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COMBATING THE EFFECTS OF WAR REMNANTS IN AFRICA: A CASE OF LANDMINES IN ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

The war remnants especially landmines from the Zimbabwe Liberation struggle that ended in 1980 is killing, maiming and haunting the people and animals. With these landmines, the security of the people is at risk in seven major areas: Mukumbura, Musengezi, Mazowe, Sheba forest, Rusitu, Sango and Lusuku. Zimbabwe is said to be heavily contaminated with landmines. Though the demining missions with five different organisations have kick-started their operations, minute progress has been made. Landmines are destroying the lives of people and animals creating societies unsafe for development. Zimbabwe needs to engage in accelerated demining actions. Furthermore, she needs to correct and align her policies to security and social welfare, strengthening the economy, establishing good governance and fostering warm relations with donor partners who and may potentially support the demining campaign. Demining is possible but needs well-polished strategies and resources with Mozambique providing a clear testament to demining successes.

Keywords: *War remnants, destruction, demining, landmines, Zimbabwe*

INTRODUCTION

When wars end, injuries, deaths and destruction linger for decades in the form of unexploded ordinances. These unexplored devices supposedly to be used in war but could not and remain active to date are what are referred to as war remnants. However, due to recent more focus on nuclear weapons, terrorism, global warming, trade wars etc. the threat of war remnants is not receiving much attention but remain a reality. Globally, there are 100 million unexplored but live mines in 78 countries and 110 million landmines in the stockpile (Landmine Monitor, 2016).

This paper focused on landmines in Zimbabwe. A “Landmine” (2020) is a bomb placed on or under the ground which explodes when vehicles or people move over it. The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNIDO) (n.d.) described a landmine as an explosive device concealed under or on the ground and is designed to destroy or disable the enemy targets, ranging from combatants, vehicles and tanks as they pass over or near it. A landmine causes damage by the direct blast effect or by fragments thrown by the blast effect or by the combination of both. Generally, landmines can be grouped into two broad categories: antipersonnel mines (those that can be triggered with small weight) and antitank mines (those that require more weight to trigger).

In not extreme cases of death, landmines are ascertained to be weapons that not ordinarily cause somatic but psychosomatic injuries and force a person to live in a state of unease and terror (Herby and Nuiten, 2001). Of the reported 78 countries with landmines, 22 are found in Africa where over 800 people die and 2500 are maimed every month (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 1994). The Landmine Monitoring Report (2016) revealed Egypt, Angola, Burundi, Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, South Sudan, Zimbabwe and Senegal as some of the infested African countries. Mozambique was declared landmine free in 2015 but the additional field has been discovered although the density is not higher than before.

Landmines in Zimbabwe were used during the liberation war that ended in 1980. They were used to inhibit the movement of colonial soldiers into the country from their various training centres which were located outside Zimbabwe (Mozambique, Zambia, Botswana and South Africa). There are seven known landmine zones: Mukumbura, Musengezi, Mazowe, Sheba forest, Rusitu, Sango and Lusuku (Shoko, 2003). It has been noted Zimbabwe has 5,500 unexplored landmines per square kilometre making it one of the densest



minefield in the world (Halo Trust, 2013).

Rupiah (1999) unearthed Zimbabwe to have inherited over 1.5 million landmines and efforts to clear them started in 1980 but with little successes to date. Indeed it is worrisome. People are trying to celebrate the independence gained without being free from harmful weapons of war. These landmines are a painful reminder, an unwanted history still being scripted and some of its effects are highlighted below.

THE EFFECTS OF LANDMINES IN ZIMBABWE

The effects of landmines transcend borders, though the paper has focused on Zimbabwe. Landmines are causing untold suffering in some parts of Zimbabwe and the situation demands urgent attention to protect people and the ecosystem. The dangers of landmines seem not to be painstakingly assessed and genuinely understood which could have assisted major stakeholders to find their priorities in clearing this social evil.

