being very vocal during the Domestic Violence Bill debates and not being equally vocal when it came to the issue of audit reports not being submitted by the different ministries. Parliamentarians themselves do not seem to have any concrete ideas on how to solve the crisis.

Another participant disagreed with the sentiment that power resides with the state. It is the people who have power and the challenge is how to mobilize this power. This should be the key role of civil society-to mobilize people for action.

In response, Ms Misihairambwi-Mushonga noted that the current reality in Zimbabwe is that military, resource and voice power rests with the state. To bolster its hold on the people, the state has put in place various legislations which prohibit public gatherings as a means of creating a sense of disconnect among people. She pointed out that her strategy has been to avail reports from the Comptroller General's Office to interested people. The onus is therefore for anyone in a position of leadership and influence, such as civil society leaders present at the conference, to use this information to demand accountability from public officials. Considering the media gag and the ineffectiveness of parliamentary debates, this is best that she can do at the moment.

On the role of individuals

An MP argued that the lack of accountability by the government and parliamentarians should be blamed on the ordinary women and men. He noted that most people are not registered as voters and he challenged everyone to ensure that they appear on the voters roll. If you want people to be accountable, then you have to prepare for it. The government is presently issuing identity documents and birth certificates and the voter registration process is taking place. Is the church conscientising its congregations on these things? The problem in Zimbabwe is one of too much talk and not much action on the ground.

2.5 Social Accountability in the Context of Domestic Violence

Ms Muchawa, the Director of the Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association tabled the concerns of the women's movement with regards to domestic violence in the country. In her presentation she noted that, while the government is a signatory to many international and regional human rights instruments this has not necessarily improved women's de facto status in society. She highlighted that 1 in 4 women in Zimbabwe have experienced domestic violence due to any one of the following reasons: male infidelity (42%); interference from relatives (13%); cultural beliefs (13%) and alcohol abuse (9%).



EMILIA MUCHAWA - ZWLA

Human rights are women rights

Ms Muchawa pointed out that everyone's rights are catered for in the Zimbabwean constitution and in various domestic laws as well as via international instruments such as CEDAW and the SADC Declaration on the Eradication of Violence Against Women and Children. Through these various legislations, everyone, male or female, is considered a rights holder and the state is obligated to fulfill, protect and respect individual's rights to:

- life
- personal liberty
- protection from slavery and forced labour
- protection from inhuman treatment
- protection from deprivation of property
- protection by the law
- freedom of expression and conscience
- protection from discrimination of any sort

Ms Muchawa highlighted the various instances in which women's various rights are violated and she noted the poor responses to these injustices by public officials and the government. The Domestic Violence Act is yet to be operationalised and until then, there is still very little recourse to the law for victims of domestic violence. The application of laws by traditional chiefs, the quality of services being provided to women who report domestic violence and the prioritization of gender injustices are all issues of concern which women's groups would like answers to. She further lashed out at societal attitudes that treat women's rights issues as 'soft' issues, subsequently trivializing them in the process. She warned that everyone is part of a domestic arrangement; hence these issues should be of concern to all. Conscientisation is particularly needed at the level of the family, as it is here that intractable cultural beliefs still exist.

Accountability on these issues entails more than just having the 'right' laws in place and involves altering mindsets and changing people's attitudes. It is also about ensuring that enacted laws are actually applied and also about ensuring that people are actively involved in the problem identification and solution finding. New structures also need to be put in place before the Domestic Violence Bill can be operationalised. These include establishing a Council, training people and developing the relevant regulations on how to pass sentences.

2.6 Social Accountability in the Context of Disability

Mr. Mungoni Tsarai spoke about social accountability from the perspective of protecting the rights of people with disabilities. Mr. Tsarai, who is himself visually impaired, prefaced his presentation by noting that people with disabilities have historically been systematically marginalized and ignored. He noted that this marginalization happens both consciously and unconsciously. At best, people with disabilities are

regarded as objects of pity; while at worst they are actively discriminated against. He therefore called for disability issues to be mainstreamed at all levels of society.

Mr. Tsarai highlighted two specific areas of concern, which illustrate the main challenges people with disabilities face. These are in the area of HIV and AIDS and the labour market. He lamented the fact that information on HIV and AIDS has not been made accessible to the visually impaired by translating brochures and related material into Braille. Visually impaired people therefore remain very ignorant on the basics of HIV prevention, especially where condom use is concerned. He further noted that the deaf and dumb also find themselves in a similar predicament as their access to information is greatly constrained. People with disabilities, especially women, are vulnerable to sexual abuse because of the erroneous belief in some communities that having sex with someone who has a disability will cure one of the virus.



