

## **ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT A PANACEA TO CONFLICTS: A CASE OF MASHONALAND CENTRAL PROVINCE, 1999 TO 2012<sup>1</sup>**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Since Zimbabwe's political independence in 1980, the government has been making efforts of trying to raise the living standards of the citizens through various means. However, because of a variety of challenges and other factors like colonial policies, national divisions, illiteracy, selfishness and a poorly performing economy amongst others, poverty has continued to affect Zimbabweans. Subsequently, conflicts have characterised Zimbabwean communities. This study, through an intensive desk research supported by some interviews, sought to establish the most prominent conflicts that have bedevilled the society and their respective possible remedies. The study was focussed on Mashonaland Central province, Zimbabwe and was conducted in 2012. Data was collected from key stakeholders; farmers, technocrats, business-people, the youth, peasant farmers, public servants and political activists while reviewed literature was from government policy papers, political party policy positions, specialist organisations (RBZ, Zimstat, TIMB, GMB, AREX, Lands, Veterinary Services and ZIA), security services, media and past research papers. The study established that economic empowerment is indeed one of the best long-lasting and sustainable solutions to the conflicts, albeit with some short-comings and challenges like politicisation of the efforts and clientelism.*

**Keywords:** Economy, Empowerment, Conflict, Politics, Youth, Land reform, Poverty.

### **Contribution/ Originality**

This study is an original, it seeks to establish the conflicts that are existent within the province of Mashonaland Central, Zimbabwe and possibly establish how economic empowerment could be used as a solution to the identified conflicts. This comes against a backdrop of the launching of some empowerment initiatives by government to the people.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Zimbabwe's pre-independence colonial governance system was characterised by dispossession, marginalisation and exclusion of black Zimbabweans from participation in the

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mainstream economy and politics. Such was perpetuated through a variety of laws and policies such as the Land Apportionment Act of 1931, the Land Husbandry Act of 1951, Unlawful Organisations Act of 1959, Land Tenure Act of 1969 and the education system bottlenecks. This visible discrimination sowed seeds of hate and vengeance within the structures of the society. The same system of governance sidelined the black population from acquiring the much needed education. At the end of it all, the black indigenous population remained poor and disadvantaged thus creating social, political and economic conflicts both within the black community and against the whites. It is this 'backwardness' on the part of the blacks that the concept of economic empowerment has been coined seeking to lift same to the same levels with those of the white minority group. Ever since Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, there have been efforts meant to empower the previously disadvantaged communities through land reform, creation of small businesses, ownership of properties and education amongst others. However, most of them have failed because of a variety of reasons. It is therefore the intention of this paper to focus on economic empowerment as a solution to the some of the challenges being faced in Zimbabwe.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

Prior to 1890, Zimbabweans followed a peaceful life characterised by endogenous mechanisms and traditional value systems. When the whites got into Zimbabwe, life was transformed socially, economically and politically as the latter had brought in completely alien systems and values. That alone created a rift in society subsequently leading to national classes and conflicts. Black Africans were driven to arid and semi-arid areas and deliberately secluded from mainstream politics and economics. Eventually blacks became poor and disadvantaged so much so that they could no-longer join main-stream activities.

When the early nationalists registered their concerns, they were over political and economic segregation. Naturally, with such concerns, it became apparent that any subsequent liberation struggle was going to be around those matters. One of the main reasons and motivation for the second "Chimurenga" war (1966-1979) was the need to reclaim land. It was also realised that during the war in the 1970s, almost every refugee camp and military training centres outside the country had some learning institutions. These were to expose Zimbabweans to education and knowledge.

The level of discrimination within the employment sector was so deep that there arose a need to clamour for some ownership of the capital. However, the playing field was not allowing and therefore kept the majority of Zimbabweans out and completely invisible. All these challenges faced by the indigenous now forced the present government to review both political and economic playing field with a view to accommodate the majority population. However, this discussion will only focus on the economic aspect of empowerment in the province of Mashonaland Central between 1999 and 2012.

The province under discussion lies in the north-east of Zimbabwe; bordering with Zambia to the north, Mozambique to the east, Harare to the south and Mashonaland West to the west.

Geographically, the province lies in natural region 1 and 2 and is popular for such crops; maize, cotton in Muzarabani and Guruve, soya-beans, tobacco in Centenary, Mvurwi, Mt Darwin and Guruve and cattle rearing. In terms of natural minerals, the region is endowed with the following; gold in Bindura, Mazowe, Guruve and Shamva, nickel in Shamva and Bindura and tantalite in Bindura while Mazowe also has chrome. In terms of viable industry, largely there are mines; Mazowe Jumbo mine in Mazowe, Shamva Gold mine in Shamva, and Eureka Mine in Guruve- all into gold extraction; Bindura Nickel mine in Bindura, and Ceasar Chrome mine in Mazowe. There are also some isolated industries in the following areas; Mazowe Citrus Estates that produces citrus produce, and countable small-scale light industries in Bindura and Mazowe.

Prior to 1999/2000, the province was largely a commercial farming region. However, following an infamous land reform programme, most of the farms were given to the majority black Zimbabweans in a move that was described by the international community as unfair, undemocratic and unnecessary. Subsequently, Zimbabwe was imposed with some targeted sanctions, which however grievously affected the majority and unintended Zimbabweans. Later on, after the land reform exercise, in 2007, the government embarked on an economic empowerment programme dubbed “Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment” which again sought to review ownership of the capital with a view to re-equitably redistribute it between Zimbabweans and foreigners.

The economic empowerment thrust by the government followed a realisation that the majority of the indigenous people were still poor and excluded from the mainstream economic arena, thus posing a serious threat politically and economically. However, questions come to mind; have the prevailing conflicts been a result of greed or grievance as posited by Collier (2000) or are simply a motivation of either a culturalist or premonialist ideology as posited by Thandika Mkandawire?

