

THE STATE OF CIVICS IN ZIMBABWE

A Report prepared for the Zimbabwe Institute

September 2008

The State of Civics in Zimbabwe

Executive Summary

The watch dog role of civil society in most struggles for democratization has been significant in history and contemporary times. As part of civil society, civics are key players although they cannot play this role if their loyalty is owed to narrow interests. The period between 2000 and 2008 witnessed the entrenchment and consolidation of an authoritarianism that generated and reflected a deep political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe. What has been the role of civics in the struggles for democratic space during this period? How has the crisis affected civics in their outlook and strategies? In what ways have their relations with each other, with political parties and with the state been affected and shaped during this period? Finally, what challenges and opportunities have been generated by the transition to a Power-sharing government in September 2008?

Context

Initially prepared in March 2008, and subsequently revised in September 2008, this report assesses the important role which civics have played in defending democratic space and mounting pressure on the authoritarian state. It begins by setting the context in which this role has been undertaken. The contextual factors that impinged on the operations of civics include the political, economic and social environment which came under tremendous stress in the 2000-2008 period. The regional and international environment became increasingly intolerant towards authoritarianism and supportive towards the civic contributions to democratic change. With the exception of such regimes as those of Equatorial Guinea, Iran and China and a few others, the Mugabe government had become widely isolated.

Mapping

The report undertakes a mapping of the civil society which is no mean task in a context in which there are about 900 CSOs in various sectors. An estimated 20 per cent of the CSOs is constituted by civics concentrated in the governance and human rights sector as well as the gender and women's organizations. These are broken further into sub-sectors of **governance and human rights, civic education and media, labour unions and student/youth organizations, faith-based organizations and residents' organizations, women's organizations and professional associations**. The report briefly surveys the objectives and membership of these civics as well as the specific contributions that they made to democratization during the period under study. Although the mapping is not exhaustive, it provides a useful overview of the civics while setting the stage for an analytical assessment of their internal dynamics and interactions with other forces such as parties, donors and the state.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The strengths and limitations of civics are examined in the third chapter of the Report. Amongst the major strengths of Zimbabwean civics are their strong commitment, resilient energy and idealism as well as solidarity in their push for democratisation. These qualities and resources were the hallmarks of the leadership and secretariat of the early NCA, CZC, ZCTU and ZESN for example. Civics have developed capacity for networking domestically and internationally on specific issues and campaigns. For instance, coalitions were set up in particular operational areas such as electoral monitoring, constitutional issues and human rights. Furthermore, despite the difficult repressive environment, civics made creative use of new media and information communication technology to mobilize and lobby around specific campaigns. Their credibility and strength of their cause(s) put the state on the defensive in a reactive mode especially between 1998 and 2000. The elements of initiative and surprise were on the side of civics before the state went on the offensive and then began to dictate the agenda from 2000.

However, the study observes a number of weaknesses that civics that have been prone to. They did not seem prepared for the *long haul* which the struggle in effect became between 1998 and 2008. In situations of such prolonged struggle and attrition, the assets of energy and idealism and commitment can be sapped by fatigue, burn-out, reactive-ness and diminution of resources. Fieldwork findings suggested that civics could not remain immune to the pervasive economic and social decline, and more acutely to harassment, detention and torture. It would also appear that a weakness of most civics was an apparent absence of a medium and long-term strategy against the authoritarian state. Furthermore, most operated on a 'hand to mouth' basis, a weakness that compelled them to operate on a short-term project and programme basis. Amongst possible areas for improvement and effectiveness of civics were a careful management of the balance between *activism* and *voluntarism* on the one hand and *professionalism* and *careerism* on the other. Skills in advocacy and lobbying needed honing especially when regional lobbying became imperative between 2004 and 2008.

Relations with Political Parties, State and Donors

The navigation by civics of relationships with political parties, the state and donors is addressed in chapters 4 and 5 of the study. It is observed that civics are not a monolithic group of actors, and that it was inevitable that there would be different shades of opinion amongst them about what form and orientation their relations with parties and the state should take. While some civics had been implacably opposed to any engagement with the state and its various institutions, others had advocated 'selective engagement' with them. The study observes civics that specialised and engaged on 'soft areas' had less difficult relations with the state. This was in contrast to civics involved in 'hard issues'. The soft areas related to such areas gender, child welfare, HIV-AIDS and food security while the 'hard issues' pertained to governance, human rights and corruption. The evolution of a

‘special relationship’ between some civics and the opposition movement (the MDC) is next assessed noting that the 2005 party split was a turning point in that relationship. Threats and punitive measures from the state as well as the *Sword of Damocles* represented by the NGO Bill of 2004 remained deterrents to civics involved in the hard issues of democracy and human rights. The challenges and opportunities of coordination and networking are explored with reference to the role and experiences of Coalitions or Networks. Problems relating to overlapping and duplication of membership and functions as well as ‘turf wars’ had been experienced highlighting the need for effective leadership and transparent governance in the Networks. The opportunities, challenges and sensitivities in the relations between civics and donors are next explored. A major feature of the relationship is the dependency factor but a shared agenda of some specific issues was a major motivating factor.

Civics and Transition

When the chapter on the possibilities of a role of civics in a transition was originally written, it was not certain which way the March election would go and what form a transition would take. Nevertheless, the recommendations that we made would still stand. *First, it is observed that civic organizations would remain active players in the political process.* However, their role might now change from that of resistance to that of contributing to the consolidation of a democratic transition. For instance, the focus of civics involved in governance and human rights work would need to shift to reconciliation and reconstruction. Some civics already viewed the role of *peace brokering* and *peace building* as vital processes in the new context. Other civics had built a comparative advantage during the past decade on the rule of law and transitional justice issues. If the transitional process will involve addressing past injustices, impunities and corruption as well as cases seeking compensation, their work will be cut out for them. At the same time, if there is a significant improvement of the governance and human rights situation, this would render the work of some civics in the sector superfluous. They would have to re-define their role.

Reconstruction

Second, as we foresaw, there has been an increase in the ‘buzz’ about economic and state reconstruction since the signing of the Power-sharing Agreement. Some civics see their role as contributing ideas to a reconstruction blueprint as well its implementation. The key state institutions operating in sectors such as health, education, housing and agriculture have suffered a heavy haemorrhage of funding and staff in the past 8 years. The rebuilding of these institutions will be imperative but, unlike at present, there would need to be greater collaboration and coordination between civics and state institutions in such a reconstruction project. Thus a challenge and opportunity to civics would be to prepare to make a transition from the present adversarial relationship to one of partnership in reconstruction in the emerging era. But the transition would ultimately hinge on whether it constitutes a genuine change from authoritarianism to democracy.

New Niches and Opportunities?

Third, the study identifies specific opportunities that would be provided within the framework of the Power-sharing Agreement. These relate to

- constitution-making and civic education,
- economic and social policy making,
- transitional justice and reconciliation,
- humanitarian and food assistance as well as
- media reform amongst others.

The study observes that these are areas in which civics could make contributions in the short and medium term. Their actual participation will depend on the political conjuncture but especially on whether the new government will be committed to democracy and good governance.

Finally and clearly, in this emerging era, a different array of skills, approaches and strategies would be necessary. The study notes that civics have a perennial challenge of building and maintaining capacity. They need to conduct training to raise competence levels, and to develop leadership and planning skills amongst their staff. Against the background of the brain drain that has affected most sectors, institutional support for civics would be vital while their ICT needs should be addressed to strengthen inter-civic communication and synergies. Other opportunities that beckon to civics relate to improvements in their self-regulation and corporate governance, and search for a new funding paradigm.

THE STATE OF CIVICS IN ZIMBABWE

Table of Contents

<i>Preface and Acknowledgements</i>	9
Chapter 1: State of the Civics: the Wider Context	13
1.1 Context of the Study	
1.2 Political Context	
1.3 Economic Context	
1.4 Social Context	
1.5 International Context	
Chapter 2: Mapping of Civil Society and Civics	21
2.0 Introduction	
2.1 Literature Review	
2.2 Mapping of Civics by Sector	
2.3 Civics by Sub-Sector	
2.3.1 Governance	
2.3.2 Human Rights	
2.3.3 Civic Education	
2.3.4 Media	
2.3.5 Faith-Based Organizations	
2.3.6 Women’s Organizations	
2.3.7 Labour Unions	
2.3.8 Students and Youth	
2.3.9 Residents Associations	
2.3.10 Professional Associations	
Chapter 3: Civic Activism	29
3.1 Introduction	
3.2 Strength of Civics	
3.3 Weaknesses	
3.4 Areas of Improvement	
3.5 Public Perceptions of Civics	
Chapter 4: Civics, Political Parties and the State	35
4.1 Introduction	
4.2 Civics and Political Parties	
4.3 Civics and the State	
4.4 Response of Civics to unfolding Developments.....	

Chapter 5: Civic Coordination and Relations with Partners	43
5.1 Introduction	
5.2 Coordination of Coalitions and Networks	
5.3 Strengths and Limitations of Coalitions	
5.4 Civic-Donor Relations	
5.5 Requirements and Procedures	
5.6 Coping Strategies of CSOs	
Chapter 6: Civics and the Transition Process	50
6.1 Introduction	
6.2 Transition and Civics	
6.3 Towards Reconstruction	
6.4 Rebuilding Confidence	
Chapter 7: Conclusion :Threats, Constraints and Opportunities	53
7.1 Introduction	
7.2 Threats and Opportunities	
7.3 Opportunities for Civics	
7.4 Possible Opportunities in the new Dispensation	
After-word	60
Bibliography	62
List of Organizations Consulted	66

Acronyms

AIPPA	Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act
AU	African Union
BSA	Broadcasting Services Act
CA	Christian Alliance
CCZ	Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition
CHRA	Combined Harare Residents Association
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
EPIZ	Ecumenical Peace Initiative in Zimbabwe
EU	European Union
FCAs	Foreign Currency Accounts
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MOPI	Mass Public Opinion Institute
NCA	National Constitutional Assembly
NANGO	National Association of Non-Governmental Organizations
NGO Bill	Non-Governmental Organization Bill
POSA	Public Order and Security Act
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
TI(Z)	Transparency International Zimbabwe
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WOZA	Women of Zimbabwe Arise
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZESN	Zimbabwe Election Support Network
ZFTU	Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions
ZIMCODD	Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development
ZIMRIGHTS	Zimbabwe Human Rights Organization
ZINASU	Zimbabwe National Students Union

Preface and Acknowledgements

Zimbabwe stood at a crossroads in the first quarter of 2008. In its eighth year of a prolonged and debilitating *crisis*, there was no clear indication of the direction that the country would take. The SADC-facilitated Inter-party talks that had initially made some progress drew to an inconclusive close amidst mutual recriminations between the two sides involved. The election campaign in February and March 2008 seemed a replica of previous ones with the incumbent Zanu PF monopolizing its advantages especially the use of state resources including public media, security services and infrastructure to drum up electoral support. Opposition parties continued to be hobbled by structural features of the electoral system with the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission not sufficiently independent and robust to ensure a fair electoral contest. Although cracks in Zanu PF finally came out in the open during the campaign, this phenomenon represented by Simba Makoni and a few other leaders including Dumiso Dabengwa appeared late to make a decisive difference in March elections.

The major surprise was nevertheless the defeat of Zanu PF in the parliamentary elections and of Robert Mugabe in the presidential election in March election. He received 43 per cent as against 47 per cent that Morgan Tsvangirai garnered.

Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this Report is not to analyse the present political *conjuncture* although it is a very important one. The purpose is to assess the role and experiences of an important group of actors who have defied heavy odds to create and defend some democratic space, no matter how limited, in an authoritarian environment that the Mugabe government has consolidated since 2000. Civil society organizations have been active in resisting the *authoritarianism* in its various forms such as repression of the independent media,

restriction of political activity and harassment of NGOs. Civics are a major constituent part of this Zimbabwean civil society. This Report specifically explores the strengths and limitations of the activism displayed by civics in the past eight years. Which are the main civics that have been involved in struggles against *authoritarianism*? How have civics related to parties and the state? What have been the key issues and challenges experienced in the coordination of civic *coalitions and networks*? And what have been the trends in civic-donor relations? These are some of the principal questions that this Report seeks to investigate.