The most affected people are the working class and children (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2012). If going by Mandizvidza (2017) (which greatly differs from the UNDP (2012) figures) where an estimated 2,000 people were reported to have died and an average of 3,000 people maimed from 1980 to 2017, such statistics are disturbing. Better approaches should be implemented to protect the people of Zimbabwe.

The major effects of landmines on people include deaths, maiming and trauma. In the event of maiming, there are permanent damages a person has to live with for example botches (wounds that cannot heal), broken body limbs, loss of eyesight, hearing or general loss of sanity. Such resultant conditions cut across and create social fault lines within families and expose the victims to an unimaginable hard life as no one may be there to support their lives.

Meanwhile, the Zimbabwean health system is down. Hospitals are closed and have no medicines; Doctors are on perennial strike that started early days of 2018 (Haq, 2019). On the other hand, Nurses also are following Doctors' demonstrations putting the whole health system in jeopardy (Gonye, 2019). Contemporarily, Zimbabwe is treading a dangerous phase where any fatalities have no hope for revival. All those involved in landmine accidents if not treated the traditional way will be inclining to the yonder world.

In addition to the hospitals that are malfunctioning and almost closed, deserted by the Physicians and not equipped and supplied with proper medication, the government is not doing enough to keep and update a database of the landmine victims to assist them. Most of the landmine infested areas are indeed at the peripheral borders but the long arm of the government should not be short in assisting the victims.

The researcher's testimony, born and bred in the landmine infested area near Rushinga Growth Point (Mt Darwin District, Zimbabwe) has an uncle maimed in 1998 with the landmine at the age of 40 (encouragingly he is still alive but without the left leg and right palm). Another incident was of the maimed uncle's sister (to which the researcher refers as aunt) who surrendered her life in 2016 due to landmines. This was all in the researcher's eyes instilling a great level of fear living in the same community. To the researcher's submission, the government is not doing enough. There is no single day the government supported the now lame uncle and the family of the deceased aunt, except a Non-Governmental Organisation. This became the family duty to fend.

The effects of the landmines are far-reaching. It is destroying the dreams of people with most of them, young. The precious resource of a nation is the people who drive its spirit. When people's spirits are subdued, dreams may easily shutter and the potential to support the development of the country may be void. Uncertainties may continue growing with each passing day resulting the downtrodden people to be liabilities to a country. It is expensive through the prism of leadership to motivate such people hence development will be minute.

Although there is no clear statistics of animals being killed by the landmines, Zenda (2019) reported the death of 120,000 animals since 1980. There is overwhelming evidence that even some of the protected animals who are also on the verge of extinction such as white rhinos, pangolin, buffalos etc., are facing death in these concentrated zones. The Halo Trust (2017); Zenda (2019) and Masiyiwa (2019) bemoan the rate at which both wildlife and livestock are killed. It is hard for farmers to recover the loss since their wealth value is



mostly stored in livestock.

The Mine Action Review (2018) considered Zimbabwe as “heavily contaminated”. The country is highly mined. In the 2018 Survey by Anti-Persoonsmijnem Ontmijnende Product Ontwikkeling or Anti-Persoonnel Landmines Removal Product Development (APOPO), Zimbabwe has over 66 million square meters of landmines. In the north-eastern region of the country, 87 communities with an approximate of 75,000 people are at risk since 78 mines were located a distance of fewer than 500 meters from households. Willie Makoti, the Chief of Sengwe (personal communication, 2018) warns the people every four months not to take short paths, open new fields or play with unknown gadgets because the area is not safe.

The areas of Sheba forest, Mukumbura and Musengezi border posts which are densely infested with landmines have a potential of attracting tourists due to their favourable weather, historical sites of importance, small to medium game parks and perennial rivers. Some areas infested with landmines stretch and link with the Gonarezhou National Park. When these landmines remain planted, they push back potential tourist activities which in a way would help the country to generate foreign currency.