Mr. Mungoni Tsarai - NASCOH
Research & Advocacy Officer

With regards to employment, people with disability have major difficulties securing formal jobs. Mr. Tsarai pinpointed the private sector civil society organisations as having the most negative attitudes towards employing persons with disabilities. The government is presently the largest employer of people with disabilities, 98% of whom are in the civil service. Many more qualified people remain unemployed and have to make a living through informal means. People with disabilities are therefore located in the lowest social class and constitute the poorest of the poor in society.

Mr. Tsarai further noted the inadequacy of existing legislation, such as the Disabilities Act of 1992, in protecting and upholding the rights of those with disabilities. The constitution and Labour Act barely mention the word 'disability'. He recommended for disability quotas in the workplace and other strategic arenas and for a more progressive approach to development which does not blame those with disabilities for their circumstances. The barriers that exist for people with disabilities are so enormous and make it incredibly difficult for them to move out of the poverty clutch. He cautioned against the use of first aid where major surgery is required instead.

In his conclusion, Mr. Tsarai remarked that everyone is at risk of being disabled through their everyday interactions. People drive, swim, walk and use various forms of machinery daily. Anything could happen then. We should therefore all be interested in ensuring that the necessary disability-friendly policies and structures exist as we could benefit from them tomorrow.

Discussion IV

On the issue of domestic violence, participants' reactions were as follows:

- domestic violence increases during times of economic hardship
- domestic violence is a reflection of the culture of violence that is prevalent in the country today; therefore more attention should be paid to changing this national culture rather than focusing on the family.
- westernization is one of the main causes of domestic violence today; women are 'naughtier' nowadays and have adopted behaviours that men find hard to accept.
- The hype that surrounded the passing of the Domestic Violence Bill has died down. What action is being carried out on the ground to inform rural women about the Act and what it means for them? Do women know that they can benefit from post exposure prophylaxis in the event of a rape and that this can reduce the risk of HIV transmission by as much as 95%? Civil society needs to breathe life into the Domestic Violence Act by educating women on it.

- A chief observed that men are also victims of domestic violence, but they do not report because they fear stigmatization. The chief stated that he has attended to many cases of domestic violence in which the man was the victim, not the perpetrator. He further pointed out that the domestic violence men experience is very subtle and often psychological, which makes it even harder to spot. There is need therefore to also educate men to understand that they too can make use of the Act.

In response to some of the comments, Ms Muchawa challenged the view that men resort to violence due to the effects of westernisation. She pointed out that domestic violence is purely about power and questioned why it seems to be only the men who are finding it hard to adjust to westernization. Why don't women resort to violence as well? On men as victims of domestic violence, she encouraged men to form their own groups and to make use of PADARE/ENKUNDLENI so that they too can get help.

On the issue of disability, the following comments were made by participants:

- A female MP clarified that it women understand better the challenges faced by people with disabilities. This is because they are the ones who are often abandoned by husbands and left to care for their disabled children. She further argued that it is the male employers, not women, who refuse to employ people with disabilities.
- People with disabilities were encouraged to be proactive and take their concerns to MPs, legislators and to the Senators. It was acknowledged that issues of disability are sidelined and that there is only one Senator who represents persons with disabilities. Even when disability issues are tabled in parliament, they are often ignored, brushed away or tokenistic promises are made. There is hardly any actual action that results from such talk. A call was made for everyone to be supportive and work together for the advancement of the rights of persons with various forms of disabilities.
- Participants called for a constitution that has checks and balances and which allows for duty bearers to be held accountable. This would help address some of the challenges faced by people with disabilities.

Mr Mukuta cautioned against an 'us and them' mentality. He challenged participants to work together with persons with disabilities in finding solutions to their problems and in lobbying the government for more disability-responsive policies. He reminded civil society of its role as a human rights defender institution and pointed out that it is a moral obligation to represent the needs of people with disabilities. Lastly, he reminded the politicians present that there are 1.2 million people with disabilities in the country and that these people can make a huge difference in terms of winning or losing an election!