In addition, the Report also assesses the possible role of civics in a *transition* process. The implications of such a process on civic organizations are likely to be far-reaching, but are they prepared for such a prospect? Finally, the study assesses the remaining threats and constraints to civics as well as such opportunities as exist or in the near future. The broad framework adopted in this study is that civics are an integral part of the wider civil and political society. They are not immune from the economic and social shocks that the Zimbabwean *crisis* has generated. They will continue to be key players in the country's *democratization process*.

Methodology

A combination of desk research and field interviews was employed for this study. There is a reasonable amount of material of civics in the public domain. Some of them publish newsletters and even monthly newspapers (like the *Worker*). The media, including the state-controlled *Herald*, also carries a considerable amount of reportage on civics. We drew on these sources with a discerning eye. The perusal of desk material was conducted the first 3 weeks of January 2008.

Field interviews were carried out with directors and coordinators of civics between late January and mid-February 2008. A list of the 15 civic organizations covered is provided in an annex to this Report. In a report of this nature, it may not be prudent to attach specific names to persons interviewed in specific organizations but the sponsors of this

study will be provided with a list of the interviewees. The response amongst the civics contacted was about 85 per cent which is a reasonably good indication of the confidence and interest that they had in the research for the Report. Many expressed an interest in getting access to the Report once it was completed.

A study of this nature and scope has several limitations. The resources for time, extensive travel and exhaustive coverage of material and organizations are often limited. In this instance, it was not possible to cover civics in other provinces and cities such as Bulawayo and Mutare amongst others. Despite this limitation, the study draws from a diverse set of civics which have national presence beyond Harare.

Structure of the Report

This Report consists of seven chapters. The first chapter provides the broad context in which the study conducted and in which the civics operate. The political, economic, social and international aspects of the context are briefly highlighted. The mapping of the civics in chapter 2 follows a brief literature review on Zimbabwean civil society. While the third chapter explores civic activism, the fourth chapter assesses patterns and implications of relations between civics, political parties and the state. The issues of coordination of civic coalitions and networks, and their relations with donors are examined in chapter 5.

The possible role(s) that civics could play in a *transition process* are explored in chapter 6. The final chapter assesses threats, constraints and opportunities as they relate to civic organizations in Zimbabwe. In this revised version of the Report, an **Executive Summary** has been added together with **Conclusions and an After-word** which take into account developments up to September 2008.

Acknowledgements

In undertaking this study, the author received generous support from the civic organizations that responded to requests for interviews and material. This was often at

short notice. I am most grateful for their quick response and candour. I cannot name all the organizations that were helpful but I am thankful to MMPZ for allowing me to attend their workshop for journalists in February, to NANGO for useful material and to the ZCTU for encouragement and insights into issues that civics are grappling with. It remains to state the usual disclaimer that I am alone responsible for any shortcomings that this Report may have.

Chapter 1

State of the Civics: The Wider Context

The Context of the Study

This chapter sets out the domestic and international context in which Zimbabwean civil society operates. It is an evolving context, and not a static one. In the first quarter of 2008- when this study was carried out – the authoritarian state and its paraphernalia of repression was still largely intact. Most of the political and democratic space was heavily policed and restricted. For example, the day prior to our interview appointment at Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CZC) offices in Harare in mid-February, their offices were raided by the police. Earlier in January, a large march planned by MDC-Tsvangirai was banned by the police at the last-minute. In addition, there continued to be reports of discriminatory politicization of food distribution in rural and urban areas.

1.1 Political Context

Although there already exists extensive literature on political developments in post-2000 Zimbabwe, it is necessary (even though briefly), to recap the major landmarks in the entrenchment and consolidation of authoritarianism under the Mugabe government (Harold-Barry, 2004; Raftopoulos and Savage, 2005; Sachikonye et.al., 2007). The landmarks have had a direct bearing on the fortunes of civil society, especially the civics. First, an opening up of political space in the period 1996-1999 was blocked and reversed after the Zanu PF referendum defeat on a draft constitution in February 2000. This was followed by a steady accentuation of political violence and intimidation as mobilization tools by Zanu PF in the 2000 and 2002 parliamentary and presidential election campaigns respectively. Using war veterans, there was a systematic deployment of these tools against both the main opposition party, MDC (founded in 1999) and activists in civic organizations such as the NCA, Zimrights and ZCTU amongst others. The election processes themselves in 2000 and 2002 were rigged in favour of the incumbent government as various observation reports documented (Commonwealth, 2000 and 2002; EU, 2000 and 2002; SADC Parliamentary Forum, 2002; ZESN, 2002). If the political

playing field had been 'level', Zanu PF faced the prospect of losing the 2000 election on the back of the referendum defeat.

The authoritarian backlash through the use of political violence was buttressed by a raft of draconian legislation. The legislation included the *Public Order and Security Act* (POSA) which drastically curbed freedoms of assembly and association, and the *Access to Protection of Privacy Act* (AIPPA) which was applied against the independent press. Other repressive legislation included the *Broadcasting Services Act* (BSA) and various electoral laws that restricted the observation and monitoring of elections. Authoritarian legislation was soon used to enforce closure of independent newspapers including the *Daily News* in 2003. In addition, bombings of premises of newspaper plants (*Daily News*) and radio stations (*Voice of the People*) contributed to a chilly atmosphere of repression particularly as perpetrators of the bombings remained at large (to this day).

The instinct for self-preservation was expressed in the restructuring of the state at various levels during this period. This process included witch-hunting and purges in institutions such as the Judiciary and Local Government (Hammar, Raftopoulos and Jensen, 2003; Feltoe, 2004; Goredema, 2005). Appointments and promotions in state institutions were based on populist and ideological criteria rather than on merit.

In this context, reference should be made to the fact that a key element of the authoritarian system is the steady militarization of major organs of the Zimbabwe state. This has taken the form of appointment of high-profile army and security personnel to political posts. Retired majors, colonels and generals have been rewarded with positions as members of the Zanu PF Central Committee and Politburo, as Members of Parliament, Governors and Ministers. Other army and security personnel have been appointed to head ministries (such as Transport and Energy) and parastatals such as the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) and National Oil Corporation of Zimbabwe (NOCZIM). While the supposed loyalty of the military and security personnel is a major factor in their appointment to key state positions, there is no evidence to suggest that they are more

capable and efficient than their civilian counterparts. To that extent, the process of militarization is a form of patronage which has been at the root of the country's decline.

The land reform process occurred simultaneously during the period between 2000 and 2003. Accompanied by violence and intimidation, self-aggrandisement and extortion, it yielded political advantage to Zanu PF while undermining a major productive base of the economy. A culture of 'entitlement' and 'self-aggrandisement' replaced that of accountability and transparency. More generally, there was a strong 'get rich quick' mentality amongst the newly-landed farmers and the wider ruling elite.

Other political markers during this period included the 'Final Push' in June 2003. Planned as a series of massive demonstrations and marches against the Mugabe government, the 'Push' raised high expectations domestically and internationally. The authoritarian response of the state was calculated but brutal. When the 'Push' failed to achieve its objective of forcing the Mugabe government to relent, there began to grow a sense of disillusionment and frustration in the opposition movement and amongst civics.

By the time the 2005 elections were held, the level of self-confidence and sense of purpose in the broad opposition movement was beginning to dissipate. The split in the MDC in October 2005 ostensibly over Senatorial elections, but clearly over long-standing internal differences, reflected this sense of disillusionment as much as weaknesses in intra-party democracy (Raftopoulos, 2006). Civics could not remain aloof towards this development since most of them had pinned their hopes for a democratic alternative through the MDC. The state repeatedly castigated civics for their alleged close cooperation with the MDC. The *NGO Bill* in 2004 had been designed to emasculate especially those civics that campaigned on governance and human rights issues. A provision in the Bill prohibited access to external funding to civics. This galvanized civics and various NGOs under the auspices of NANGO into intensive lobbying which included a meeting between them and a senior Politburo member. That lobbying including that by bishops bought time for civics as this Bill was still unsigned at the time of writing in 2008 (Field Interviews, February 2008)!

Yet this narrative on the political context would be incomplete without reference to dramatic developments during 2007. Sensing that the stalemate had become debilitating, civics were instrumental in forging the **Save Zimbabwe Campaign** whose prayer meeting on 11 March 2007 witnessed a brutal display of force against civic and opposition party figures. The footage of the assaults shocked Zimbabweans as well as the wider world. The footage was similar to an earlier rehearsal of beatings of trade union leaders in September 2006. This naked authoritarianism nevertheless became a catalyst for renewed international condemnation on the one hand and the SADC Inter-party Dialogue in 2007. In turn, as this study will show, the Inter-party Dialogue process and outcome would play a great role in conditioning relations between civics and political parties especially the MDC.

1.2 The Economic Context

Zimbabwe has experienced a steady economic decline in the past 8 years. It is an unmitigated decline that has coincided with the tightening of the authoritarian grip on the society. Unlike in development models where authoritarianism is accompanied with growth (for example China), in the Zimbabwean case, it has been inimical to growth. Indeed, Zimbabwe has notched dubious records on the economic front during the period under review. For five years running up to the present, it has had the highest inflation and fastest shrinking economy in the world. In the course of 2008, the Zimbabwe Central Statistical Office (CSO) stated that inflation had climbed to over 1 million per cent.

This report will not delve into detail about the *causes* and *effects* of the decline. There are several important studies on the Zimbabwean economy (Solidarity Peace Trust, 2007; Zimbabwe Institute, 2007). What is of immediate relevance to this study is that the economy has *shrunk* by more than 40 per cent during the period under review. This has had a significant impact on unemployment and poverty levels, access to food and basic *livelihoods*. It is estimated that 80 per cent of the population lives below the *poverty line* and that more than a third of the population will require some form of *food assistance* in 2008. The outlook for the sectors of *agriculture, manufacturing, mining and tourism* has been bleak in the past 4 years, and continues to be so. There has been underutilization of

land in agriculture and of capacity in manufacturing as key inputs such as seed, fertilizer, fuel and electricity have been in short supply.

The response of the populace has been to enter into *informal sector* activities such as vending and barter, cross-border trade, repair and maintenance amongst other activities for *livelihood*. While formal sector production and employment have shrunk, the informal sector has been growing fast. Indeed, this explains the exponential growth of the *parallel market* in goods and services. Another response by the population has been *migration*. An estimated 25 per cent of the population (about 3 million) has migrated to other countries principally South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, UK, Australia and the United States. This migration has encompassed a *brain drain* of qualified and experienced professionals such as teachers, nurses, doctors, engineers, technicians, administrators amongst others from both public and private sectors. The civics have not been spared this *brain drain*.

Despite the crisis, a small elite has nevertheless been able to make windfall gains. It has done so by using state avenues of access of cheap foreign exchange and then engaging in speculation on the *parallel market*. This Zanu PF- and state-connected elite has also been a beneficiary of government and central bank cheap loans as well as inputs such as fuel, some of which has also found its way onto the *parallel market*.

At the beginning of 2008, there were no signs of the *economic crisis* abating in the foreseeable future. It is unlikely that internally generated growth alone will provide a way out of the *decline*. Other sources of stimuli would have to be sought. The bleak economic landscape in 2008 was manifested by frequent power cuts, some lasting days, water shortage, break-down of infrastructure exemplified by roads cut into potholes.

1. 3 The Social Context

The Zimbabwean society has not been immune to the multi-layered crisis that has engulfed this country for the past 8 years (Sachikonye and Manjengwa, 2006). For instance, the economic crisis has been at the root of social hardship and deprivation that has deepened poverty levels while authoritarianism has generated a mixture of resistance,

apathy, withdrawal and fear. Unlike an apparently self-confident society that appeared to be emerging in the 1980s and 1990s, the Zimbabwean society is now uneasy, unsettled and deeply unhappy. Indeed, an international public opinion survey in 2006 observed that, with respect to their economic and political conditions, Zimbabweans are amongst the two most unhappy societies in Sub-Saharan Africa (AfroBarometer, May 2006). (The other society was Nigeria).