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The paper is a product of an extensive research that was conducted on the conflicts in the province vis-a-vis their causes and the possible corrective mechanisms. The study was based on a desk research supported by interviews with 60 key informants in respective sectors. The study followed a triangulation approach supported by portraiture methods which recognise that researchers undertake a study already armed with some background knowledge that could influence their perceptions. However, every effort was made to ensure that no background information could taint or influence the results of the study. The interviewees were drawn from key stakeholders; 12 commercial farmers, (2 from each of the 6 farming districts), 16 youth, (2 from each of the 8 districts), 16 peasant farmers, (2 from 8 of the districts) and each respondent from the following sectors; Environmental Management Agency (EMA), Department of Parks and Wildlife Management (DPWM), Tobacco Industry Marketing Board (TIMB), National Economic Commission (NEC), Zimbabwe Statistical Office (Zimstats), Department of Lands, Zimbabwe Commercial Farmers’ Union (ZCFU), Department of Veterinary Services (Vet),

Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF), Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), Zimbabwe Farmers Union (ZFU), Grain Marketing Board (GMB), Agricultural Research and Extension Services (AREX), Ministry of Youth, Indigenous and Empowerment (MYIE), District Administrator's office (DA), Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) and Zimbabwe Investment Authority (ZIA) while reviewed literature was from government policy papers, political party policy positions, specialist organisations (RBZ, Zimstat, TIMB, GMB, AREX, Lands, Veterinary Services and ZIA), security services, media and past research papers.

All the selected respondents were identified specifically for their wisdom, experience in the fields and their placement on strategic professional positions. The 2 respondents sampled in each district were randomly selected while those in specialist sectors were purposefully sampled. In all the reviews, past trends were critically analysed and juxtaposed against previously proffered solutions. This was meant to find the most suitable solutions for different conflicts and disputes. Data gathered was compared and critically analysed against other sources that were also employed in-order to ensure accuracy and building a new body of information.

All the respondents were subjected to the following key questions though other ancillary questions could be probed further.

1. Respondents' understanding or appreciation of economic empowerment.
2. Identify measures that have been put in place by the government since political independence.
3. How they view various empowerment results.
4. Identify challenges and successes.

#### 4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is to some extent guided by the Youth Bulge theory (Heinsohn, 2008), which posits that the more there are idle youth in an economy, the more that economy is exposed to conflicts perpetuated by a youth constituent demanding social services and employment. In this instance, the province under study has had several mines and other employment offering institutions that closed over the years thus seeing thousands becoming redundant. Thousands more youth hoped to be absorbed into the economic bowls soon after the establishment of the National Youth Service project. However, many of these are still idle but potentially dangerous.

The study will also in some instances, be guided by two economic hypotheses (Keen, 1994) that focus on some of the causes of conflicts, typically experienced in Zimbabwe and Mashonaland Central province during the period under review; Private motivation hypothesis (Keen, 1994; Collier and Hoeffler, 2000) which posits that uneducated youth take advantage of conflict situations to find employment either as hired hooligans or as thieves. According to the hypothesis, conflicts create opportunities to loot, profiteer from shortages, and trade in illicit and other commodities. The other hypothesis according to Nafziger and Auvinen (2000) is the Failure of the Social Contract which derives from the view that social stability is based on a hypothetical

social contract between the people and the government. In instances where government fails to deliver as per its promises or pledges, the people respond by venting out their anger variedly.

## 5. EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment, understood from a Zimbabwean perspective means attempting to redress an economic imbalance or irregularity on the part of the majority indigenous blacks, with the support of the state and the legislation. Quoting [Gergis \(1999\)](#),

*“It is seen as a response to the failure of modernization and ‘trickle down’ economics of the 1970s and the 1980s, and the widespread perception of the State’s inability to intervene successfully on behalf of the poor or other disempowered groups in the society”.*

From a development understanding, it is the participation of the generality of the marginalised population in an activity previously considered elite. The development-oriented approach suggests that empowerment is largely directed at those communities previously sidelined. It therefore seeks to describe members of the society according to their resourcefulness and income levels before a class of the marginalised is identified. What that means is that any attempt at classifying society can easily lead to a variety of conflicts. [McArdle \(1989\)](#) also looks at empowerment as “the process whereby decisions are made by people who have to bear the consequences of those decisions”. In other words, the people being referred to in this context are the intended beneficiaries. However, the approach depicts a gloomy tomorrow as it suggests that the process is followed by some ‘consequences’.

Black Economic Empowerment Commission (BEEC) of South Africa defined Black Economic Empowerment as an integrated and coherent socio-economic process, located in the context of national transformation that is aimed at redressing the imbalances of the past ([Enterprise, 1999](#)). This approach by BEEC recognises the existence of an established system which has to be respected and followed systematically if any empowerment of the previously disadvantaged is to be successful. The approach also recognises the fact that the process is a transformative activity which systematically seeks to balance past economic playing ground.

Empowerment as defined by [Parsons \(1988\)](#) is a process of internal and external change whereby the internal process is the individuals’ ability to make decisions and attend to other personal matters. External change is one’s ability to impart or practically employ skills and learnt knowledge. According to Parsons’ conception of empowerment, it meant that while any government may be interested in empowering its citizens, the people themselves must have the passion and liking for the programme. Actually, the idea of empowerment must have come from the people so that there is some element of programme ownership. Having established the above, Parsons goes on to argue that the people to be empowered must also be able to practically apply at least some of the skills and information that they would have acquired during the process so that they do not simply take over economic activities and fail to be initiative and creative as they move on. In other words, the people must exhibit some skill in the areas of empowerment. It has been pointed out that the origins of empowerment could be traced back to the Brazilian Paulo

Freire who suggested rolling out an extensive education programme as a way of liberating the oppressed. Others have viewed empowerment as the idea of power, giving power to the people whilst others view it as a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their lives.

Those already in the echelons of power but in the indigenous majority group regard empowerment as the movement of the powerless into positions of power and making those at the higher levels of power accept sharing power with them. This is what the generality of the leaders in the developing world where empowerment has been implemented have believed and tried to adopt. This is aptly shown by these' attempts at 'selfishly' taking over some institutions without regard to possible negative eventualities. By-and-large, empowerment seeks to create a practical and meta-practical whole characteristic of language, ideology, and action principles. Other practitioners have interpreted this to mean that empowerment process is defined by some professional and convincing language based on some acceptable ideology and supported by objective, feasible and realist on-the-ground programme implementation.

Over the years, economic empowerment has been observed to be a rigorous process which takes cognisance of several professional and social factors. Whenever the sort of empowerment adopts a preservative and corrective approach, then there are some basic routes that several scholars and researchers have noted to be crucial and necessary. [Parsons \(1988\)](#) noted that any successful empowerment programme employs some strategy. First and foremost, according to Parsons, there has to be a permanent component of the community so that all inhabitants can be used and adapt to its implementation. It is believed that there will not be any conflicts within the communities over either their concept or implementation process. Any government that wants to engage in this programme should also think big and act locally. This is meant to tap a wide range of expertise and knowledge and yet focus attention on a smaller community when implementing the programme. Parsons also pointed out the need for collective approach towards empowerment programmes arguing that since this is a multi-layered concept, it is bound to draw in a variety of perceptions, ideologies and modus operandi thus creating conflicts. The other facet of the strategies devised by Parsons is that empowerment is a multi-levelled concept which draws in a variety of interests; individuals, groups, organisations, environment, cultural and historical contexts.