2.7 Social Accountability in the Context of HIV and AIDS

Ms Thondhlana, the Coordinator of the Women Living with HIV and AIDS, which is a division of the ZNNP+ examined the challenges faced by people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) in the country. In particular, she looked at the issue of access to treatment and the extent to which the government has adhered to the principle of More Involvement of People living with AIDS (MIPA). She also highlighted the key gaps in the government's response to the epidemic.



Martha Thondhlana, ZNNP+

There are at least 1.6 million Zimbabweans living with HIV and AIDS, and official estimates suggest that up to 300,000 are in urgent need of anti-retrovirals (ARVs). However, ZNNP+ thinks that the number is probably twice that. As of April 2007, only 66,000 people are on ARVs and AIDS-related deaths remain high, with an estimated 250,000 deaths in 2005. Ms Thondhlana indicated that it is extremely difficult to get accurate and up to date statistics on the epidemic in Zimbabwe, and that there is much secrecy and politicization of the epidemic.

Some of the key **challenges** faced by PLWHA include:

- *Access to treatment* by PLWHAs is compromised by the shortage of ARVs and drugs for opportunistic infections, general health staff apathy and bad roads. This has seen many needy people being turned away from health centres. Staff apathy is worsened by poor remuneration which has seen a steady loss of trained health personnel. SAfAIDS reports that the *doctor-patient ratio* is at an appalling 1:16,000 while the nurse-patient ratio is 1:800. Ms Thondlana lamented the fact that the government's preferred response has been to punish health personnel rather than offering them incentives.
- Although ARVs are available for free, *user fees* are a major hindrance to most PLWHAs as they can afford them.
- Treatment for PLWHA also includes *nutritional support*, but in Zimbabwe this is problematic and has not been done. The plight of PLWHA was worsened by Operation Murambatsvina which displaced many of them and relocated them to areas that had inadequate health facilities and where they could no longer access treatment.
- The plight of HIV positive children is even worse as there are no *paediatric ARVs* for them in Zimbabwe. Consequently, adult ARVs are broken into smaller pieces to make up child-level doses. This has resulted in the under dosing or over dosing which has serious implications for drug resistance. There are presently 115,000 HIV positive children in the country.
- *Second line drug* regimens are still not yet available in Zimbabwe. Ms Thondlana expressed concern over her fate as she is due to start second line drugs next year. This is in line with international standards that state that treatment regimens should be changed every five years. Presently, Varichem has the monopoly over ARV provision and it only makes first line treatment regimens.
- The process of granting ARV status to health facilities is a long drawn out process. This results in serious delays in the commencement of PLWHA on ARVs, thus further compromising their health. She also questioned why Mtawatawa hospital was shut down, soon after the Parliamentary elections, even though it was well equipped and even had a resident doctor. No one has come to explain to the community why this is so and those who were receiving ARVs from Mtawatawa now have to travel longer distances and incur transportation costs.

Where is the AIDS Levy Going?

Given the above scenario, Ms Thondlana questioned the use of the AIDS Levy which is being collected by the National AIDS Council (NAC). She noted that the AIDS Levy is not being accounted for satisfactorily and the NAC has been plagued by scandals of mismanagement of funds. She further explained that reports suggest that 50% of the AIDS Levy is being channeled to the acquisition of ARVs, but there is no corresponding evidence on the ground. The only evidence of how the money is actually spent is seen in NAC officials driving expensive 4x4 vehicles. It is also worrying that there is no one who is openly HIV positive on the NAC Board, though this has been discussed since 2003.

NAC has politicized HIV and AIDS issues and many of its employees are there for the money. Their commitment to improving the lives of PLWHAs is questionable. NAC needs to be made accountable for its use of the AIDS Levy.

The Way Forward

- More action and less talk
- AIDS Service Organisations and NGOs should implement MIPA
- Depoliticise HIV and AIDS
- The health sector should be adequately financed
- Provide comprehensive support to hospitals that are approved as ARV sites
- Establish an independent body to monitor the use of the AIDS Levy
- Involve PLWHA in ART

2.8 Social Accountability from the Perspective of Young People

A representative from a youth group, Mr Thembinkosi Museumwa presented on young people's take on the issue of social accountability. He thanked NANGO for having listened to young people and created space for them to share in the discussions. His presentation emphasized the different ways that young people can better participate in development processes in the country. Young people should be viewed as a resource, not a constraint.