Comparatively speaking, Zimbabwe is one of the countries that have experiences out-migration as an ‘exit’ strategy, and by extension, as a political ‘safety valve’. As we briefly observed above, the resultant ‘brain drain’ could not fail to have an impact on civics but also on state and private institutions. Their skill, leadership and institutional memory bases have been affected.

In sum, as an environment in which civics are operating, the Zimbabwean society is undergoing considerable change if not upheaval. Survival in the informal sector has been possible through *undermining* and *supplementing* the formal sector. As we saw above, this sector has become a mainstay of a substantial proportion (some 80 per cent) of the population. The survival of this population is possible partly through ‘grey’ activities such foreign exchange transactions, smuggling and tax evasion. Although it is difficult to quantify their size, remittances from Zimbabweans in the Diaspora have been significant in cushioning their relatives and dependents at home from the worst effects of deprivation. Estimates of receipts ranged from USD 400 million to USD 1 billion in 2007 (IOM, 2008). Some studies have also suggested that the *social reproduction* of a significant number of households is increasingly dependent on receipt of remittances (Bracking and Sachikonye, 2006).

In addition, the consequences of the HIV-AIDS (although prevalence has declined from over 30 per cent at its peak to 15 per cent in 2007) have been very profound leading to a considerable weakening of the extended family support system. Furthermore, *individualist* values appear to be gaining an upper hand over *collective* values that support mutual care, assistance and solidarity. To that extent, Zimbabwean society is poorer in terms of confidence, optimism and solidarity than it was a decade ago for

instance. Events such as *Operation Murambatsvina* in 2005 compounded the sense of fear, stress, trauma and desperation among wide swathes of society. There has also developed a general cynicism towards the political class, both ruling and opposition parties. It would therefore take some time to rebuild confidence, optimism, civic and collective values after the demise of authoritarianism.

1.4 The International Context

A study on civics such as this one should also have its international context broadly defined at the outset. This is not only because of the common perception that civics are mainly supported by external donors but because the Zimbabwean *crisis* itself has been internationalized in the past decade. What has been the state of Zimbabwe's external relations during the period under study?

Within the Southern Africa region, Zimbabwe has maintained reasonably good relations with most of the SADC member states. However, some of them have felt increasing impatience and apprehension especially in relation to economic decline and rising number of migrants from Zimbabwe. This has been the case of Botswana, South Africa and Zambia. Despite occasional outbursts of impatience and irritation (in one instance Zimbabwe was referred to as a 'sinking Titanic'), SADC has sought to maintain a common stance. The SADC Inter-party Dialogue process facilitated by South Africa from 2007 was a sustained attempt at achieving an inter-party settlement. Nevertheless, civil society in SADC has taken a more critical stance against the authoritarian regime in Harare. SADC CSOs have interacted more closely with Zimbabwean civics in lobbying activities and advocacy in recent years.

Within Africa more broadly, the reputation of the Zimbabwean government has had more mixed fortunes. While some countries have supported it consistently, others have been more critical and the latter include states such as Nigeria and Ghana. The low point for the Zimbabwe government was the censure of its human rights and governance record by the **African Court for Human and People's Rights**. There were clearly limits to which the continent through the AU Commission could ignore the crisis in Zimbabwe on the

pretext of an assumed pan-Africanism! The censure was the outcome of significant lobbying by Zimbabwean civics in concert with the wider African civil society.

A major development during the period under review was Mugabe government shift of foreign relations to the East, especially to China. This has resulted in a significant build-up of development and trade relations. By 2007, China had become Zimbabwe's biggest trading partner, and well on its way to become its biggest investor (Burke, 2007. Sachikonye, 2008, Shwerenksy, 2006). Chinese loans and aid came with no questions asked. Indeed, Chinese military supplies including planes and trucks were augmented with police anti-riot equipment and radio jamming equipment thus buttressing the authoritarian arsenal of the Mugabe government. Although its sustainability might not be open-ended, Chinese assistance has bought the latter some time since 2000.

Finally, relations between Zimbabwe and the West have been poor during the period under review. After a relatively good relationship during the 1980s and 1990s, they took a turn for the worse in 2000 as governance conditions deteriorated (Laakso, Sachikonye and Masiya, 2006). The critical conjunctures were the violence-ridden elections of 2000, 2002 and the land reform process in 2000-03. Although trade relations and humanitarian aid have continued, development assistance slowed to a trickle. In addition, 'targeted sanctions' on the travel of Zimbabwe government leaders has provoked much anger and discomfort in Harare. Since most civics draw their funding from the West, this has increased the suspicion and consternation amongst the ruling elite hence the harassment of civics operating in the governance and human rights sector. However, by 2007, there were also fissures in the West on whether or not to engage the Mugabe government. The attendance of Mugabe at the EU-AU Summit in Lisbon in December 2007 was contested by a few countries such as the UK but most showed fatigue over the issue by attending. Wider issues were clearly at play: Europe broad strategic interests *vis-a-vis* China's growing clout in Africa.

Chapter 2

Mapping of Civil Society and Civics

2. Introduction

In assessing the contemporary role of civics in Zimbabwe, it would be useful to provide a mapping of the civil society in which they are situated. This enables us to provide an overview of the structure of civil society and the scope of its activities. However it would be appropriate to begin with sketching a brief literature review to draw attention to those salient issues and dimensions that social scientists, practitioners and donors have highlighted.

2.1 Literature Review

The research and policy interest in Zimbabwean civil society began to bloom in the 1990s as civic activism grew after a relatively quiescent period during the first decade of independence. This is not to overlook studies devoted earlier to such civic organizations as labour and student organizations in the 1970s and 1980s. The new element in the attention paid to civil society in 1990s and later was the attention paid to the *democratic potential and prospects* created by the mushrooming of new civil society organizations (CSOs) in human rights, governance, gender, anti-corruption, development and poverty reduction. Globally, the collapse of communism at the end of the 1980s, created a conducive intellectual and political environment for a new *discourse on good governance and human rights*. In Africa, pressures built up for a *transition* from one-party state and military rule to *multi-party democracy* (Gibbon et.al. 1992; Olukoshi and Laakso, 1996; Bratton and de Walle, 1997). In Southern Africa, civics played a prominent role in *transitions* in Zambia, Malawi, South Africa in the 1990s. In Zimbabwe, the formation of civic coalitions on human rights, women's rights and constitutional provided the backdrop for research and literature on CSOs.

Among the early studies in mapping CSOs were two publications, first by Moyo, Makumbe and Raftopoulos (2000) on *NGOs, the State and Politics in Zimbabwe* and the

Zimbabwe Human Development Report, 2000. These publications provided a fairly upbeat assessment of the capacity and potential of CSOs in contributing to both *development and democratic processes* in Zimbabwe. The brief political opening up in the late 1990s fuelled this optimism. For instance, it was observed that the *developmental role* of CSOs is quite significant; and that the emergence of a stronger civil society had nurtured the idea of *political pluralism* (ZHDR, 2000). Some of the strength of these early syntheses was derived from the insights gained by some of the analysts being activists also in the CSOs that they studied. These early analyses were enriched by analytical and conceptual contributions from debates on civil society in the wider Southern Africa region (Nzimande and Sikhosana, 1995; Sachikonye, 1995).

This early set of studies was followed by a number of extended scholarly investigations on CSOs. One of the studies was by Dorman on *NGOs and the State in Zimbabwe*, and she argued that while studies of NGO-state relations often used conceptions of ‘civil society’ which emphasize state-society conflict, this was an excessively bi-polar approach (Dorman, 2001). It was proposed that state-society relations should be understood not only in terms of the state’s use of coercion but also its construction of consent. Three related observations were made about CSOs in Zimbabwe:

- they operated within the framework of the hegemony of the state,
- they operated under material and organizational constraints- that they are as much centres of employment as activism – which encourage them to develop working relations with the state, and
- they exercise strategic pragmatism framing what few challenges they make to political order in a depoliticizing discourse in order to make themselves acceptable to their peers and the state (Ibid.).

This analysis drew from her research in the mid-1990s before the contest between CSOs and the state became sharper, and before the counter-hegemonic thrust of some of the CSOs became clearer. By the post-2000 period, some of the analysis by Dorman had been superseded by events and processes.

Post-2000 assessments of the State-CSO relations show polarization particularly in the governance and human rights sector. This is largely explicable because conditions of authoritarianism had been tightened as we saw in chapter 1. Studies such as that of McCandless and Pajibo (2003) explain the growing irritation of the state towards the mission of CSOs involved in the civil and political rights field hence the recourse to draconian measures taken against them between 2000 and 2004. In addition, various reports documented increased repression against CSOs in this sector, and the consequences arising from that (Anand et. al., 2004; Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, 2005; Amnesty International, 2007). The Amnesty International (2007) report observed an upsurge in state harassment of trade unionists, human rights defenders and women grouped around the Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) amongst others. Several studies included an evaluation of programmes conducted by civics in human rights, anti-corruption, voter education and constitutional reform yielding important insights on their strengths and limitations (Nupen, Njovana and Sachikonye, 2006; Sachikonye and Manjengwa, 2006). Other evaluation reports surveyed the views of CSOs on relations between Zimbabwe and the European Union in the light of Article 96 under which smart sanctions were invoked against the ruling elite (Laakso, Sachikonye and Masiya, 2006).

Finally, additional literature that throws a sharp light on the vicissitudes of CSOs include several book-length memoirs. The books by Geoff Nyarota (2006) and Judith Todd (2007) resent eloquent indictments of state repression of the media in particular, and other civic organizations in general. An eagerly awaited book by Brian Kagoro (forthcoming) on civics with particular reference to the founding and early phase of the NCA will enrich our understanding of dynamics in civil society as the relations with the state developed between 1998 and 2005.

2.2 Mapping Civics by Sector

In 2000, there were an estimated 850 CSOs in Zimbabwe (ZHDR, 2000). First, about two-thirds of them consisted of community-based NGOs representing locally based, self-

help groups specializing in a particular activity. Second, some 18 per cent of them consisted of intermediary NGOs which assist in operations of smaller groups, and mediate between such groups, donor agencies and the state. They operate in areas such as relief services, sanitation and water provision, back-up support for cooperatives in various sectors.

The third category of CSOs is that of service NGOs which make up 9 per cent of the total. They provide support for project formulation and implementation, consultancy and research in training and information. Constituting 5 per cent of the total, the fourth category is made up of trusts and unions. Belonging to this category are interest groups such as farmers, business, trade unions and women's organizations. Finally, making up about 4 per cent of the total are regional and international NGOs spanning various sectors.

Significantly, the civics constitute a relatively small proportion of the CSOs operating in Zimbabwe. Concentrated in the governance and human rights, they make up about 5 per cent of the total (ZHDR, 2000). However, if the broad area of gender/women's organizations is added to this proportion it then expands to 21 per cent of the total.

2.3 Civics by Sub-Sector

Although the civics operating in the governance, human rights and gender sub-sectors are comparatively few, they have exerted the greatest pressure on the state to change its authoritarian ways. Their fewer numbers are compensated for by their high profile and visibility, courage and tenacity, regional and international linkages. To that extent, for lack of a better expression, they have constituted a great thorn in the side of the state. Nevertheless, it would be necessary to break down the civics by sub-sector for purposes of analysis. We propose to categorize them according to the following sub-sectors:

- **Governance,**
- **Human Rights,**
- **Civic Education,**
- **Media,**
- **Faith-based Organizations,**
- **Women's Organizations and Gender,**
- **Labour Unions,**
- **Professional Associations (eg. of lawyers, doctors),**

- **Residents' Associations,**
- **Student and Youth Organizations.**

In the remainder of the chapter, we will briefly describe the composition and scope of key CSOs in each of the sub-sectors.

2.3.1 Governance

CSOs in this sector are preoccupied with democracy, political and civil rights, constitutional reform and citizen participation. They campaign for transparency, accountability, indeed anti-corruption in public and private sectors. CSOs in this sector attract higher visibility during election campaign periods when the political temperature rises. Without being exhaustive, the major CSOs in governance during the period under review were CZC, NCA, TI (Z) and ZESN. Other active ones were the **Public Affairs and Parliamentary Trust (PAPST)**, the **Centre for Peace Initiatives in Africa (CPIA)** and the **Bulawayo Agenda, and the Foundation for Democracy in Zimbabwe (FODEZI)**. The **Mass Public Opinion Institute (MOPI)** engages in public opinion research in relation to governance issues.