However, to achieve the above, Parsons pointed out that there are also some tactics that are followed. Communities to benefit in the empowerment programme have to be enabled; capacitated adequately for a task ahead before they are linked together into either a professional or specialist network. That way, they are expected to share notes and skills. An empowerment agent or government should also catalyse the entire process so that cases of shortages or deficiencies will not be reported. In other words, this is simply a process of availing basic resources so that beneficiaries do not fail. This process is complimented by the availability of information and knowledge to the people. This is where specialist departments and organisations come in to offer expertise in various ways. Parsons also point out the need for a deliberate development of skills

for respective fields and subsequently followed by a clearly structured and defined model which then guides the whole implementation process. Once a model is in place and seen to be working out well, values for the programme, albeit derived from the people themselves have to be instituted and monitored from the agency level. At this juncture, communities develop social technologies for sustenance that are however supported by professional technical assistance from either the government or implementing agency. However, [Friedman \(1992\)](#) argues that people can empower themselves by mobilising for political participation as social, political and psychological disempowerment could lead to poverty.

In a nutshell, empowerment should be directed to all the people in society regardless of their sex, age, or religions for all are prone to encountering survival challenges. It is also rolled out through the following amongst others; accessing the marginalised to the core of the economy, educating the masses academically and technically, availing land to the marginalised, creation of legislative instruments supportive of the marginalised, and allowing the marginalised to own valuable properties amongst others.

Meanwhile, the government of Zimbabwe has put in place different mechanisms and policies to promote indigenous empowerment in most of the key areas; economic, social and political. The Employee Share Ownership Scheme or Trust (ESOS/T) is one of them. It is a deliberate programme by the government of Zimbabwe set to allow employees of companies to access at least 5% of the company's total equity although businesses can offer shares up to 28 percent of the equity. Meanwhile, the National Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Board monitors to ensure that companies adhere to the indigenisation and economic empowerment legislation ([The Sunday Mail Business, 2012](#)). According to the Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Empowerment, it has since established the following ownership schemes; Mhondoro- Ngezi, Chegutu Community Share Ownership Scheme (Zimplats Holdings), the Tongogara Community Share Ownership Scheme (Anglo America- Unki) Hwange Community Share Ownership Scheme (Hwange Colliery) and the Zvishavane Community Share Ownership Scheme (Mimosa Mining Company). Several more are still being considered throughout the country.

This comes under the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act (Chapter14:33), which was passed by parliament in 2007, ([Government of Zimbabwe \(GOZ\), 2007](#)). Under the same empowerment programme, all companies operating in Zimbabwe are required to arrange for 51% of their shares to be availed to indigenous people so that they also have a stake in their wealth and the development of their economy. The same Empowerment Act makes provision for the protection of some low capital investments for the indigenous people only so that they are not completely shut out of economic business in their country. Besides, these investments are low capital intensive and so locals can easily run them without any need for foreign intervention or expertise. According to Statutory Instrument 21 of 2010 ([Government of Zimbabwe \(GOZ\), 2007](#)), these are some of the sectors reserved for indigenous Zimbabweans:

Primary production of food and cash crops through the land reform that was recently completed has been reserved for the local players. That way, it avails markets for the producers so that they do not get stuck with their produce.

The transport business such like passenger buses, taxis and car hire services are some of the economic activities which indigenous Zimbabweans have successfully ventured. The sector does not require sophisticated foreign investment or expertise.

The retail and wholesale trade is also considered a low expertise sector which local businesspeople could easily take up.

Barber shops, hairdressing and beauty salons have been deliberately preserved for the locals especially the youth. It is a field which is usually taken up by the unemployed school-leavers and some who would have failed to secure other sectors of their dreams.

Employment agencies, advertising agencies and estate agencies were also identified for indigenous entrepreneurs simply for their low cost capital requirements.

Valet services and bakeries are some of the production and processing sectors which do not require outsiders to invest. Rather, these are some of the sectors which have created jobs for the traditionally idle women and men in the townships.

The tobacco grading and packaging sector was identified for the local players considering the fact that it also affords an opportunity to the local farmers to add value on some of their produce. The same argument similarly applies to the milk industry which has also been preserved for indigenous entrepreneurs.

The arts and craft, marketing and distribution industry has also been left solely for indigenous players since it does not require foreign expertise. Besides, it is one of the sectors that have created employment for the idle youth especially along the high-ways and in resort towns.

## **6. CONFLICTS**

Conflicts in developing countries, Zimbabwe included, have heavy human, economic, and social costs and are a major cause of poverty and underdevelopment. Some of the major causes of conflicts include political, economic, and social inequalities; extreme poverty; economic stagnation; poor government services; high unemployment; environmental degradation; and individual (economic) incentives to engage in disturbances.

When the study focuses on conflicts due to lack of some form of economic empowerment or some other causes but which could be resolved by some economic empowerment, then pointers narrow down to economics of the society. This therefore directs us to look at conflicts around these areas; social, political and economic. Generally, conflicts are misunderstandings or failure to share a common meaning on some thoughts or inadequate resource leading to hate, isolation and in some cases the creation of social classes as defined by Karl Marx. These misunderstandings, because of lack of patience in most of the people who believe that they are being disadvantaged or taken for granted, result in fatal physical and armed aggression.

Most scholars and political researchers have widely written and confirmed that bad economic policies imposed by the West, political and economic development failures have been some of the root cause of Africa's political instability that has subsequently led to the loss of millions of lives. Civil wars in Uganda, the South Sudan, Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, and Sierra Leone were and are being carried out by rebel movements which are organised across ethnic lines. The question of ethnicity is only becoming glaring when one group is left out or feels robbed of its share of the resources. This has also led to an increase of cases about secessionism in Africa; DRC, Nigeria, Mali, Zimbabwe, Libya and soon South Africa.