Due to the prevalence of landmines and the real danger that ensue on encountering them, many people are living with the hearts in their hands. Fear is breeding uncertainties in the future of the people who are settled as well as settling in the areas. Some have already encountered the menace and others just fear to encounter them. How people are living in Zimbabwe is another major question. The economy is not performing. There is no money. The government is not active. The land to carry out self-help projects and farming on is infested. Then what else is left to imagine in such peripheral hard to reach areas?

This state of safety is dragging development leading others to abandon the areas, migrate, and searching for a safer destination for settlement. Places like Rushinga, Chesa farms, Zvimba and Mutare communal areas are becoming densely populated as they are safer destinations. In the reverse, there is a growing underpopulation in these landmine infested areas.

The institution of war is entirely in the decline, according to Mueller (2003). Some classic standard of warfare have become rare but what remains after the war provides the opportunity for others to continuously engage in warfare, especially civil war. This means the remnants of war need an urgent policing or else if such arms fall in the hands of rogues and bandits, the whole country will be thrown into chaos. Mozambique pulled through a nasty civil war starting from the 1990s and some of the dissidents took advantage of these war remnants to create their weapons. They also used these densely landmine infested areas as their bases and hide from state security when on the run.

The same with Zimbabwe in contemporary times. There is a group commonly referred to as "MaShurugwi", disturbing the tranquillity of the country. Although these people have not used these remnant weapons, when they intensify their rebellion, it could be an option to migrate to.

Since some of the landmines are planted underground, they tend to pollute the environment, making even the water sources unsafe. Approximately 80% of rural people use water from shallow wells and rivers for domestic purposes including cooking in Zimbabwe (Muneri, 2015). This means the bulk of the water used in those areas is contaminated making the people vulnerable to health hazards of using and drinking from contaminated sources.

Although the areas with landmines are peripheral, perhaps to invite urgency, a better explanation is needed why after 40 years of independence the calamities of landmines are real. In another thought, it probably meant the effects of landmines in Zimbabwe have not been painstakingly assessed and premeditated. This is also shown by the absence of a particular groundbreaking study on the effects of landmines in Zimbabwe making it difficult to determine absolute harms and effects as all will be widely speculative. However, victims of landmines should get unconditional support, the government must continue supporting demining activities and strategies to accelerate policy relevance should be crafted including the few below selected ones.



COMBATING THE EFFECTS OF LANDMINES: A REFLECTIVE GUIDE

Landmines that are still planted need an urgent demining. The move to engage in demining may erase the proof of the heated conflict that existed for years, to some, pregnant with unpleasant events to continue remembering. After a successful demining, it may create a platform even for humanitarian agencies to reach the areas and support the people, equipping them with skills for self-sustenance.

Currently, there are five demining missions in Zimbabwe which are The Halo Trust, Mines Advisory Group (MAG), the Zimbabwe National Army (National Mines Squadron Group), the Norwegian People's Aid and APOPO. To the researcher's term of enlistment, demining is the only means that gives an immediate, accelerated practical support which results in short and long term tangible as well as measurable results for the Zimbabwean communities. Recognising that the demining process is in full force, thus some other strategies to reinforce its solid operation and speedy completion may need to be suggested.

Good Governance And Policy Injection

The government need to show its will to remove the landmines as one of its core duties in providing security for its citizens (Constitution of Zimbabwe; Chapter III: Declaration of Rights). In addition to that, the government have to be competent, well-coordinated and supported by the people. The people support is important, for example, in the case landmines fell or are to be used by rogue people against the citizens or the state, people may defend on the side of the government. To reduce such risk, Muller (1998) asserted that a country should have competent military and police forces as of the case of Europe in the last century.

The risk of the landmines falling into the hands of bandits in Zimbabwe is high. The government seems inadequate, the military not well equipped including the policing forces and people are not pulling in one direction with the government due to various reasons, amongst them, ingrained tensions of perceived electoral fraud of 2018. There is a need for the government to warm the national mood and encourage every effort to be directed for development.