2.3.2 Human Rights

Civics engaged in human rights work deal with cases of violation of these rights by the state or its agents, the documentation of abuses and seek the redress of the violations. They also organize workshops and conferences on human rights, train human rights defenders and provide courses in conflict resolution and peace-building. Active civics in this sub-sector include **Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, Legal Resources Foundation, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights and Zimrights**. Other civic organizations involved in human rights work include the **Human Rights Trust of Southern Africa, the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, Amnesty International (Zimbabwe) and the Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights**.

2.3.3 Civic Education

There are several civics engaged in providing civic education to citizens. This education includes basic political rights as well as voter education. The main civics in sub-sector

find that their focus relates closely to that of those in the Governance sub-sector. For instance, **ZESN** is engaged in broad governance especially electoral observation but also in provision of voter education. Key civics in this sub-sector include **Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP)**, **Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust (ZIMCET)** and the **Civic Education Network Trust (CIVINET)**. There is considerable straddling of activities in the sub-sector as some of these organizations also deal with documentation of human rights violations, on political violence and initiatives at peace-building at local levels. Similarly, organizations such as **NCA**, **Zimrights** and **CCJP** include a component of civic education in their programmes. The **African Community Publishing Development Trust (ACPDT)** has been involved in a significant civic education programme in rural areas as well as in publishing texts for local study circles.

2.3.4 Media

An important component of civil society is the media whose ‘watchdog role’ is indispensable in society. While the state-owned media cannot be classified as part of civil society proper, the independent media is. As we observed in chapter 1, the independent media has borne a larger brunt of state repression. There are several media organizations that campaign for press freedom as well as an end to authoritarianism. They include the **Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe (MMPZ)**, the **Media Alliance of Zimbabwe (MAZ)**, and **MISA-Zimbabwe**. The **Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ)** represents the interests of journalists and campaigns for their freedom from suppression.

2.3.5 Faith-Based Organizations

Faith-based organizations constitute a vital part of civil society. They are predominantly based on churches and church-related organizations. Amongst notable faith-based organizations are the **Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC)**, the **Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference (ZCBC)**, the **Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ)**. These organizations have been interested in areas such as constitutional reform and national reconciliation. The **Ecumenical Peace Initiative in Zimbabwe (EPIZ)** represents an initiative by these three organizations to build momentum to break the current stalemate in the country through dialogue with the state. A parallel initiative is that of the **Christian**

Alliance (CA) which draws from church leaders and individuals from Catholic, Evangelical and Protestant churches, Bulawayo-based churches as well as from the **Zimbabwe National Pastors Conference**. The CA has organized the **Save Zimbabwe Campaign** in conjunction with civics and opposition parties to bring pressure to bear on the Mugabe government.

2.3.6 Women's Organizations

A significant component of civics consists of organizations representing women's rights in political, social and economic arenas. The organizations have drawn from both professional sectors of society as well as ordinary membership in both urban and rural areas. They include organizations such as **Women's Action Group (WAG)**, **Zimbabwe Women Lawyers' Association (ZIWOLA)**, **Musasa Project and Women and Law in Southern Africa (WILSA)**, and **Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA)**. Others are the **Zimbabwe Women's Research Centre and Network (ZWRCN)**, **Women in Politics Unit (Wipsu)** and the **Women's Trust**. About 40 women's organization are grouped under the **Women's Coalition**. Like in the above-mentioned civics operating in other sub-sectors, there is considerable straddling and overlapping of activities within and between the organizations and operational areas. Some provide services, others research and advocacy across sectors including governance, human rights and civic education.

2.3.7 Labour Unions

Labour unions have been active sector of civil society both in the representation of workers' interests and in campaigns for democratic governance. Representing more than 20 per cent of the total national work-force, they have exhibited greater organizational and mobilizational reach than most civics. The operations of unions range from civic education to human rights at work-places to networking with various civic coalitions. It is not a coincidence that the national centre, the **Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU)** has been actively in such Coalitions as **NCA**, **CZC** and **CA** to mention a few. One of labour's major contributions was its role in the formative stages of the MDC which proved to be the strongest opposition movement since independence. Despite a

state-sponsored attempt to promote a rival centre, the **Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions (ZFTU)**, labour has remained a relatively cohesive social group.

2.3.8 Students and Youth

Although often under-rated, student and youth organizations form an active element within Zimbabwean civics. They organize in a sector that has witnessed decline in education and employment provision. Despite the long arm of state patronage and infiltration, such organizations as the **Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) and the Zimbabwe Student Christian Movement** have been active in projecting the interests of students. Frequent arrests and torture have been unsuccessful in dampening student and youth activism.

2.3.9 Residents Associations

In local government matters, residents associations have been important players in organizing on matters of housing, water, electricity and access to other services. As the *economic crisis* has deepened, the role of these associations has become pivotal. Similarly, they have been in the forefront of resisting government measures against democratically elected MDC councils and mayors in the period from 2003. The sacking of mayors in cities such as Harare and the installation of state-appointed commissions compromised democratic governance and contributed to the deterioration of infrastructure and services in cities and towns. Amongst some of the active residents' associations are the **Combined Harare Residents Association (CHRA), the Bulawayo Residents Association and the Mutare Residents Association.**

2.3.10 Professional Associations

Finally, there are various professional associations that contribute to the building of a civic culture and provision of expertise on legal and governance matters. They also contribute to capacity building in individual civics. Notable amongst such professional associations are the **Law Society of Zimbabwe**. Other key professional associations include the **Progressive Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Teachers' Association (ZIMTA).**

Chapter 3

Civic Activism

3.1. Introduction

Like in most long drawn-out struggles, civic activism has experienced ‘high’ as well as ‘low’ moments. It would have appeared far-fetched if someone had predicted in 1998 that Mugabe’s authoritarianism would still be entrenched a decade later. Yet it is a tribute to civics that they have kept the issue of *democracy* in Zimbabwe on the agenda domestically and internationally. This chapter assesses the strengths and limitations of civics in contributing to *democratic change*. It then suggests areas of possible improvement and consolidation by civics.

3.2 Strengths of Civics

In any discussion of the qualities of civics, their strengths, weaknesses and potential, it should be acknowledged at the outset that one cannot make more than broad generalizations. This is because these qualities are distributed unevenly among the more than 800 CSOs which include more than 100 civic organizations. Indeed some of the Coalitions boast of a membership of over 200 civics. It would be difficult to do sufficient justice to their qualities, accomplishments and weaknesses. This caveat cannot be overstressed. Nevertheless, the broad overview that we provide here is based both on the documentation as well fieldwork in early 2008 amongst the civics.

Clearly, a major strength of the civics has been the resources of energy, enthusiasm and idealism with which they undertaken the struggle against an authoritarian *police state*. For instance, against heavy odds, they were *proactive* in the setting the agenda for *constitutional reform* in 1997. This galvanized the Zanu PF government to launch a constitutional reform process although it was ultimately a flawed one. Energy, optimism and solidarity were the hallmarks of the leadership and secretariats of the early NCA, CCZ, ZCTU and ZESN for example. Their credibility and strength of their *cause* put the state on the defensive in a *reactive mode* especially between 1998 and 2000. The

elements of initiative and surprise were on the side of civics before the state went on the *offensive* and then began to dictate the agenda from 2000.

Another strength of civics relates to their close working relationships and solidarity. This is mostly sustained through *Coalitions* in particular operational areas such *electoral work, human rights and constitutional issues*. The adages that there is *strength in numbers* and *the more the merrier* have been adopted in strategies of civic coalitions. This is aimed at making them less vulnerable to state coercion than if they operate individually.

Undertaking lobbying and advocacy on issues as groups has strengthened their critiques and messages.

However, once the state assumed a *proactive and offensive* posture from 2001, it has become more difficult for civics to re-set the agenda on *democratic transition and change*. While demonstrations and marches by civics had been grudgingly tolerated before the 2000 referendum result, there was a distinct change afterwards. Not only did the police refuse permission or use force but there was increased use of war veterans and National Service youth graduates in thwarting marches and demonstrations. Democratic space was forcefully closed. However, there was still limited state control over events such as *stay-aways* when these were organized by labour unions especially between 1997 and 2003. Finally, a strength of civics has been their adoption of information communication technologies (ICTs) in disseminating information and in mobilizing around specific campaigns. The e-mail, short message texts and mobile phones have expedited organizing by civics. Similarly, solidarity links with regional and international civic organizations have been a source of strength. The ‘naming’ and ‘shaming’ of authoritarian behaviour by the latter has made the state uncomfortable in international fora.

3.3 Weaknesses

In situations in which struggles last a limited period, the assets of energy and surprise can make a large impact. However, in situations of prolonged struggle, these can dissipate to be replaced by *fatigue, burn-out, reactive-ness and diminution of resources*. The decade-

long contest of *attrition* would not fail the sap the energies of the civics. They have been vulnerable to economic and social decline, and more acutely to harassment, detention and torture. A major weakness of civics has been an apparent absence of a medium and long-term strategy against the authoritarian state. Such a strategy would require a great deal of planning, weighing up of *pros and cons* of tactics and methods to be used. It would also presuppose that civics have assured access to resources to enable them to engage in medium and long-term *strategic planning*. This has not been the case. Most civics operate on a ‘hand to mouth’ basis. This weakness compels them to operate on a short-term ‘project’ and programme basis. Hence there is a propensity towards ‘spontaneous’ militant activism in short isolated outbursts (Field Interviews, January 2008). While this generates publicity for the concerned civic group and the issue (such as constitutional reform or women’s rights), the momentum created dissipates quickly until the next march. Other civic groups that might have wanted to participate in joint marches feel left out because they are not consulted (Ibid.). This *weakens* solidarity links and action amongst like-minded civics.

A related weakness of civics is *structural*. This relates to a tension between *activism and voluntarism* on the one hand, and *careerism and professionalisation* on the other in civics. This tension affects the operations and orientation of civic organization. It was argued that there has been a trend towards the careerists, often highly qualified administrators and coordinators, dominating the visioning and running of civics and sidelining the voluntarists and activists (Field Interviews, February 2008). This was reinforced by the claim that civics have made citizens

‘abdicate their role *in struggles about issues that concern them*.
Citizens have been weakened as a result. Fear and non-commitment are now prevalent. Citizens expect civics to undertake the struggle on their behalf...’ (Field Interview, February 2008).

This claim raises an issue of *agency*. Who is driving the civic organization? Is it mainly the small secretariat which occasionally organizes public meetings on a theme it chooses? Or is it the wider grassroots membership that is driving the civic and choosing its strategies and tactics in the struggle? It would appear that in the majority of civics it is the professionals in the secretariat and Board of Trustees that wield most power and say on

how the struggle or programmes should be implemented. This *top-down approach* to democratic struggle would go some way to explain the sapping of activism in recent years.

Some analysts have been more critical about the leadership of Zimbabwean civics. As it was observed:

so-called networks are often made up of elite small groups of activists, who seldom consult with the organizations they claim to represent, running the 'network' as an autonomous NGO with a handful of staff and with no real membership base . These networks cannot mobilise support when it counts, and while membership organizations are happy to send representatives to expensive conferences, fewer people turn up on the streets for peaceful protest than turn up for five-star lunches...A further observation is that civil society is Harare-centred in its outlook and therefore primarily urban-centric... (Alexander, 2006).

A great deal has also been observed about the relatively comfortable working conditions of CSO professionals and some Board of Trustee members. Misgivings about the large gap between average members of civics and the general population and civic organization leaders are regularly expressed (Field Interviews, February 2008).

Finally, a weakness amongst civics, at least in the early years, was their limited lobbying skills in African countries. They found it difficult to shake off the charge that they were appendages of Western donor agencies (Ibid.). It was emphasized that civics needed to invest in the development of links with civics in Southern Africa and 'sing the African song' on issues of imperialism, pan-Africanism and development. At least, in lobbying work on Zimbabwe, they needed to be aware of sensitivities relating to debates on 'good governance', the 'land question' and the inequitable economic relations between Africa and the West. In sum, to the extent possible, civics needed to 'Africanize' their discourse on anti-authoritarianism in Zimbabwe (Field Interviews, February 2008).