There are some studies that argue that aid decreases the risk of civil conflicts by promoting economic growth and strengthening state capabilities (Collier and Hoeffler, 2002). However, there are some instances when communities fight over food aid while in other instances, that aid could be converted into valuable resources to sustain conflicts or wars. This shows that conflict causes are wide and varied so much so that it sometimes becomes difficult to really know the actual triggers of conflicts in respective situations. Either lack of this aid or abundance of it could trigger conflicts.

Aid shocks have in some cases led to situations whereby people's lives are required to adjust rapidly in the negative after aid has been cut off, (Powell, 2004). In Zimbabwe, following the US-imposed smart sanctions in 2001, aid was cut to unsustainably low levels so much so that the powerful had to scramble for the little available for personal aggrandisement while the needy starved. It was then the powerful, accessible to the media who cried foul giving an impression that the sanctions were directed at the entire nation.

Resource abundance-conflict correlation (Collier and Hoeffler, 2002), in respect to Mashonaland Central province and indeed in the entire Mashonaland region, particularly land-related conflicts were high and severe largely because that is where some of the best agricultural land is found. Both the former white commercial farmers and the new black farmers wanted to occupy that region hence the conflict. The other reasons about being the strong-hold of Party X and that probably the most provoking whites were based in that region, are of less value.

In Mashonaland Central province, conflicts of varied magnitude have been recorded often in different areas over the period. Most have assumed a political attitude and appearance and yet instigated by either poverty or delays in the availability of some facilities and or commodities in the society. In most instances, politicians ride on these long-ripe grievances to advance their political agenda. A clear example could be the 2000 land invasion in Svosve area, Mashonaland East province by some impatient community in the redistribution of land. Similarly, in 2012, there was a land conflict at Tavydale farm, Mazowe pitting 17 new black farmers against one white commercial farmer over 70 hectares of land (The Herald, 2012). These aspirations had long been in the people so much so that they simply required some slight detonation. History of Zimbabwe also tells us that in 1995, the late Ndabaningi Sithole, president of ZANU Ndonga, a minority political party had redistributed his farm (Churu farm) in Harare to the land hungry Zimbabweans. The land conflict was wide-spread in the entire province where a minority white

group had splashed lavishly and spent extravagantly and yet their next door black majority suffered in the abyss of poverty.

The landless Zimbabweans strongly believed and knew that it was on the land that their future could be anchored, on the land where they could develop properties, in the land where they could invest their money and sweat, in the land where they could claim nativity, in the land where their heritage was and where all their generational poverty could be addressed. When eventually the slightest opportunity to claim land came their way, it was no-longer a land conflict alone. The vengeant black majority went for anything that they could lay their hands on either for self enrichment or for destruction. This saw most of the properties that had been developed by the white commercial farmers in the farms going to waste. It should also be realised that inequitable land distribution forced people in communal areas to subsist through overexploitation of resources, leading to resource degradation. Therefore, when the land-hungry blacks moved into the commercial farming areas, they had 'some sort of vendetta' to solve against the white farmers.

Over the years, land related conflicts have shifted from the traditional Black/White war to a new phenomenon of the Black/Black war. This new war is pitting the first land beneficiaries who had participated in the physical struggles against the late comers called "*mafikizolo*"<sup>2</sup>, who had sided with former white farmers hoping that the land reform programme was a non-event. The other dimension is that of political activists who were being used by politicians to clear the roads and later failed to secure land against those who acquired vast tracks of land contrary to the set allocations.

Other conflicts that have been recorded in the province also include wars over small-scale mine ownership and dominance popularly called "*makorokoza*"<sup>3</sup>. Besides fighting amongst themselves, these illegal panners have also caused untold land degradation which has rendered most of the areas that they would have worked on inhabitable or irreparable.

Elsewhere, especially in the urban set-ups, there is a serious challenge of unemployment. Urdal and Hoelscher (2005) observed that countries with youth bulges have a markedly higher risk of conflict as the youth have little opportunities for self-sustenance. Bindura, Glendale, Mvurwi, Mazowe and Shamva have not had any meaningful industrial sectors that could absorb able-bodied and other school leavers. All these have been left at the mercy of poverty and joblessness thus making room for criminals of all sorts. In the other growth points; Guruve, Muzarabani, Centenary, Rushinga, Chimhanda, Dotito, Mt Darwin, Madziva, Nzvimbo and Manhenga, most of the youth and potential workers have since left for the towns and outside of Zimbabwe for greener pastures. This development has seriously affected opportunities for development since most of the active age-group is no-longer available.

In the farming areas, another form of conflict has been recorded especially in Mazowe and Bindura. This has been over water. Soon after the land reform programme, some of the new black

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<sup>2</sup>Those who came late.

<sup>3</sup>These are illegal small-scale miners.

farmers upstream harnessed water thereby depriving other downstream users. This ignited fierce conflicts as all claimed ownership to the natural resource.

The Zimbabwe Young Adults Survey of 2002 and the 2003 study on domestic violence (Zimbabwe Women Resource Centre and Network, 2012), highlights that women had become increasingly marginalized from mainstream economic activities, despite the fact that they constituted 52 percent of the population. This alone clearly showed the glaring discrepancies that existed in society. Clearly, that also contrasted with the gender commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women and the SADC Gender Protocol to which Zimbabwe is a signatory.

## 7. THE ECONOMY

Zimbabwe's economy has traditionally been supported by agriculture both in terms of production and employment creation. For this sector to do well, it has been the efforts of both the black majority and white minority. However, that sort of relationship only saw the minority prospering at the expense of the majority. Actually, according to Moyo (2005), in 1980 at independence, there were over 700 000 black small holder farmers on 14.4 million hectares of land whereas by the end of the land reform programme in 2004, there were over 1.312 866 farmers on 24.34 million hectares of land. The over 4 000 white farmers who had been on the bigger portion of the land had been reduced drastically by this era.

Besides the fact that it is on the land that the economy is based, built and nurtured, Zimbabwean black population simply wanted their heritage back. It gives and restores confidence in the citizens. This desire for land then led to the infamous land reform of 1997 though in earnest, the implementation part was rolled out in 2000 to 2004/5. At the end of the redistribution programme, over 300 000 people benefitted in different land holding schemes.

## 8. RESULTS

After conducting all the 126 interviews and going through all the selected literature, the following responses were gathered and categorized as shown in the chart below.

Fig-1.