Thembinkosi Museumwa
Prosperity International

Mr Museumwa observed that youth are marginal figures in politics. They are only invited to participate during the implementation stages and hardly ever during the formulation and planning of development initiatives. This situation prevails throughout society, be it in government circles, in the private sector or even in civil society. He observed that NANGO has no youth representative in its board, even though the youth have been clamouring for representation for over a year now. He remarked that the National Youth Policy was crafted for purely selfish political reasons and is nothing more than a mere collection of research findings. Mr Museumwa urged decision makers to tap into the creativity of young people and to support them, as youth often have innovative solutions that they are not afraid to try out but lack the necessary material resources.

He therefore recommended the following:

- inclusion of young people in all decision making structures
- involvement of young people in programme planning
- investment in young people if political parties are to be sustainable
- increased funding to youth organisations by the donor community

Discussion V

Mr Munodawafa, a war veteran, was invited to discuss the presentations on HIV and AIDS and on the youth question. He prefaced his comments by stating that he was ashamed of the legacy being created by the current government. The noble values of a democratic Zimbabwe that upholds the universal norms of good governance and human rights that informed the liberation struggle have been totally ignored. He assured young people that some of the elderly people who participated in the liberation struggle are looking up to the youth to solve the present crisis. He noted that youth constitute 45% of the population, hence their participation should be actively encouraged and sought out.

With regards to the HIV and AIDS epidemic, he reiterated Ms Thondlana's concerns, especially as they related to the use of the AIDS Levy. He supported the idea of an audit of how NAC is using the AIDS Levy and what the priorities for the use of the funds are. He commented on the unprecedented orphan crisis in the country and questioned how much of NAC funds were reaching this highly vulnerable group. We all need to take responsibility as adults, and not be content with children heading households. Let us allow children to be children.

A number of young people who were at the conference also made comments on the **youth question**. This is what they had to say:

- A female youth shared the challenges that she has encountered in her attempt to secure funding for an income generating project. She explained that she had approached some top level government officials with her project proposal. However she was thrown from one office to another and nothing has come of it one year later. She lamented that her experience mirrors the experiences of so many

other young people and illustrates the lack of acceptance of youth ideas. So how can youth make a difference when they are actively excluded from participating in the development agenda.

- A male youth was of the view that reference to young people as 'born frees' is derogatory and is used to exclude them from politics. He also noted that parents are the main barrier to young people's active participation as they do not communicate with their children in an honest and open manner on matters pertaining to politics and even HIV and AIDS. For instance, parents will get upset when they see their children with condoms instead of actually being supportive and proud that their children are responding wisely to the HIV and AIDS epidemic.
- An MP flagged the lack of a standard and cogent definition of youth as a key obstacle. In politics, a youth can include those over the age of fifty, and this makes it hard to debate on youth participation, as it can be argued that they are represented in parliament and other decision making bodies. The MP noted that making parliamentary reports available to the masses could be useful in addressing the youth participation question.
- Some adults at the conference however challenged young people to be proactive and not wait for adults to come up with solutions on their behalf. Youths should also not agree to be used to carry out violent acts on behalf of political parties. Youth were also encouraged to come up with meaningful and relevant projects, as these could get support from the private sector.

On HIV and AIDS, there was general consensus that NAC funds need to be audited and that NAC needs to be held accountable for its use of the AIDS Levy. Participants remarked on the politicization of the AIDS Levy and noted that only ZANU-PF card holders have access to the funds. NAC has become an arm of ZANU-PF whose mandate is to advance the aims of the ruling party.

An MP clarified that Varichem is one of only two companies in Southern Africa to have the privilege of producing generic ARVs. The problem though is that Varichem has not received any foreign currency from the Reserve Bank, hence the shortage of ARVs in the country.

2.9 Social Accountability from the Perspective of the Private Sector

Mrs Hativagone, the Chair of the Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce (ZNCC) remarked that the concept of social accountability is not well known in business circles. The more common term is corporate governance. Her presentation focused on some of the most common challenges of good corporate governance in the private sector in Zimbabwe today.

Lack of social accountability in the private sector in Zimbabwe is illustrated in the following practices:

- Most board members are being selected on the basis of being the friends and relatives of decision-makers in a company rather than because they have the necessary skills and competencies. Obviously, such board members will not demand accountability from anyone, and their role is purely for window dressing purposes.
- Chairpersons of quasi-government bodies tend to be political appointees, who have very little experience in the companies they lead, and consequently they produce hardly any results. There are also a number of individuals who have been in an 'Acting CEO' position in parastatals for over five years. This is bad business practice and does nothing to motivate such people to excel in their work.