3.4 Areas for Improvement

There are no simple recipes for the strengthening of civic activism. It is an issue that needs to be approached holistically. The next two chapters contain recommendations on how civics can improve their capacity and planning, and address risks of fragmentation

and of a hostile environment. In this chapter, we confine our discussion to the need for civics to strike the necessary balance between activism and professionalism. Activism should not be smothered. It should be nurtured to promote mature political consciousness. It needs to be based on values of voluntarism and solidarity. There is need to avoid spontaneous and infantile tactics divorced from a measured strategy. Above all, the so-called ‘commercialization of protest’ should be avoided. This is an approach in which money is used to hire protesters to go onto the streets and demonstrate. This ‘rent a crowd’ approach to activism is not widespread amongst Zimbabwean civics, but a few have resorted to it and thus damaging their integrity (Field Interviews, January 2008).

There is therefore an imperative to strike a balance between *activism and professionalism* in civics. As demands of campaigns grow, advocacy and lobbying become sophisticated, and administration becomes more complex, civics certainly need qualified and experienced professionals in management, communications, research and advocacy. However, such professionals should not be attracted by career benefits but by the worthiness of the *cause* of a particular civic organization. There are professionals who are committed to the cause but there are others who are not. Tension between *activism and voluntarism and careerism* can grow and spiral out of control. This affects the mission, internal governance and operations of a civic organization. Sometimes this takes the form of tensions between the secretariat and the Board of Trustees, between the Director and the Chairperson, or between head office and the regions (Ibid.). At other times, it takes the form of tension and mistrust between the secretariat and the members of the civic organization. *Internal democracy* in civic organizations is as much a challenge as *national democracy* which they campaign for at the national level.

3. 5 Public Perceptions of Civics

What are the perceptions of the Zimbabwean public towards the profile and role of civics in society? Some of the public participate actively in the activities of CSOs while others are beneficiaries of their resources such as humanitarian relief. By and large, the public takes a favourable view towards civics with respect to their contribution to improve governance and development processes. However, the lack of an assessment of the

public's views towards civics was admittedly a limitation of this study. This was primarily due to an absence of a rigorous methodology that would have been necessary to ensure valid and representative results.

However, for what it is worth, we can draw briefly from a national survey carried out in 2006 (Sachikonye et. al., 2007). Of the 120 respondents who had an opinion about the integrity of CSO leaders, 60 per cent believed that *some* of them were corrupt. This compared with perceived corruption amongst traditional leaders (61 per cent), local business leaders (57 per cent), government leaders (73 per cent) and religious leaders (80 per cent). Significantly, as far as contact and participation in local community associations were concerned, about 28 per cent of respondents had been involved. Thus participation in associational life was not high. Finally, some key informants (83 per cent) interviewed in the same survey believed that the environment for CSO operations at that time was not a conducive one, 69 per cent believed CSOs had limited influence in society while 50 per cent stated that they were making a valuable contribution. It would be useful, in future, to explore more systematically what public perceptions towards civics are in the post-settlement/Agreement period.

Chapter 4

Civics, Political Parties and the State

4.1 Introduction

Civic organizations are not a monolithic group of actors. Even in a society as currently polarized as Zimbabwe, there are different shades of opinion amongst civics about what form and orientation their relations with political parties and the state should take. While some civics are implacably opposed to any engagement with the state and its various institutions, others advocate ‘selective engagement’ with them (Field Interviews, February 2008). Similarly, although some civics maintain a strictly non-partisan *stance*, others have close ties with political parties. This chapter explores the rationale and effects of these different positions taken by civics. We will draw largely from fieldwork findings gathered in January-February 2008.

4.2 Civics and Political Parties

Conditions of authoritarianism make it difficult for civics to be aloof from the political process and parties. However, it makes a great deal of difference whether a particular civic is engaged in development and gender –related work or in governance and human rights work. The former are sometimes termed ‘soft areas’ while the latter is a controversial zone. In the 1990s, it was not surprising for some civics to cooperate with Zanu PF in matters relating to local development, access to social services and food.

In 2006 and 2007, women’s organizations worked closely with Zanu PF’s Women’s League and the MDC women’s wing to draw support for the passage of the *Domestic Violence Bill* in Parliament (Field Interviews, January 2008). Women rights organizations appear to have been more innovative in lobbying both Zanu PF and MDC on specific issues of concern to them. (In 1999, they took a stance to participate in both the government-sponsored Constitutional Commission and NCA processes). Similarly, an organization such as Wipsu has provided services to women parliamentarians and

officials from both the ruling and opposition parties. In 2008, a civic known as the **Women's Trust** took an initiative to provide campaigning skills to aspiring candidates from both ruling and opposition parties (Herald, 20 February 2008).

However, it has been a different matter with the 'hard issues' of democracy, governance and human rights. There has been little engagement and cooperation between civics and Zanu PF and state institutions. Civics have been more closely aligned to opposition parties on these issues. Indeed, civic organizations such as ZCTU, NCA and CHRA were active in the process that led to the founding of the MDC in 1999. That organic link underlay a close working relationship between civics and the MDC. Although there was no formal alliance between these civics and MDC, their cooperation contributed to the referendum defeat and boosted the latter's electoral performance in 2000 and 2002. Indeed, the composition of the MDC parliamentary teams in 2000 and 2005 reflected the presence of activists and leaders of some of the civic organizations such as NCA and ZCTU amongst others.

It is possible to speak of a *special relationship* between civic organizations and the MDC between 1999 and 2005. It was a relationship ostensibly built on shared values and a common revulsion against authoritarianism. There was a shared aspiration for a *democratic transition* from Mugabe's repressive rule. However, most civics involved in this relationship with the MDC tended to be uncritical about its internal democracy and leadership. Perhaps, with the benefit of hindsight, following the MDC split in 2005 but before the conclusion of the Inter-party Dialogue in 2008, some civic leaders have observed that:

civics should not have gone to bed with parties. The relationship should have been at arms length. We should be able to separate our role from that of parties... We romanticized the MDC. We were not critical towards it. Civics subcontracted the struggle to the MDC. Apathy and disillusionment have ensued... Civics no longer view Tsvangirai as a Messiah but now see him as Moses, the leader who did not reach Israel... (Field Interviews, January-February 2008).

The main catalysts in the change in the *special relationship* were two developments. The split in the MDC in 2005 caused a rift in some civics though not in all (Ibid.). Others took a distancing neutral position toward the two factions, MDC-Tsvangirai and MDC-Mutambara. The fact that the causes of the split related mainly to shortfalls in internal party democracy upset civics engaged in *good governance, transparency and human rights* issues. The split was interpreted in some quarters as revealing naked power ambitions on the part of MDC leadership and authoritarian tendencies reminiscent of those in Zanu PF. For instance, one civic leader claimed that the MDC demonstrated ‘many attributes of Zanu PF: patronage, hypocrisy and violence’ (Ibid.). There was little doubt that the 2005 debacle in MDC removed any lingering blinkers that some civics might have had about a *special relationship*.

The larger catalyst in civics’ change of attitude to relations with parties may turn out to be the SADC-facilitated Inter-party dialogue. In early 2008, the fall-out from the inconclusiveness and deadlock in the talks continued. However, even as early as September 2007, civics were agitating against the dialogue process and specifically against *Constitutional Amendment no. 18*. Civics were particularly critical about the bilateral deal between MDC and Zanu PF to introduce constitutional amendments instead of pursuing a *people-driven constitution-making process*. Both parties have been tarred with the same brush over their introduction of No. 18. Some of the comments from civic organizations’ leaders have been unequivocal:

MDC took a disastrous move. It seems that they wanted to share power with Zanu PF...MDC acceded to piecemeal reforms. Civics view this as a mistake and they have been vindicated to some extent... Civics advised MDC to be wary of the ‘Ides of March’. It now admits the error... (Field Interviews, February 2008).

Most civics also argued that they should have been consulted or at least received regular briefings on the progress of the Inter-party talks. While they do not contend that they should have been a party to the talks, they state that they should have been appraised about the main elements and stages in the negotiations. The secrecy surrounding the talks created mistrust and suspicion amongst the civics. This gave impetus to the

Stakeholders' Forum which they held in Bulawayo in September 2007, and the People's Convention which they held in Harare in February 2008. It will take some time to repair the damage to trust and credibility caused by the Inter-party Dialogue process.

4.3 Civics and the State

As we observed above, there are a variety of relationships between civics and the state; they range from cooperation to mutual suspicion and distrust. It was noted that civics engaged in women's issues tend to find a receptive ear from state institutions including the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Development. The same would relate to civics involved in education, health and child welfare. These 'soft sectors' are not viewed as a threat to the state. It is a different with civics whose mission is to monitor the state's role in governance and record in transparency and civil and human rights. They have been a target of critique and threats from the state including from President Mugabe himself who remarked that:

'political opponents are dealt with politically. They should not cry cry foul for they have redefined the rules of engagement...Money pours in variously, through individuals, through Trojan horses, among them NGOs, trade unions, select private media, embassies... all to be used against us...' (Mugabe, 2001).

Civics in the governance and human rights sector are taken seriously indeed. State authorities are very uncomfortable about the 'watchdog role' that they play hence their attempts to de-legitimize this role. They have found themselves in the dock to answer adverse reports from the **African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR)** and the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** in recent years. Similarly, the work of civics in research and advocacy provided some useful substance to the UN Special Envoy's report on *Operation Murambatsvina/Restore Order* in 2005. The quality of lobbying and periodic reports of civics has steadily increased in the past few years thus putting the state permanently on the defensive (see various reports from Solidarity Peace Trust and Zimbabwe Institute, 2005-2007). Part of the state response has been to mount a propaganda offensive against civics in its media such as the *Herald*. Some exposes are ostensibly about their sources of funding from the West; reference is made to agencies

such as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and others as tainted sources of funding. During the survey for this study, a report about British funding for civics was prominently displayed on the front page of a leading newspaper (*Herald*, 20 February 2008). In a thinly-veiled spin, the paper stated that:

'Britain has increased funding for its regime change agenda in Zimbabwe by pouring in 3,3 million pounds to support NGOs, anti-government lawyers, doctors and other opposition elements to step up their demonisation campaigns' (Ibid.).

Civics are often at the receiving end of this sort of judgemental reporting and commentary by the state media.

The state attempted to emasculate civics more tightly by introducing a draconian *NGO Bill* in 2004. If it had been signed into law, funding to governance and human rights civics would have been cut off. The collective response of civil society to the Bill was overwhelming and its lobbying efforts very effective. In the last analysis, however, economic and political considerations were applied in deciding to shelve the Bill. The state would have stood to forfeit about 30 per cent of foreign exchange inflows into the country in 2007 (Field Interviews, February 2008). These were destined for humanitarian agencies, churches as well as civics. In addition, up to 10 000 people could have lost jobs in the sector if the Bill had been signed into law. At the same time, since the Bill remained dangling over them as the *Sword of Damocles*, civics became more circumspect and self-censoring while donors have become less keen on medium and long-term programmes. Most confined their support to projects lasting not more than a year at a time (Field Interviews, January 2008). Thus the Bill could still achieve its objectives of deterring civics without being implemented as law!

In 2007, state institutions went further to tighten their monitoring of the flow of funds into civics and their use. The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe introduced a monitoring mechanism by putting the foreign currency accounts (FCAs) of NGOs including civics under its ambit. This has resulted in delays in access to the funds by civics, and causing a chain delay in activities such as voter education, research and advocacy (Field Interviews, January 2008). This form of state control is adversely affecting the effectiveness of civics.