<b>Respondents' Reaction To Research Questions</b>		
<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% (response rate)</b>
Respondents' understanding of empowerment	50	63
Identify measures instituted by government	45	57
Views about empowerment outcome	39	49
Challenges and successes observed	46	58

The responses to the research questions were varied. However, 50 of the 60 respondents, especially from the technocrats, commercial farmers and the youth did express knowledge about what economic empowerment was and its implications to the Zimbabwean programme. They all

generally defined it as the provision of the reigns of the economy to the previously disadvantaged indigenous people in a society. The other 10 respondents were either not sure or avoided the question. On the measures that had been instituted by the government to ensure empowerment since 1980, only 45 drawn from across the board responded with the rest either avoiding the question or failing to identify the measures. Amongst some of the most prominent measures cited are; land reform programme, share ownership, RBZ-funded farm mechanization, free education, free health, establishment of micro-income-generating projects in the rural areas, provision of residential stands in urban and semi-urban areas, livestock restocking programmes, legislative quota for women and establishment of more tertiary colleges.

On the respondents' view of the empowerment results, 39 answered the question indicating that there were areas of successes and areas of failures across the board. Mixed views were also expressed on the implementation approach as some cited politicization, nepotism or patronage. The question to the challenges and successes was answered by 46 people and the rest were hesitant to talk about it. However, they raised issues around economic, social, political and environmental matters.

All the technocrats and civil servants (totaling 16 and constituting 32% of the respondents) interviewed proposed that the government devise some strategy of availing education to all the disadvantaged youth especially in the form of practical knowledge so that they find professions to keep them busy and earning an income. This could be achieved in the province by way of deliberately creating a quota for students who hail from the province to benefit in all tertiary colleges like Bindura University, Chaminuka Technical College, Madziva Teachers' training College, Ponesai Vanhu Vocational College, Blackfordby Agricultural College, and Mazowe Veterinary College. The respondents also pointed out that the roll-out of this programme should be apolitical as it was bound to benefit members of the ruling party, which is more dominant in the province. On the same subject, 10 of the 16 technocrat respondents (63%) or 20% of the entire sample pointed out that empowerment is not all about availing tangible resources to the marginalized communities; rather, it is also about the definition and pronouncement of the rights of respective sectors in society. According to this argument, each constituency of people in society needed to understand what it stood for, its rights, benefits and obligations and how it could manage the outlook of the society and economy in general. That way, communities would have been empowered enough to be able to distinguish the good from the bad, conflicts from harmony and development from destruction. Empowerment also meant having the confidence, belief and trust that whatever one owned or had is really his or hers to a point that everyone becomes jealousy of the surroundings. This could be achieved by ensuring unhindered and unpoliticised access to the use and or benefit of the resources and social services. Generally however, different constituencies' responses were captured, analysed and presented accordingly as explained below.

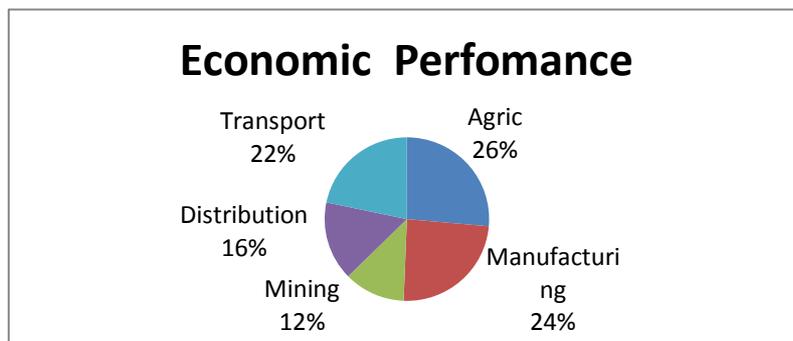
Participants in the agricultural sector revealed that tobacco production figures for 2010 show that smallholders produced over 75% of the crop compared to less than 10% two years previously. The increase was attributed to contract farming that the corporate sector had engaged with the

farmers banking on a sound economy. In other agricultural sectors, though production has fairly improved, it has not matched the anticipated levels largely due to lack of or low support levels by government structures in the form of favourable pricing systems and availability of commercially competitive loans and policies. According to the Tobacco Industry Marketing Board (TIMB), GMB, ZCFU and ZFU, generally commodity prices have been suppressed and this has negatively impacted on the farmer who expected more. On the general, tobacco has been selling for an average of US\$3.20 per kilogramme instead of the expected US\$4.20, maize fetching US\$250 per tonne instead of the expected US\$350, cotton going for US\$0.30 per kilogramme instead of an expected US\$1.60 and soya-beans fetching US\$530 per tonne contrary to an expected US\$800 during the 2012 marketing season.

[Environmental Management Agency \(EMA\) \(2012\)](#) reported that there had been a wave of inter-farmer conflicts over the use and abuse of firewood and forests within the commercial farming communities. According to EMA, there is a category of farmers who are also into the destruction of forests in-order to get firewood for resale while others are totally against the practice.

Closely akin to the above, there are also farmers who have depleted wildlife through illegal hunting within the farming communities. Cases in point according to the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management (DPWM) and EMA ([Environmental Management Agency \(EMA\), 2006](#)), were noted around Manzou Game Park and Jumbo dam, both in Mazowe where zebras, gazelles, antelopes, kudus and warthogs were being hunted down illegally. In Guruve district, according to DPWM, Nyamanechi Game Park had also recorded an increase in poaching cases from 21 per month to an average of 45 different cases per month. The most affected animals were antelopes, kudus and duckers. Similarly, in Gonono area in the same district, elephants and buffalos were the main targets whereby responsible departments had recorded an increase of poaching from an average of 3 and 7 to 8 and 15 elephants and buffalos per year respectively. In Bindura, Matepatepa commercial farming area, most of the wildlife that had been reared and left behind by some former white farmers had been forced away due to increased human population and the fact that some were being deliberately poached. Mining had proved to be one of the fastest growing sectors in Zimbabwe since 2009. According to the National Economic Commission (NEC), platinum accounts for 45% of mineral export revenue while gold contributes 22%. This means that mining now accounts for 64.7% of merchandise exports in Zimbabwe following the collapse of agriculture and manufacturing. The manufacturing sector's contribution to GDP had shrunk from 28% in 2000 to 10% in 2008, before recovering to 17% in 2009 and over 40% in 2011. The sector still suffers from low capacity utilisation which presently (2012) stands at over 43% largely due to lack of skilled personnel, eroded market share and obsolete machinery. Overall, [Dodo \(2012\)](#) and Zimstats indicated that the following sectors have contributed the following towards the economy during the period 2012.