Marah Hativagone - ZNCC

- Red tape in public offices is another instance of bad corporate governance which has, unfortunately, become a standard feature in government.
- Finally, given the prevailing economic condition, businesses have devised 'creative' ways of reporting on their financials. This has become the business norm.

Mrs Hativagone observed that there is no culture of customer satisfaction in Zimbabwe anymore, and that the customer gets the short end of the stick most of the time. There is therefore need to educate customers on their rights so that they are better placed to demand accountability from the private sector.

In terms of a way forward, Mrs Hativagone gave her support for the social contract. She argued that the social contract has worked in a number of countries that faced similar or even worse economic challenges than Zimbabwe. The social contract was used successfully in Kenya and Ghana, as well as in Ireland and Japan, among others. However, people need to be patient and allow the social contract processes to kick in. She explained that it required thirteen years of implementing the social contract before Ireland's economy started to recover, while in other countries it has taken at least five years to see results. She deplored the use of violent demonstrations and argued that these will not positively impact on Zimbabwe's economy.

2.10 Social Accountability in the Context of Operation Garikai

The final sector presentation was made by Edmore Mufema, a research fellow at the Institute of Development Studies (University of Zimbabwe). Mr Mufema gave a compelling analysis of Operation Murambatsvina and the subsequent Operation Garikai. He examined the various ways in which these two events violated democratic principles and illustrated the government's total lack of respect for its citizens. The presentation was based on a study that he carried out on behalf of NANGO. Mr Mufema informed the conference participants that the comprehensive report can be obtained from NANGO offices.



Edmore Mufema - IDS-UZ

Mr Mufema began his presentation by observing that 2005 was a significant year as Zimbabwe celebrated its Silver Jubilee then. This was also the year that the infamous Operation Murambatsvina occurred-on the 30th of June. Mr Mufema highlighted some of the negative effects of the clean up exercise, particularly noting its impact on informal traders who constituted 40% of the labour force by June 2005. The massive housing problem that was created in the aftermath of the exercise has still not been resolved by the government, despite the much touted Operation Garikai. Mr Mufema invited participants to reflect on why there has been much media hype over Operation Garikai, why Anna Tibaijuka was invited to the launch of Operation Garikai, why the Vice President was present at the launch and why news reports constantly showed pictures of 'happy' beneficiaries of the new houses. Prima facie, the presence of a high level UN envoy, Ms Tibaijuka and the media during the launch of Operation Garikai suggests high levels of accountability on the part of the government. But is this so?

Mr Mufema noted that the government has not released any information on how much has been spent on building new houses for those who were displaced during Operation Murambatsvina. He further commented on the uncharacteristic silence on the issue by the Reserve Bank Governor, Dr Gono, who has something to say on all matters monetary. Mr Mufema questioned who the beneficiaries of the new houses are and how they were chosen. The lack of accountability has been a core feature of the present government, and he traced this culture back to the independence era. In the 1980's the government was convinced that it knew what was best for the people and just went ahead and implemented policies without

much consultation. By the 1990's, the culture of lack of accountability on the part of the leadership had set in, hence destructive policies like structural adjustments were made, again without consulting the people. The cumulative effects of the government's bad decisions are still being felt today and have been compounded by the HIV and AIDS epidemics.

He concluded by urging Zimbabweans not to accept that poverty is a right; there is nothing normal about not affording to feed oneself and one's family. There is also nothing wrong with being political. Housing is a political issue and the government should be made to account for its actions under both Operation Murambatsvina and Operation Garikai. Finally, he recommended that NANGO establishes a full-time Research Unit, whose role will be to investigate and document civil society and individual's experiences at the hands of the government and public officials. He also recommended that NANGO develops a strategic plan that will inform a coordinated civil society response to the current crisis.

Discussion VI

Ms Munonyara, Director of the AIDS Counseling Trust, was invited to discuss the key issues emerging from the two presentations. Ms Munonyara thanked Ms Hativagone for underpinning the importance of the principle of social accountability as a key determinant for investor confidence. She noted that the private sector presentation highlighted the applicability of the concept of accountability to different contexts. On Mr Mufema's presentation, Ms Munonyara commented on the militarization of the clean up campaign and on how very conspicuous the uniformed forces have been throughout both Operation Murambatsvina and Operation Garikai. She also commented on the apparent complicity of the Reserve Bank, which has been strangely silent on the whole issue, and yet they are financing the construction of the Garikai houses. She noted that no-one has been left untouched and unscathed by the clean up campaign.