It is against this background of state antipathy towards, and strictures against, civics that the question of whether there should be engagement between the two has been raised. It is a pertinent question. The challenge is whether and how to engage the state on governance, human rights and policy issues. As we observed above, the viewpoints of different civics range from those implacably opposed to any discussions or negotiations with state authorities to those that see value in engagement and lobbying. Developments in the past 4 years may have begun to change perceptions. For instance, the intense lobbying around the *NGO Bill* yielded some results at least in the short term. As we have observed elsewhere, there are opportunities, challenges, constraints and dilemmas to be negotiated in any engagement, not least with the state, in the present conjuncture (Sachikonye and Manjengwa, 2006). While deep polarization remains a hurdle, history suggests that there is no change without engagement of some sort. As one civic representative remarked,

‘civics should aim at influencing policy in parties and governments. They have tended to overlook that they need to influence the ‘party in power’” (Field Interviews, February, 2008)

This is an argument for engagement.

This discussion on civic-state relations would be incomplete without alluding to government creation and co-optation of certain NGOs. These include the Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions (ZFTU) which is state-sponsored through financial and administrative support. It serves as an opponent and critic of the ZCTU as well as a ‘spoiler’ during stay-aways and on May Day celebrations. Another state-sponsored civic is the Zimbabwe Congress of Students (ZICOSSA) which played an active role in the 2008 celebration of Mugabe’s 84th birthday. This trend towards state penetration of civil society also extends to the formation and support of churches such as those associated with Reverend Msindo. Thus some civics play a role in buttressing Mugabe’s authoritarian project. This is not wholly unusual in a world where governments have created their own NGOs (GONGOs) to employ in various sectors as conduits of patronage in return for support and legitimation.

4.4 Response of Civics to unfolding Developments

The key developments which civics responded to in 2007 were firstly the Inter-party Talks, and secondly the Inter-Party Power-sharing Agreement in 2008. We have discussed the relationship between civics and parties in greater detail in a preceding section. The discussion reflected on the differentiated response of civics to the *process* and *outcome* of the Inter-party talks up to February 2008, when the fieldwork for this study was undertaken.

What has been the response of the civics to the process and outcome of the Inter-party Power-sharing Agreement signed in September 2008? First, there has been no comprehensive response as such by civics to the Agreement. While some CSOs have made their views known, some have kept their opinions to themselves. However, it would appear that some CSOs were uneasy about the process through which the Agreement was arrived at. For instance, the ZCTU has argued that the Agreement was an outcome of a flawed process because the process had not been all-inclusive (Chibebe, 2008). It was observed that civil society had not been given an opportunity to participate in the process; the exclusion of such critical sectors as labour as well as the secretive manner in which issues had been discussed did not lend credence to the outcome (Ibid.).

Second, some CSOs had preferred the setting up of a Transitional Authority to the Inclusive Power-sharing Government, a variant of what has been termed a Government of National Unity (GNU) elsewhere. For example, it was argued that a transitional government would provide an appropriate vehicle for ushering in democratic reform. Such a government would have a specific, limited mandate to oversee the drafting of a new democratic and people-driven Constitution and the installation of a legitimate government.

Finally, some CSOs have questioned the new Inclusive Government's intentions towards constitutional reform (Madhuku, 2008). It was stated that the NCA objected to the Power-sharing Agreement because it appeared to allow political leaders to 'chop' and 'change' the country's constitution through Parliament without consulting ordinary

Zimbabweans. However, a closer reading of the Agreement shows that it contains a provision for a consultative process as well as a referendum on a draft Constitution.

In sum, the response of CSOs to the negotiation process by the three parties and to the contents of the Agreement highlights the issue of *mandate* for their direct participation in political and governance processes. It is an issue that impinges on the scope of *representative-ness* of CSOs vis-à-vis negotiations and government formation either as Transitional or Inclusive Governments. There are very few instances in which CSOs are *directly* represented and involved in negotiations or power-sharing between political parties.

Coordination of Civics and Relations with Partners

5.1. Introduction

Civics experience challenges of internal management as well as of coordinating the running of their network organizations or *Coalitions*. A great deal of attention has previously been paid to management and capacity issues in individual civics (Moyo, Makumbe and Raftopoulos, 2000; McCandless and Pajibo, 2003). Effective management, transparency and accountability remain key issues in the running of civics. However, this report focuses more on the challenges of coordinating relations between individual civics when they come together into *coalitions or networks*. It also explores the relations between civics and donors to assess their strengths and limitations as well as areas of possible improvement.

5.2 Coordination of Coalitions and Networks

Civics have found a great deal of value in setting up coalitions or networks to focus on specific issues in the governance and human rights sector. They see advantages in ‘economies of scale’ or ‘politics of scale’ in setting up one umbrella under which a group of like-minded civics working in a particular area set up a coalition for that purpose. We have already referred to some examples of coalitions and networks. They include:

- **the Women’s Coalition,**
- **Crisis Coalition in Zimbabwe (CCZ),**
- **National Constitutional Assembly (NCA),**
- **Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN),**
- **Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum,**
- **Christian Alliance (CA),**
- **Ecumenical Peace Initiative Zimbabwe (EPIZ) and the**
- **Media Alliance of Zimbabwe (MAZ).**

What have been the experiences in organizing these coalitions and networks? How effective have they been in their respective fields? This chapter will confine itself to highlighting common experiences and challenges encountered by this institutional innovation.

5.3 Strengths and Limitations of Coalitions

Coalitions often have comparative advantages in drawing on already existent expertise in a particular organization working in a particular area. For existence, expertise in electoral issues is concentrated in ZESN, constitutional issues in NCA and media issues in MAZ amongst others. Coalitions have greater credibility and a higher profile. They provide some ‘safety in numbers’ and are a response to a ‘harsh reality’ of resource scarcity and repression (Field Interviews, January 2008). Coalitions and networks are suitable vehicles for ‘basket funding’. They provide ‘economies of scale’ and sharing of resources in advocacy and lobbying domestically and internationally.

However, coalitions have certain limitations. These relate to overlapping of memberships, leaderships and areas of interest and competence. For example, a Coalition organization can be simultaneously a member of another coalition; a leader of a national civic organization can serve as a Coalition leader simultaneously. There is sometimes a duplication of effort in the sector of governance and human rights. It is difficult to draw boundaries strict boundaries between democracy, electoral process issues, civic and voter education, governance reform questions, constitutional reform issues, legal and human rights issues.

The overlapping and duplication can lead to ‘turf wars’ in a context of stiff competition for scarce resources (Field Interviews, February 2008). It has been observed that some of the tensions that arise between Coalition partners relate to funding or rather the process of fund-raising. Individual civic organizations tend to prefer to conduct their own fund-raising (Ibid.). More generally, the overlapping which results because Zimbabwe arguably is believed to have a high number of coalition organizations leads to:

competition and personality cults...There are so many umbrella organizations – and so the idea of an umbrella loses meaning...Umbrellas only come alive during Annual General Meetings (AGMs)...(Ibid.).

It would be therefore necessary to address the issue of overlapping and duplication of activities and fund-raising. The same relates to competition between civics where it has taken forms such as militancy to ‘outdo’ each other.

From the standpoint of civics, some of the problems encountered by civics relate to lack of access to the public media. Unless they insert adverts in the media, they do not receive coverage. Another problem is that most donors have little interest in funding administration costs of coalitions while others are rather specific in what they fund and cannot fund (Field Interviews, February 2008).

However, a few of the civics covered in this study suggested that there was no strong reason to justify the existence of permanent Coalition and Network organizations. Coalitions should be formed for a specific campaign or purpose; once a campaign is completed, the coalition should dissolve (Field Interviews, February 2008). In some situations, it was not even necessary to establish a Coalition; this was the case of the campaign against the *NGO Bill* in 2004-05. The informal coalescing and coordination of the lobbying was effective without a structure to direct it (Ibid.). According to this perspective, coalitions such as NCA and CZC should have wound up in 2000 and 2002 respectively. This is a controversial assertion. It can be argued that there was indeed a structure and Coalition that spearheaded the lobbying against the Bill. This was provided by NANGO. Similarly the prolongation of the *constitutional question and governance crisis* do not make NCA and CZC obsolete but necessary! In summing up the debate on the role of Coalitions, one civic activist simply observed that *'there is no formula for coordinating a Coalition'* (Field Interview, February 2008).

5.4 Civic-Donor Relations

Any assessment of the civics would be incomplete without exploring relations between them and donors. Most civics depend largely on donor support. There were no instances of self-financing amongst the civics that we studied. Yet there was a surprising candour amongst them about how they perceived donor support. They believed that such support promoted a donor country's foreign policy, and that a donor was the stronger partner in setting the agenda of programmes and projects (Field Interviews, January-February 2008). The partnership is not one between equals but 'a power relationship'. Their control of resources enables donors to play a more dominant role in 'agenda setting'. Sometimes,

they do so in a forthright manner by issuing ‘calls for proposals’ in areas in which they define parameters for activities, research or advocacy. Like fashion, the areas of donor interest vary and shift from time to time from gender to HIV-AIDS, human rights to climate change, good governance to children’s rights. Civics discover that they have to tailor their programmes to areas defined as priority areas by donors (Ibid.). They observed that there were a number of areas in which donors were less interested. These were social and economic rights, the so-called ‘red rights’ (Field Interviews, February 2008). As one civic organization leader summed it up:

‘donors are supportive but they tend to shift their resources according to their interests...There is little activity around economic issues. There should be a needs assessment and a conscious effort to link political and economic rights...’ (Ibid.).

There is absent any naivette amongst civics about the purpose of donor support. In struggles for democracy and human rights, their objectives and values happen to coincide with those of donors. Even so, some civics were wary about the unequivocal goal of *regime change* expressed by some donors. There was also some uneasiness about donors who viewed democratic struggle as an event rather than a process. This was expressed in terms of donors having ‘‘too high expectations’’ (Field Interviews, February 2008). In summing up the relationship, an officer working for a large donor organization was unequivocal in his comments:

‘the agendas of civics are tailored to suit donors...Recently, there has been a trend to basket funding which makes it difficult for civics to look for funding outside the donor parameters...’ (Ibid.).

Other variables influence decisions to make funding available. The charisma of the civic organization’s leader can be a decisive factor in some instances. To that extent, donor funding can be fickle.

Some of the criticism that has been levelled at donors relates to the working conditions that they have made possible in civic organizations. For example, it was observed by one civic leader that the generous perks, including 4 x 4 vehicles, to directors and programme coordinators had created ‘a domestic aristocracy’ with conditions equivalent to those in the Diaspora (Ibid.). Another criticism was that donors did not seriously take on board

ideas put forward by civic organizations. However, there were different experiences and views put by other civics that had a better working relationship with donors. It was observed that donors were not a monolithic group. While some were rigorous in insisting how their support was spent, some gave civics more latitude. There was, for example, a distinction made between donors like USAID and those from Nordic countries with the latter giving more latitude to civics. It was added that the working relationship between civics and donors improved if they participated in a joint strategic planning process. They developed a better understanding and respect of each other's objectives and needs.

5.5 Requirements and Procedures

Some donors are reportedly stricter in laying out and enforcing procedures for proposal submission and project funding and monitoring. This can consume a great deal of time in reporting by civics. The amount of time and resources required for this exercise is considerable if a civic has multiple partners. There is therefore a case for streamlining of evaluation and reporting.

Finally, the overall environment of the donor-civic relationship in Zimbabwe has been undergoing change. It is clearly a much more challenging than it was before 2000. The timelines for funding have become much shorter, as we observed above. The hostile posture by government towards donors appears to have been unrelenting. As one official based at a donor agency observed, '*most donors do not wish to be known*' that they support civics in the governance and human rights sector. They prefer to remain in the background because of anxiety about a possible fall-out.

In this volatile and unpredictable environment, civics would be expected to draw contingency plans in case the NGO Bill was translated into law and external funding cut off. Some have opened offices in neighbouring countries. Funding can be routed through those offices into local operations in Zimbabwe. However, this raises possibility of logistical and accounting problems if funding is not routed through normal banking channels which are now being strictly controlled by the central bank, as we observed above.

5. 6 Coping Mechanisms of CSOs

5.6.1 Economic

As observed above, the economic crisis took a turn for the worse in 2007 and 2008. No sector of society, including civics, was unaffected. With hyper-inflation first above 1 000 per cent in 2007, and then over 1 million per cent in 2008, it became very difficult for civics to undertake routine activities, let alone to plan ahead on fixed budgets. The option of hedging against hyperinflation by making recourse to parallel currency markets was a risky one because the government set out to inspect the accounts of CSOs, and to penalize those that engaged in the activity. In recent years, 30 CSOs have searched, interrogated and forced to disclose confidential financial information (ZHR NGO Forum, 2005).