Fig-2. Economic Performance



NEC, ZIA, Zimstats, ZCFU, RBZ and 9 of the 12 farmers (75%) indicated that the government had however over the period failed to expeditiously address a rigid labour market, land tenure frictions and improving the business climate. The Government of National Unity's failures are seen in various fronts, chief amongst them, failure to deliver as promised. At the beginning of the GNU in 2009, government announced a Short Term Emergency Recovery Programme (STERP) which sought to liberalise the agriculture sector, administrative and government processes, social protection on health, food, security, and education. At the end of 2009, there was STERP II, which was a three-year macroeconomic and budget framework for 2010-12. Up to this date, the government has not been able to deliver any of the policy pronouncements; elimination of multiple farm ownership, eradication of inefficiency on the part of government, improving gender equality and reformation of over 2 million hectares of under-used land, (ibid).

Generally, most of the food items in Zimbabwean shops are imported and have reasonably served the interests of the people well. Because of the liberal policy that has been adopted by government in as far as the importation of food is concerned, there has been competition of supplies so much so that there has been a subsequent reduction in prices. To an ordinary household of 5 people, according to a February 2012 Consumer Price Survey and [Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency \(Zimstat\) \(2012\)](#), clothing requires US\$82.6, water, electricity and gas – US\$129.5, health –US\$93.6, transport –US\$113.1, food and beverages –US\$97.3 and education requiring US\$117.3, thus requiring a total of US\$633.4 per month. The survey presented an average monthly inflation rate of 4.3%. All these figures come against an average monthly salary of US\$400 per month for an average worker in Zimbabwe. This therefore means that the majority of Zimbabweans cannot afford to purchase most of the basic food requirements.

On the education front, in 2010, the Net Primary School Attendance Rate (NAR) stood at 91%, an indication of an improvement of 9% from the era of the economic crisis. According to [Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency \(Zimstat\) \(2012\)](#), of the 91% NAR, 71% of the children had failed to attend school due to financial challenges while 9% had dropped owing to either pregnancies or marriages, (ibid).

Despite the above statistics on education enrolment, Zimstats reported that over one hundred thousand (100 000) youth from the 8 districts in the province were either unemployed or under-employed thus increasing the risk of conflicts and the propensity to be lured into sinister projects on the promises of financial rewards. Most of these unemployed were in the communal areas and growth-points while the under-employed were in the farming areas and illegal mining areas. It is at this juncture imperative to look at this argument; contrary to the Youth Bulge hypothesis, youth violence and unsettledness is not only due to idleness and unemployment but to a large extent perpetuated by national history and immediate incentives. This argument is based on the understanding that Zimbabwe has not experienced violence by the youth of greater magnitude than that of South Africa and Kenya despite the fact that the grievances in the former may be long outstanding and more inflicting. Zimbabwean youth have to some extent managed to control tempers largely because of two reasons; they have valuable properties to protect and that historically, the Shona nation has been a peaceful lot. However, the minority Ndebele nation in Zimbabwe with a history of violence only constitutes about 14% of the total population and has since been neutralised by the majority Shona people.

## 9. CHALLENGES

Like it has been noted that the concept of empowerment dates back to the 1970s and before, over the period, its implementation has been rocked by several factors. Some of the same factors however, have also worked to the advantage of the programme. Some of the noted factors impeding empowerment are; lack of finance to kick-start the programmes and lack of facilities where these programmes can be based or delivered. Closely akin to the above is the question on the availability of appropriate operational facilities for respective empowerment programmes. It has already been alluded to above that lack of training and education has also seriously affected empowerment programmes. Partly, the above is a result of lack of political will by the powers that be to direct attention and funding towards that needy area. Another impediment has been that of political interference especially towards national elections, whereby most contesting parties will be propagandising programmes and development schedules.

## 10. EMPOWERMENT BENEFITS

In this discussion, the essence of the empowerment programme is to ensure that the majority of indigenous Zimbabweans are taken on board in the economic arena with a view to cushioning them from potential exposure to the risk of poverty-induced conflicts. However, beside the above stated agenda, the province benefits in other various ways.

Mkandawire's premonialist argument around conflict clearly states that poverty eradication corresponds to peace, stability and development. It is therefore beneficial to both the state and the communities at large to roll out a successful empowerment programme considering the peace dividends that ultimately come out. Closely akin to poverty eradication and peace dividends, is the issue about security. Paul Collier talked about an insecure society largely fuelled by the

grievances within the same people. What it simply means is that for as long as the communities have grievances that are political, social or economic matters, there is no security or if it is there, then it is fragile. The other perspective to this argument is that for as long as the communities are empowered and own immovables, they never allow conflicts or wars for they fear that their properties will be destroyed. In other words, empowered communities have got stakes to protect. Could the same hypothesis explain why South Africans easily engage in fatal and destructive violence compared to Zimbabweans?

In the province, according to Ministry of Youth Indigenisation and Empowerment, over 1400 youth have benefitted under the Land Reform programme in all the 6 administrative districts (with Farms) while another 16 300 have been economically empowered in one way or the other (small-scale income generating projects, employment, mining, and National Youth Service). All the beneficiaries were selected either through political structures or during political forums so much so that no non-members had an opportunity to benefit from these 'government-funded programmes'.

Effectively, that has accessed people to social, educational and economic facilities though in different ways. According to Party X provincial youth officials, a sizeable number of the youth are comfortably doing well in small-scale mining especially in Shamva, Bindura, Mazowe, and Guruve so much so that they were now employing several hundreds more. Because of an improved income, the same youth and their communities were now able to access other modern entertainment and communication facilities, thus modernising their communities. That way, both their immediate families and distant communities, could be kept away from poverty-induced conflicts. However, according to Party Y, National Youth Service could not be considered to be part of empowerment as it perpetuated violence. The same respondent also indicated that another challenge that some of the youth were facing had to do with politicisation of empowerment programmes where opposition party elements were being left out. It must be appreciated that once a considerate single member of the community is out of the poverty pit, there is some form of knowledge and capacity building in the entire community as that single personality is bound to upgrade others through; sending siblings to school, provision of food and health and exposure to modern information and communications technologies amongst others.