The presentation by Mr Mufema generated much discussion among the conference participants. Observations made were that politicians, including some senators and parliamentarians, have benefited the most from Operation Garikai. A participant challenged those politicians who acquired houses under Operation Garikai to surrender them to those who were displaced. Another participant stressed the fact that Operation Murambatsvina only affected the already vulnerable members of society, while the elite were not. For instance, cottages in high-income suburbs where most politicians reside (e.g. Borrowdale, Chisipite, Hogart Hill and Marlborough) were not destroyed. Participants also pointed out the absurdity of the exercise, which saw the government destroying shelters that were built by the colonial government for black people. The government even destroyed structures that it had itself built soon after independence. Where is the accountability in this? NANGO and civil society were blamed for not having reacted in any meaningful manner when Operation Murambatsvina occurred. A participant queried if and how civil society had responded to the UN Report recommendations advanced by Ms Tibaijuka.

Calls for less talk and more action were made. Some participants were of the view that dialogue has failed to produce the intended results, hence more aggressive strategies were now required. Others worried that unless a new constitution is drawn up, it is not possible to act as existing legislation will be used to stifle any form of opposition. Yet still others argued for more creative ways of mobilizing the masses, such as through the use of the arts, in particular drama performances and poetry. The arts can be equally effective with small groups and can reach more people in the grassroots. They will also enable civil society to circumvent POSA and AIPPA.

2.11 Social Accountability from a Child Rights Perspective

Accountability as a nation begins with accountability to children and everyone has an area in which to be accountable to children. According to the Children's Protection and Adoption Act and the Orphan Care Policy, children are rights holders while the family, community, government and civil society are duty

bearers. The Executive Director of the Child Protection Society, Tomaida Banda, was scheduled to make a presentation on social accountability from a child rights perspective. Unfortunately, due to time constraints he was unable to do so and the presentation that he had prepared is summarized below.

<i>Who is accountable to children?</i>	<i>Key accountability areas for child protection</i>
Family biological and extended family have primary obligation to care for children Community has a duty to intervene in care and support for the child when the family is not available or abrogating responsibility State is the ultimate duty bearer with responsibility to police the family and community. Also has duty to intervene when family and community can not take responsibility Children have responsibility towards themselves and family in some areas and towards other children	Budgeting allocating reasonable amounts of resources to children Participation involving children in decision making and activities in a way to bequeath to them life skills and enhance their sense of responsibility Service delivery delivering services to children with a sense of responsibility and sense of being duty bound Protection being proactive to prevent or deal with abuse of children and deprivation of their rights

3. NEXT STEPS

The final session of the conference was devoted to finding concrete strategies that can be used to solve Zimbabwe’s economic and political crises, which can be traced directly back to problem of government’s lack of social accountability. Mr Bob Muchabaiwa and Mr Cephas Zinhumwe, both from the NANGO Secretariat, facilitated the session. Below are some of the actions that were proposed by conference participants.

In this last session, participants were invited to make recommendations on how to operationalise some of the important issues that were discussed at the conference. Participants were challenged to come up with actionable solutions. Due to time constraints, the session was conducted by way of a brainstorm. This means that the recommendations put forward were not debated on and all were noted down. A committee was chosen to refine the recommendations.

There was active participation during this session and almost every social group got to contribute ideas. A total of twenty-nine contributions were made: eight came from women and one from a visually impaired participant. The youth also contributed their ideas, as did a parliamentarian. The unrefined recommendations are captured in the table below. In brief, the main recommendations were that NANGO should be more public than it currently is, and should strengthen its advocacy role. The sentiment was that NANGO has the responsibility of publicly flagging injustices committed by the government and that, as a representative of civil society, it should play the leading role in demanding accountability from the state and public officials. Another key recommendation was that NANGO should produce a position paper



Bob Muchabaiwa -
NANGO Secretariat

based on the conference proceedings and present this to the government. Finally, very strong views were expressed to the effect that NANGO and civil society should step up on voter education and that NANGO should inspect the voters roll in order to ensure that certain groups-especially the youth and those in the diaspora, are not deliberately excluded from the voting process. The rest of the recommendations are contained in the table below.