Furthermore, the RBZ has cast a net over the accounts of NGOs engaged in governance and human rights work. In 2007-08, it deliberately created red tape to make it very laborious for NGOs to draw from those funds. As we have observed above, it was against this background that some CSOs relocated their fund-raising activities and banking to neighbouring countries to avoid that excessive red tape. For obvious reasons, there is limited information about how many CSOs have set up accounts outside the country to avoid the dragnet of RBZ and state authorities. But this has become an important survival mechanism for some CSOs. However, it is an arrangement with its own challenges such as constant travel to centres like Johannesburg and Gaborone to draw cash from banks and accounting later for the equivalent Zimbabwean currency.

5.6.2 Political

Following a relative lull in 2005 and 2006, CSOs were forced to cope in a more dangerous authoritarian environment in 2007 and 2008. Developments which directly affected civics included assaults and torture in March 2007 and during the subsequent period. Equally lethal was state-sponsored violence aimed at civics involved in voter education, election monitoring and observation in the period between March and June 2008. Repression was also directed at journalists, human rights activists and trade

unionists amongst others. This orchestrated wave of harassment and violence was unprecedented in its planning and execution. Some of the civics covered in this study, for instance ZCTU and ZESN, were at the receiving end.

Some of the mechanisms pursued were to publicize the repression widely especially outside the country. The images of violence shocked the international community particularly during the presidential run-off poll in June 2008. This served to substantially undermine the legitimacy of that run-off outcome. Thus the ‘naming’ and ‘shaming’ of the perpetrators of the repression and violence discredited the run-off process. Another mechanism was for CSO activists to go ‘underground’ for their own personal safety during the April-June period. Personal security became paramount amongst the concerns of civic leaders no less than it was for elected Opposition members of parliament. At the same time, civics found it imperative to highlight their non-partisan credentials. This was necessary to deflect the heightened state-directed repression during this period in 2008.

Chapter 6

Civics and the Transition Process

6.1 Introduction

What role could civic organizations possibly play in a transition process? What form could a transition process take? These are pertinent questions that continue to be raised despite uncertainty about whether the *political crisis* that has lasted since 2000 will finally be resolved through the 2008 election outcome. A strict definition of a ‘transition’ would be that it is a change from one government to another. This would be a political transition to a new leadership and governing party. However, a broad definition of a transition would involve not only a change of government but the setting up of a *government of national unity* drawn from several parties. It would be possible for such a government led by Mugabe or Tsvangirai to draw its Cabinet not only from Zanu PF and MDC but from other parties and sectors of society.

6.2 Transition and Civics

This brief penultimate chapter explores the possibilities and opportunities that would be created by such a broad transition process for civic organizations. Like under authoritarianism, civic organizations would be active players in the political process. However, their role would change from that of *resistance* to that of contributing to the *consolidation* of the transition process. This would be particularly through their role in facilitating the opening and widening of democratic space. The focus of the civics involved in the governance and human rights work would need to shift to the new realities of *reconciliation* and *reconstruction* (see ODI, 2007; Gavin, 2007; Moss and Patrick, 2007; USAID, 2007; World Bank, 2008). Some civics viewed the role of *peace brokering and peace building* as vital processes in the new context (Field Interviews, February 2008). Skills in peace-building and reconciliation would be required for this effort. However, there would be need for a basic consensus on what the objectives and outcomes of *reconciliation and reconstruction* should be.

Other civics believe that they have built a comparative advantage during the past decade on the *rule of law and transitional justice* issues (Ibid.). The transitional process would involve addressing injustices, impunities and corruption committed as well as cases seeking compensation or restitution. The wounds caused by the Matabeleland conflict in the 1980s, the detentions and torture in the post-2000 period, and the losses and trauma arising from land reform and *Operation Murambatsvina* would require active and careful intervention by civics. There already exist extensive data bases, some housed by civics, on these developments.

However, a transition characterized by a significant improvement in the governance and human rights situation would make the work of some civics in this sector superfluous. There would arise a serious possibility of some of the civics folding up as a result. Even if the leadership of civic organizations might wish to continue with a monitoring role, donors may show little interest in this. As several civic leaders put it:

‘if the situation relaxes, some civics would go out of business. Some would collapse...Civil society will find it difficult to define itself after 29 March 2008. It may not be sufficient to describe problems. There will be need to go more deeply into policy, transitional justice and reconstruction issues...’ (Field Interviews, February 2008).

Like in the case of South Africa, following the demise of apartheid in the mid-1990s, civics would have to re-define their mission, vision and focus in a new era. Some may disband, others may merge, and yet others could seek a new role and transform into policy institutes or training institutions. However, at the time of our fieldwork, it was not readily apparent that civics were contemplating new roles or that there would be a significant *transition process* later in 2008. Yet things are unlikely to remain static in the political environment and in the civic sector. Indeed, they have not been static since the March election and the Power-sharing Agreement in September.

6.3 Towards Reconstruction

Much of the ‘buzz’ about possible change relates to economic and state reconstruction. The parlous state of the economy with over 100 000 per cent hyperinflation (as of January 2008) and collapse in basic services such as water and electricity make it

imperative that there be developed an economic reconstruction programme in the near future (ZIMCODD, 2007). Some civics see their role as contributing ideas to a reconstruction blueprint as well as in its implementation (Field Interviews, February 2008). A programme of economic and social reconstruction would be expensive. In addition, it will require a reconstruction of state capacity to deliver on basic social services such as health, education and housing (UNDP, 2008). The key state institutions operating in these sectors have suffered a heavy haemorrhage of funding and staff; the rebuilding of these institutions will be imperative. Unlike at present, there would need to be greater collaboration and coordination between civics and state institutions in such a reconstruction project.

However, it is unclear whether civics have been considering such a role in the light of an observation that:

'civics do not know how to work with government. Engagement with government is viewed as illegitimate...' (Field Interviews, January 2008).

This posture would need to change if there is a transition process. Indeed, there are civics that see an expansive role for the state:

'civil society growth is inverse to state decline...The Ministry of Health, and not 200 civics, should meet the needs of the people. Growth in the number of CSOs reflects a failure of the state. The burning question is how to regain control of the state and how to reformat it for a new developmental role...' (Field Interviews, January 2008).

Civics could begin to prepare for a transition from the present *adversarial* relationship to one of *partnership* in reconstruction. But the transition will hinge on whether it is a genuine change from authoritarianism to a democracy. If authoritarian tendencies continue, the transition would be a superficial one and civics would be obliged to revert to their watchdog role to maintain pressure for democratic space and human rights.

6.4 Rebuilding Confidence

It would be an immense task to rebuild confidence and capacity in state institutions. As we observed above, both material and human resources have been depleted in key state institutions like ministries of agriculture, health, water and sanitation, and education.

Programmes would need to be instituted firstly on an emergency basis. This is where innovative collaborative programmes between the state, private sector, CSOs and donors would be imperative. Although the four sides have been locked in a relationship of mistrust and suspicion for many years, they would need to open a new chapter of cooperation for the greater good of the country. In sum, not only the state but civics will need to respond innovatively to the transition process. They would need to prepare for it.

Chapter 7

Conclusion : Threats, Constraints and Opportunities

7.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter, we examine the threats and constraints that civics face as well as opportunities that they could create or take advantage of. There is a sense in which civics are at a crossroads in 2008. It is a conjuncture at which they could pause to reflect on the future that they would like to build, and to redefine their role in the event of a *transition*.

7.2 Threats and Constraints

The report has already identified the major constraints that civics operate under. Some of them constitute threats to growth and survival of certain civic organizations. We will highlight six areas from which threats arise. The first relates to the *operating environment*.

Operating environment

Authoritarian repression remains a potent threat to civics. It creates an environment in which one dominant party holds on to a monopoly of power. A *police state* possesses instruments and inclination to crush dissent even if it is expressed peacefully. Civic activists are harassed and victimized. Electoral violations and violence accompany election campaigns. There exists an atmosphere of fear and apathy discouraging active citizen participation in local and national governance. As we observed in chapter 4, even though it was not signed into law, the *NGO Bill* continues to have a deterrent effect on how civics organize their operations, make plans and formulate their statements. In sum, unless there are significant reforms beyond the piecemeal ones enacted in 2007, the operating environment will continue to pose a threat to civics.

Economic Environment

The broad economic environment is another threat to civics. Not only is the economic situation unpredictable with policies being changed frequently but with a hyperinflation

of over 1 million per cent in 2008, it has become a nightmare to undertake realistic budgeting and planning beyond a month at a time. Prices of commodities, services and equipment change on a weekly basis. Zimbabwe has become an expensive environment for civics. Contributing a source of direct hardship to civics is controlled access to funds in their foreign currency accounts (FCAs). This affects operations such as workshops, programmes, payment of salaries and travel generally causing immense delays that reduce the effectiveness of civics. As we observed above, some civics have scaled back on their voter education programme owing to restricted access to their FCA funds by the authorities. An additional threat posed by the *economic decline* is an exodus of staff from civics because of inability to ‘‘make ends meet’’. The staff is skilled, experienced and committed but the economic crisis makes it difficult to raise their families. With the ‘brain drain’, *institutional memory* is lost.

Lack of Sustainability

It is common knowledge that most civics depend on donors for their funding. There is very little local and self-funding. To that extent, the agendas and programmes of civics are dependent on the whims of donors. On the whole, they have been generous and consistent in their support of civics. However, this does not necessarily mean that civics are therefore always vulnerable to *donor-driven agendas*. More generally, civics will need not only to diversify their sources of funding but also seek independent and self-sustaining sources of funding in the long-term.

Fragmentation

There also exists a threat in the turf competition amongst civics. A multiplicity of civics leads to duplication and overlapping of operational areas in some sectors, as the Report showed. This can contribute to wastage of much needed resources. It results in dissipation of energies. Although donors are not aloof from such ‘turf wars’, it is first and foremost a responsibility of civics to pre-empt such situations.

Internal Governance

Some civics encounter internal governance problems. These mainly relate to internal control mechanisms on use and accounting of funds. There have instances of misappropriation of funds and withdrawal of donor funding as a result. The lack of transparency and accountability is a threat that should be addressed. Some governance problems concern relationships between the Secretariat and the Board, the Director and the Chairman; and sometimes between the Secretariat and the membership.

Role in Transition and After

If a transition process occurs, some civics will stand to lose their *role and niche*. Their purpose would have been accomplished and would have to fold or adopt a new and different role. For other civics, the challenge would be how to adjust to the new conditions.

7.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR CIVICS

Despite the obvious constraints and threats, what opportunities nevertheless exist for civics? The opportunities relate to possible changes in the operating environment, capacity building, self-regulation and new synergies in collaboration and fund-raising.

Operating Environment

There is a possibility that 2008 could mark the beginning of reforms that would usher in a *transition process*. Whether this would result in a new government or one of national unity, the assumption is that there would be an opening up of democratic space. Civics would be able to take advantage of such an opening when it occurs. However, to be meaningful, the reforms would need to be more substantial than those contained in Amendment No. 18, and the amended *POSA and AIPPA*.

Capacity Building

Civics have a perennial challenge of building and maintaining capacity. They need to conduct training to raise competence levels and to develop leadership skills amongst their staff. This has become even more imperative against the background of a high turn-over

induced by the above-mentioned 'brain drain'. Skills in risk management, strategic planning and scenario modelling would raise capacity levels in civics. Institutional support would continue to be vital; the information and communications technology needs of civics need addressing to strengthen inter-civic communication and synergies. The publication of newsletters and bulletins would promote knowledge and understanding of each other's experiences, challenges and achievements.

Self-Regulation and Corporate Governance

Through an initiative by NANGO, civics have an opportunity to consider a draft manual entitled *Zimbabwe NGO Corporate Governance Manual* for adoption and use. The manual provides a framework for NGO corporate governance and a code of practice. The manual contains material on resource mobilization strategies, human resource management, policy planning and conflict resolution. There now exists a framework for self-regulation and peer review in the civil society sector. Civics should now work toward convincing government authorities of the usefulness of the Manual, and toward the implementation of its contents.