Empowerment, by nature provides the requisite institutional mechanisms for the marginalised's participation in the core of the national economic arena. According to the Department of Lands and MYIE, in Mashonaland Central province, out of the over 23 000 beneficiaries of the Land Reform programme, over 65% have been actively involved in the mainstream productive sector of the economy through; crop farming, animal rearing, transport services, tillage services, poultry projects, retail services and consultants amongst others. It has become a common sight to see cars, tractors, satellite gadgets and imported beers in the most remote parts of Mashonaland Central province unlike before the government had adopted a deliberate economic empowerment drive.

The present situation where there is equal participation builds dedicated, loyal and motivated citizens who do not tolerate conflicts. This has over the period built confidence amongst the people. However, it must be noted that the availability of finances especially the youth sector has brought in a new culture of violence. This is usually experienced when the youth involved in gold-panning earn some income. They indulge in sexual escapades and uncontrolled beer drinks, in most cases leading to sexually transmitted diseases and grievous fist-fights amongst themselves especially over women. To some extent, these conflicts defy Heinsohn's notion of youth bulge as a cause of conflicts in society. Instead, this could be resource bulge contributing to conflicts.

Effective empowerment has also led to vibrant and effective civil society organisations that are representing various interest groups in society. Friedman (1992) observed that the effectiveness of a civil society group is determined by the availability of both financial and material resources. As such, an empowered community is bound to avail all the required resources for the effectiveness of its representative group. In the province, farmers are now more represented by their traditional Zimbabwe Farmers' Union and Zimbabwe Commercial Farmers Union because they are timely paying their periodic subscriptions. At the end of the day, the previously idle and jobless youth are kept busy with some remuneration for their sustenance.

## 11. RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the above background, where the majority blacks had suffered in poverty and isolation at the instigation of the minority whites, it makes a lot of sense when some form of empowerment is rolled out in favour of the majority. Simply, this will be to ensure economic equity and normalisation of the economic playing field. This is done and achieved through a variety of ways. Given the problems that had characterised Zimbabwe, socially, politically and economically and juxtaposed against the positions that were presented by respective government agencies regarding what they had seen on the ground and the best possible solution to the said challenges, it is this paper's contention that a systematic programme be instituted in-order to find a lasting solution.

First and foremost, an economy that wishes to embark in this empowerment programme needs to objectively identify the need for the programme before causing unnecessary anxiety in society and economy. Need is determined by the concerns raised by the generality of the population especially over a skewed societal and economic structure. Considering the fact that Zimbabwe has a society that is difficult to dissect in terms of classes, it becomes imperative to carefully identify the needs of various members of the society so that they can be categorised accordingly. After drawing a needs analysis, an appropriate policy is designed based on the surrounding environment and cultural needs.

Once a policy is in place, it becomes easy for any awareness and consciousness raising programme to be implemented so that people begin to appreciate the need and the people's needs in that programme. This exercise takes care of all possible hostilities within the communities and

educates people on how to manage the same empowerment programme. When people are considered to have appreciated the nobility of the programme, deliberate training programmes are rolled out as per one's need and level of literacy. This is supposed to develop the intended beneficiaries so that they assume local ownership of the programme and all its materials and facilities. At this stage, it becomes important to identify the needy members of the community so that they benefit on the ground to systematically reduce horizontal inequalities.

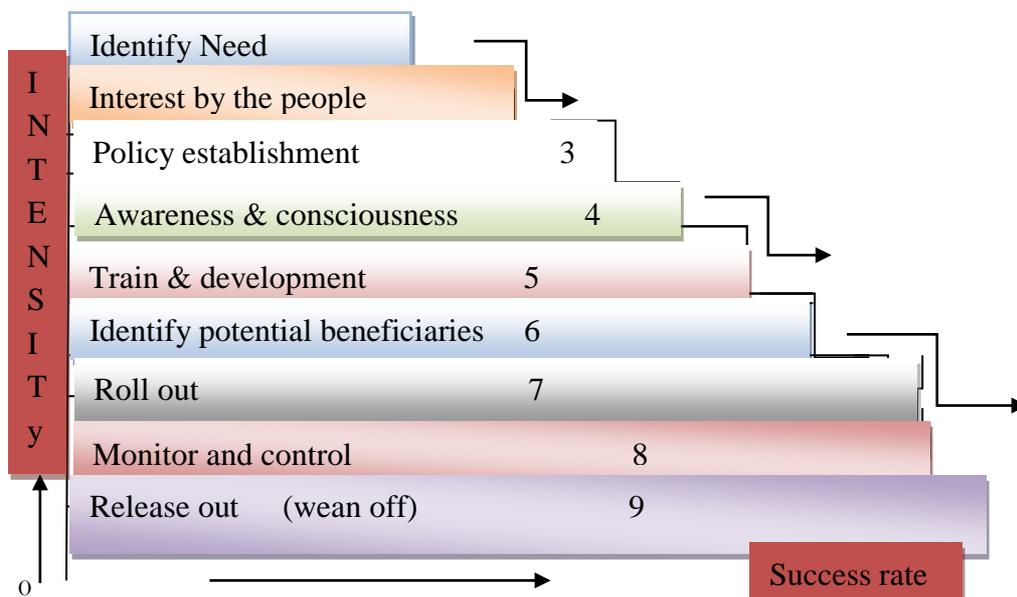
This should guard against multiple beneficiaries or benefitting the upper class at the expense of the needy. When every stakeholder in this programme is satisfied with the selection that would have been spearheaded by the local leadership, then empowerment programme can now be rolled out in earnest, albeit in phases depending on the most needy and available resources. From the day of the empowerment proper, monitoring and control should concurrently be initiated. This is also a specialised activity which should be undertaken by specialists in respective areas to ensure quality compliance, production continuity, ethic adherence and cordial relationships amongst all participants. At the end of the programme, satisfied by all stages implementation, then beneficiaries can now be weaned off so they can stand alone.

However, the stage at which these newly empowered members can be released cannot be really set; it depends on the success of all the other stages before. Also important to note is that this model was considered ideal for the Zimbabwean situation but its applicability to other situations 'may' not be guaranteed. This model follows a realisation that most of the initiatives in Zimbabwe adopt an emotional approach which at the end of the day affects its objectivity and ultimate success. Not prophesying doom, history has shown us that such like programmes fail soon after a massive political campaign usually noted ahead of a national plebiscite.

From an extensive study of the empowerment programme that is on-going in Zimbabwe, it is imperative that one understands a conceptual framework shown below.