The NANGO Secretariat noted that it has been made responsible for implementing most of the recommendations and cautioned that NANGO is an umbrella body of different organisations. Everyone should therefore be involved, hence the committee that has been selected will also identify the organisations that should actively participate in implementing specific decisions. The NANGO Secretariat thanked participants for attending the conference and promised to ensure that the issues deliberated on will be followed up on.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON NEXT STEPS

Proposed Actions	Time-Lines	Person Responsible
Production of a position paper, based on the issues discussed at the conference. The paper should be presented to the government by a delegate organized by the NANGO Secretariat.	End of June 2007	NANGO Secretariat
A letter should be sent to the government in which NANGO and civil society express their displeasure at the absence of government representatives at the conference.	End of June 2007	NANGO Chairperson
Public Accounts Committee Reports should be obtained from Ms Misihairambwi-Mushonga and circulated among the NANGO membership	End of June 2007	NANGO Secretariat
The voters roll should be inspected as a matter of urgency and voters educated on their rights. People in resettlement areas should be prioritized in the voter education exercise. NANGO should also assist civil society organisations raise funds for community mobilization and civic education activities.	By end of August 2007	NANGO and Human Rights Groups
Audience with the Registrar General's Office to push for personal documents to be made easily available, especially for informal traders. In particular, passports, emergency traveling documents and birth certificates have been made incredibly hard to acquire.	By end of July 2007	?
Lobby the Parliamentary Committee on Local Government to conduct an audit of Operation Garikai in order to determine who the actual beneficiaries are. The elites who have benefited from the new houses should then be brought to book.	By end of August 2007	NANGO
Lobby for a new constitution and make it a condition for holding next year's elections.	None given	NANGO
Lobby for better salaries for workers and push for the minimum wage to be pegged in line with the poverty datum line.	End of July 2007	ZCTU
Lobby for the enactment of laws that protect the local business person against unfair competition from foreign businesses.	None given	ZNCC
A parliamentarian invited people with disabilities to coordinate themselves and present their views to their MPs, as parliament meets in three weeks time.	Three weeks time	People with disabilities
The parliamentarians who attended the conference should move a motion that allows parliamentarians to recall non-performers.	None given	MPs

4. FINAL REMARKS

A NANGO Board Member, Mr Hondoyemoto, made the closing remarks and also gave the vote of thanks. In his remarks, he made reference to the concept of territoriality. He noted that most animals make a urine border as a way of marking their territory, and will jealously guard this demarcated space. Any animal that enters this space-accidentally or not, will be fought off violently, often to the point of death. Territoriality is therefore about protecting one's space. Mr Hondoyemoto observed that the present government appears to be applying the concept of territoriality and will protect its space by any means necessary. The civil society therefore needs to have strategies if it is to break through the boundaries that the government has put in place. He invited all civil society organisations to register as NANGO members and to capitalize on the fervor that characterised the conference. He pointed out that everyone in the country is in agreement that 'things are hard', hence now would be the best time for the civil society to act. He alluded to the Sarajevo Incident that sparked off World War One and noted that every war needs a catalyst-something that will propel people into finally acting on their grievances. For Zimbabwe, the 'things are hard' rejoinder might just be the catalyst that is needed. He also made reference to the recommendations that were put forward and urged everyone to participate in solving the country's woes. He reminded the civil society organisations present that they are NANGO and so they are each responsible for delivering on the recommendations. He concluded his remarks by thanking all the participants for their contributions and insights.



Mr Hondoyemoto, NANGO Board Member

5. CONCLUSION

It is not often that the civil society of a country, from its private sector businesses to all its various non-governmental organisations, is given an opportunity to come together with parliamentarians and debate national issues in a candid, yet respectful manner. This is precisely what happened at the NANGO National Social Accountability Conference, though. This unique forum brought together people who otherwise do not meet, and allowed them to reflect on the nature of social accountability in present day Zimbabwe, as well as on goals for the future. The general consensus was that accountability remains a challenge for Zimbabwe, particularly for the government and elected officials. In the case of the latter, it was suggested that repressive legislation like AIPPA and POSA has created an environment of impunity, where the state simply does what it pleases and marginalizes the voices of other interested parties. At the same time, this culture of unaccountability was also thought to be present in civil society organisations, which also tend to marginalize points of view that do not conform to their own core business or even administrative needs. Social accountability is therefore a double-edged sword that has internal and external facets. Everyone must therefore account and be held accountable if Zimbabwe is to come out of the prevailing national malaise.

“Citizens have the Right to
Demand
Accountability;
Public Actors have the Obligation
to be Accountable to Citizens”



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