Funding Paradigm

As the Report explained, there is almost a total *dependence* on donor support by civics. This has an effect on their *agenda setting* and *sustainability* of their projects and programmes. Civics would need to explore other *funding paradigms* that do not compromise their autonomy and sustainability. They should seek opportunities to diversify sources of funding, and to negotiate for more flexible funding arrangements. Other models of fund-raising and support partnerships in the region should be studied for possible adoption.

Exchange Visits

One of the negative effects of authoritarianism has been the relative isolation under which civics operate. It was the view of most that they would benefit if they had closer interaction with other civic organizations and coalitions in Africa, especially in Southern Africa. In addition to deepening solidarity, visits would facilitate a sharing of experiences, knowledge and perspectives on matters of mutual interest.

7. 4 Opportunities Under the New Dispensation

Further opportunities for civics are those potentially envisaged under the auspices of the Inclusive Government which, ironically, they have been critical towards. Here we will only make schematic observations of areas of potential interest to civics and also because the implementation process had not been sketched by the time this present draft was completed.

First, the area of **constitution-making and civic education** will be of particular interest by civics operating in the Governance sector. Under the Inclusive Government Agreement, it is envisaged that the process of constitution-making will have as its main actors:

- **Parliament** especially a Select Committee to be set up for this purpose,
- **Stakeholders** who will participate in two All Stakeholders' Conferences, and
- **Citizens** who will participate in public hearings, consultations and in a referendum on a draft Constitution.

In a process envisaged to take place over at least 18 months, civics will have a significant role to play in contributing to debates on what should be included in a new Constitution. Similarly, they will be expected to play a visible role in educating voters on the significance of participating in the referendum on the draft Constitution.

Second, an important area of interest to civics relates to **economic and social policy** under the new Government. In promoting economic recovery, it will create a National Economic Council that will draw not only from political parties but also from CSOs. The Council will give advice to Government in the formulation of economic plans and programmes. There will be an important window of opportunity for CSOs to contribute directly to economic policy-making as well as to a possible Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

Third, **transitional justice and reconciliation** also figure in the Agreement. There is envisaged a mechanism to advise on national healing, cohesion and unity with respect to victims of pre-independence and post-independence political conflicts. CSOs operating in

the human rights and conflict resolution sector would be expected to make important contributions to the mechanism and process. The same would relate to the Government's objective to promote values and practices of tolerance, respect, non-violence and dialogue as a means of respecting political differences.

Fourth, the role of CSOs in the provision of **humanitarian and food assistance** is highlighted in the Agreement. The principle that all concerned parties shall render such assistance without discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, gender, political affiliation and religion is expected to be binding. CSOs will have greater space than hitherto to play a key role in the provision of this assistance.

Finally, the Agreement makes provision for a more **diverse media** in terms of ownership and sector. The Government was enjoined to ensure the immediate processing of all applications to register or re-register under the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA). CSOs engaged in the media sector should explore new spaces under a more relaxed environment.

After-word

This report reflects two periods of writing up. The first draft was completed in early March soon after the fieldwork in January and February 2008. This was prior to the seismic March election in which the parliamentary and presidential defeat of Zanu PF and of Robert Mugabe respectively created a different political landscape in the country. The final draft of the Report was completed in September soon after the signing of the landmark Power-sharing Agreement.

The revised draft necessarily had to include updated material but the original analytical framework and argumentation have largely remained. Indeed, the authoritarian tendencies of the Zimbabwean state were displayed dramatically and brutally in the repression of opposition structures and of CSOs in the period between April and June 2008. The state-sponsored *Operation Makavhoterapapi* (Operation where did you put your vote?) resulted in over 120 opposition supporters murdered, thousands assaulted and displaced during this period. The ‘iron fist’ of the state and ruling party was crudely and systematically applied against key opposition and civic structures.

However, against the backlash of domestic and international revulsion, this state-sponsored violence was ultimately unsustainable. The critical stance of civics, SADC, AU and the UN, amongst others, de-legitimized the June result. The widespread rejection of the presidential run-off result in June was the major catalyst for the Inter-party talks that led to the Power-sharing Agreement in September.

In the final analysis, however, the trigger for political change emanated from Zimbabwean voters whose will could neither be smothered nor ignored. Despite overwhelming state repression and monopoly control of resources such as media and others, Zanu PF lost substantial ground in the March election. Electoral machinations and the unleashing of terror could not obscure this loss of popularity and control.

However, the process of transition to a new power sharing arrangement has not been smooth. The Agreement is still untested. There are huge challenges – and opportunities - for the three parties that will constitute the new government. There will be a new terrain for civics with the ushering of the new government. It is a terrain that presents both large opportunities and challenges as we saw in chapter 6. Will the civics rise up to the challenges and opportunities?

Bibliography

- AfroBarometer (2006) *People's Development Agenda and Government's Policy Performance in Zimbabwe* *Afrobarometer Briefing Paper no.27* Harare
- K. Alexander (2006) *The Future of Democratic Politics in Zimbabwe* Cape Town: IJR
- Amnesty International (2007) *The State of the World's Human Rights* London
- R. Anand et.al. (2004) *Zimbabwe under Siege: a Canadian Civil Society Perspective* A report made after a Fact-Finding Mission
- S. Bracking and L.Sachikonye (2006) *Remittances, Poverty Reduction and the Informalisation of Household Wellbeing* Global Poverty Research Group, WPS 045
- M. Bratton and N. de Walle (1997) *Democratic Experiments in Africa* New York: CUP
- C. Burke and H. Edinger (2007) *AERC Scoping Studies on China-Africa Relations: a Research Report on Zimbabwe* University of Stellenbosch
- W. Chibebe (2008) *ZCTU Statement on Power sharing Agreement*, Harare, September
- Commonwealth Observer Group (2000) *The Parliamentary Elections in Zimbabwe: Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group* London
---- (2002) *Zimbabwe Presidential Election, March 2002: Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group* London
- S. Dorman (2001) 'NGOs and the State in Zimbabwe' in B. Beckman et.al. *Civil Society and Authoritarianism in the Third World* Stockholm: PODSU
- European Union (2000) *Report of the EU Observation Team on the Parliamentary Elections in Zimbabwe, June 2000* Brussels
- G. Feltoe (2004) in D. Harold-Barry (ed.) *Zimbabwe: the Past is the Future* Harare: Weaver Press
- M. Gavin (2007) *Planning for Post-Mugabe Zimbabwe* New York: Council on Foreign Relations
- P. Gibbon, Y. Bangura and A. Ofstad (eds.) *Authoritarianism, Democracy and Adjustment* Uppsala: SIAS

- C. Goredema (2005) 'Whither judicial independence in Zimbabwe?' in B. Raftopoulos and T. Savage (eds.) *Zimbabwe: Injustice and Political Reconciliation* Harare: Weaver Press
- A. Hammar, B. Raftopoulos and S. Jensen (eds.) *Zimbabwe's Unfinished Business* Harare: Weaver Press
- D. Harold-Barry (ed.) (2004) *Zimbabwe: the Past is the Future* Harare: Weaver Press
- Human Rights Watch (2008) 'Bullets for each of you: state sponsored violence since Zimbabwe's March 27 elections' New York
- International Organization of Migration (IOM) (2008) *The Flow, Impact and Regulatory Framework of Migrant Labour Remittances in Zimbabwe* Harare: IOM
- B. Kagoro (forthcoming) *The Zimbabwe We Want: the Politics of Change 1989 to 2002*
- L. Laakso, L. Sachikonye and T. Masiya (2006) *Evaluation of the Consultation Processes under Article 96 in the Cotonou Partnership Agreement: Zimbabwe Field Study* Brussels: CTS
- L. Madhuku (2008) 'Zimbabwe civic body to fight imposition of new constitution' As quoted on www.zimonline.org.za, 24 September 2008.
- E. McCandless and E. Pajibo (2003) 'Between Perception and Reality: are NGOs really Making a Difference?' *A report for MWENGO*, Harare
- T. Moss and S. Patrick (2005) *The Day after Comrade Bob: applying Post-recovery Lessons to Zimbabwe* Washington: CGD
- S. Moyo, J. Makumbe and B. Raftopoulos (2000) *NGOs, the State and Politics in Zimbabwe* Harare: Sapes Books
- R. Mugabe (2001) *Speech to the 51st Session of the Zanu PF Central Committee*, Harare
- D. Nupen, E. Njovana and L. Sachikonye (2006) *An Evaluation of ZESN* A report prepared for SIDA, Harare
- G. Nyarora (2006) *Against the Grain: Memoirs of a Zimbabwean Newsmen* Cape Town: Zebra
- B. Nzimande and M. Sikhosana (1995) 'Civil Society', Mass Organizations and the National Liberation Movement in South Africa' in L. Sachikonye (ed.) *Democracy, Civil Society and the State* Harare: Sapes Books

- A.Olukoshi and L. Laakso (eds.) (1996) *Challenges to the Nation State in Africa*
Uppsala: NAI
- K. Proudlock and S. Busse (2007) *Rethinking aid policy in response to Zimbabwe's protracted crisis* London: ODI
- B. Raftopoulos (2006) *Reflections on the Opposition in Zimbabwe: the Politics of the MDC* Mimeo
- B. Raftopoulos and T. Savage (2005) *Zimbabwe: Injustice and Political Reconciliation*
Harare: Weaver Press
- L. M. Sachikonye (ed.) (1995) *Democracy, Civil Society and the State*
Harare: Sapes Books
- and J. Manjengwa (2006) 'Towards a Civil Society Programme in Zimbabwe'
A Country Programme Review prepared for Trocaire
- et. al. (2007) *Consolidating Democracy in Southern Africa: the Case of Zimbabwe*
Johannesburg: EISA
- (2008) 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Agenda? Zimbabwe and China Relations'
Paper prepared for the Centre for Conflict Resolution Cape Town
- SADC Parliamentary Forum (2002) *Report on the Zimbabwe Presidential Election*
- Solidarity Peace Trust (2007) *A Difficult Dialogue: Zimbabwe-South African Economic Relations since 2000*
Johannesburg
- (2008) *Desperately seeking sanity* Durban
- S. Schwersensky (2006) 'Harare's Look East Policy now focuses on China' in G. La Pere (ed.) *China in Africa: Mercantilist Predator or Partner In Development*
Johannesburg: SAIIA and IGD
- J. Todd (2007) *Through the Darkness* Johannesburg
- UNDP (2008) *Comprehensive Economic Recovery in Zimbabwe* Harare
- USAID (2007) *Zimbabwe Economic Performance Assessment: a benchmark study*
Washington
- World Bank (2008) *Zimbabwe Emergency Recovery Programme (draft)* Harare
- ZESN (2002) *Zimbabwe's Presidential Election, March 2002* Harare
- ZIMCODD (2007) *Zimbabwe: Thinking Beyond the Economic Crisis*
Harare: ZIMCODD

Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (2005) *Zimbabwe: Fact or Fictions*
Harare

Zimbabwe Human Development Report (ZHDR) (2000) *Governance*
Harare: UNDP and IDS

Zimbabwe Institute et. al. (2007) *Building Consensus-Charting Zimbabwe's
Future: a Conference Report* Pretoria

List of Organizations Consulted

ActionAid	
ANSA	Alternative to Neo-liberalism in Southern Africa
CA	Christian Alliance
CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
CCZ	Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition
CHRA	Combined Harare Resident Association
EPIZ	Ecumenical Peace Initiative in Zimbabwe
LEDRIZ	Labour and Economic Development Research Institute of Zimbabwe
MAZ	Media Alliance of Zimbabwe
MMPZ	Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe
NANGO	National Association of Non-Governmental Organization
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
WC	Women's Coalition
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZESN	Zimbabwe Election Support Network
ZLHR	Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights
ZPP	Zimbabwe Peace Project
	Organizations whose material was Consulted
ACPDT	African Community Publishing and Development Trust
NCA	National Constitutional Assembly
MOPI	Mass Public Opinion Institute

ZIMRIGHTS **Zimbabwe Human Rights Organization**

ZINASU **Zimbabwe National Students Union**