The empowerment proper can be viewed from the following perspectives amongst several others. The Land Resettlement Programme that was rolled out ever since 1980 in Zimbabwe, especially the 2000 to 2004, saw over 23 000 beneficiaries benefitting according to the Department of Lands, Mashonaland Central province, thus transforming their livelihoods socially and economically. The essence of the programme, according to respondents from TIMB, ZCFU and Veterinary Department, was to uplift the majority of the needy but equally competent Zimbabweans into commercial farmers' status thereby empowering them financially, socially and morally. That way the traditional abuse of the idle youths by the rich and the politicians would end.

Fig-3. Author's Conception of the Empowerment Process



Indeed, the bulge that had been created by the youth who had no jobs was deflated as more youths have been transformed into serious farmers, businesspeople, agricultural commodity merchants, and project managers. For the rural poor in Mashonaland Central province, land and financial resources are of foremost importance, but technology, seeds and fertilizer, livestock, general infrastructure (water, roads, clinics and schools) and employment in general are also important. To ensure that the agrarian reform is successful, it is imperative that the government avails some form of long-term land tenure-ship. That way, people will have some sense of ownership and responsibility so much so that they begin to develop their areas.

The Education for All policy that was pronounced soon after Zimbabwe's political independence has seen millions of Zimbabweans improving for the better. The policy has confirmed the notion that 'an educated society is a progressive community'. Most of the people and in particular the youth who have been exposed to education have managed to shun violence and all other barbaric activities that characterise youths in other communities (Ministry of Youth Development Indigenisation and Empowerment (MYIE), 2012) albeit with some exceptions in this province. However, there is still a lot that the government can do to help the situation especially ensuring that the youth are exposed to practical skills' education supported by peace and human rights concepts so that they are able to distinguish the good from the evil.

Infrastructure establishment and upgrading in communities where the youth are is another approach that could be taken to ensure empowerment of the youth in Mashonaland Central province. It may not be enough to educate the youth and avail land for farming and yet the other entire relevant infrastructure; socially, politically and economically is missing. It is important that the government establishes an appropriate legislative mechanism to support and guide the youth

and everyone else in their endeavours<sup>4</sup>. The current Economic Empowerment Act may not be enough. It needs to be supported by policies that specifically cushion vulnerable groups in society. Socially, community and leadership systems must be either built or revived where they are down so that cultural and societal expectations and obligations are sustained and fulfilled. The absence of these societal structures, to some extent contributed to the political violence that was experienced in 2008 whereby the youth arbitrarily terrorised elderly people without regard for age, health and moral dictates, (Dodo, 2012). It must be realised that all the conflicts in Angola, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Burundi and Rwanda, Sudan, DRC, Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Mozambique and Nigeria amongst others were waged by the youth.

Social analysts have observed that an empowered youth is a responsible one. This is particularly true with some of the Zimbabwean youth who own immovable properties and are reluctant to participate in violent and destructive activities for fear that theirs may be affected too. Property ownership is considered one of the key strategies to ensure that everyone is responsible in as far as community policing is concerned. People need to know their fate in the event that there is a change of government; will they not be chased away from the new land, will they not be dispossessed of their new business shares, will their education certificates still be valid and will the international community still embrace them in a new dispensation? The same laws must also ensure that environmental needs are catered for so that degradation is minimised. In-order for the empowerment programme to be successful both in its planning and implementation, all the 50 respondents posited a diversity of suggestions. However, a summary of all the proposed suggestions point to the provision of education and training both to the administrators of the programme and the beneficiaries themselves. It is argued that since the indigenous will be venturing into completely new sectors in which they have no experience and in some cases, professional knowhow, there is serious need for some exposure of the stakeholders to the sectoral information and education. Relevant training and education enable stakeholders to be responsible in the management and preservation of the resources around them. It also gives them some sense of ownership so much so that they become responsible for the resources in the locality. There is also need for political will in the empowerment programme. Parsons (1988) and some respondents from the business community indicated that while a noble programme might have been rolled out on the ground, lack of specialised support, injection of monitored financial services and lack of a deliberate legislative framework, may see all the effort going to waste. Deliberate support on the ground survives courtesy of the will power of the political leadership and the entire structures. There is need for principled determination by all concerned stakeholders. Closely akin to the above requirement is the aspect of a conducive environment for the sustenance of the empowerment programme. Ideally, empowerment drives should never be meant to revenge for past wrongs; it must be executed along professional lines whereby relevant specialists are assigned to carry out specific tasks and the allocation of resources conducted through meritocracy

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<sup>4</sup>(ibid), TIMB, ZCFU and Vet Department.

and not patronage. Another important requirement for a successful empowerment programme is the right people and the right sectors to be availed out. While the right person is moulded by the training and education that was previously alluded to, passion and physical commitment also play an invaluable role. When we talk about the right sector, it is all about the ability to identify sectors that can be availed to indigenous people. The essence of this programme is not to run down the economy but to take on board the majority of Zimbabweans. Therefore, if the surrounding communities do not qualify to take up stakes in a sector, it must not be forced simply for the sake of 'empowerment'. Most importantly, the "*Zanufication*"<sup>5</sup> of the entire programme must be corrected otherwise the entire effort go to waste as is the case in most of the initiatives in Zimbabwe.

## 12. CONCLUSION

Conflicts are known to exist in most normal societies as was aptly noted by Galtung that they are like sex; needed and controlling societies. However, all what is required is that there is some deliberate policy by the government to ensure that all the people are adequately provided for in a sustainable manner without having a society defined by exaggerated classes.

Social exclusion, deprivation, and political thuggery were some of the mechanisms by which the 'war-lords' consolidated their power and disenfranchised perceived but powerless enemies. These are war-lords in the sense that they virtually controlled all the resources available depriving all they considered potential threats. To them these are 'enemies'. Patrimonialism perpetuated and feeding on the youth bulge was thus seen through the impoverished and disenfranchised youth. However, all this inequality and disenfranchisement has been part of the causes of conflicts and under-development of Mashonaland Central province. Beside these poverty and inequality-induced conflicts or simply resource-based conflicts, there are some largely based on other factors like ideology, ethnicity and simple selfishness that are still dogging the province. By and large, most of the conflicts have and are still motivated by the need for resources in whatever form by the bulging youth. While it has been noted that economic empowerment has attempted to make a difference in the lives of people, there are still areas that need to be polished especially to do with politicisation of the programmes thus leaving the following question; 'are the people in it out of patriotism or clientelism?'

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<sup>5</sup>Aligning programmes to ZANU PF party and benefitting its members only.

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