The government of Zimbabwe has done well on policy front creating the policies of landmine clearance but some of it needs to be well aligned with the many international standards provided by the African Union, United Nations and other international available statutes. The major alignment needed is practical implementation as it is lacking. As Zimbabwe is still building its nation-state, it is commendable that it finally acceded to the African Peer Review Mechanism (African Union, 2020). It is an important platform for measuring how states can deliver or executive their duties.

Education, Public Awareness And Capacity Building

The naissance fathers of Africa like Julius Nyerere advocated for the people to be educated. The education though of varying classes was meant to serve the purpose of lifelong self-reliance. Zimbabwe has an indelible mark of greatness when it comes to education. Her people are well informed.

The problem is of the well-educated people who are moving out of the country and others already outside the country remaining there. One may wonder the rationale to it. The answer lies in searching for better opportunities. Zimbabwe is behind if compared to some other African countries such as Ghana, Tanzania, Rwanda and South Africa in preserving and retaining their educated people. These educated people by no means are equal to the task on how these landmines may be cleared in a short space of time, not this 40 years landmark. The learned people of Zimbabwe should be encouraged not to flea from home but now with such economy and politics polarised, it is going to be difficult.

Strengthening Of Economy

The economy of Zimbabwe has gone from strength to strength being stubborn. Typically it is denying picking up from 2008 slump to date. Though during the period of Government of National Unity (2009 – 2013) it



showed signs of recuperations but failed to sustain for long. Varying models such as the Short Term Emergency Recovery Programme (STERP) 1 and 2, Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP), "Dollarisation", the introduction of bond notes and now local currency reintroduction, has been tried. There are a lot of errors and mismatch in both monetary and fiscal policies. Today the economic engine of Zimbabwe is hard to crack hence no creditable production.

Some analysts like Coltart (2019) opted for the Central Bank to be supplanted with another system that is apolitical and professional, perhaps emulating the Central Bank of India. In the field of researches, it is indicating that there is no production happening in Zimbabwe. Value is created, not just found, without production. If industries are not functioning, agriculture is not kicking and mines are not operating well, the few service industries may be subdued by the demands of the national budget hence ordinary people pay heavily.

Regrettably, this is the current scenario as Zimbabwe is struggling in three-layered trouble of liquidity crunch, policy anomaly and production gap. There is a need to heal the leaking economic wounds to the extent of eliminating corruption. A strong economy is needed to support a country especially to engage in intensive capital campaigns that involve demining and infrastructural development.

Science And Technology

Science and technology are progressively becoming an enabler. It is streamlining life, making connections, undertakings and communications quicker and protected than before. Whilst technology is performing wonders, there is the other side of technology that needs to be censored and organized systematically. As rightly put

“The prophetic doom in Africa still rests on her cultural values and sentiments as some assert technology is collapsing the original social rubrics and implanting a culture of violence. The traditional African system of conflict resolution is being demolished without something relevant given as a replacement. The democratic processes, though rudimentary, was uprooted and replaced by technological colonisation which mounted an authoritarian command to people. Even in the societies, technology is breeding new seeds of elites, nurturing and weaning them on the altar of violence armed with the structures of a modern state, to continue carrying out the art and act of subjugation of the mass in an attempt to service technology.” (Mujuru, 2017)

The above highlighted negative service from technology must be prevented to maximize the net gains in Africa.

Africa as a continent is supporting technology through various mechanisms such as New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology (AMCOST), Zimbabwe's STEM Initiative and other decision-making tools used across the continent. If science and technology are prioritized even the machines to detect the exact positions of the mines may be invented and substitute the use of giant rats, dogs and humans to detect buried landmines. This also goes hand in glove with retaining the few scientists and entrepreneurs Zimbabwe has from going outside the country.

Collaboration With International Partners

Zimbabwe might have disappointed many international partners with the projection of her foreign policies which were, of course, unpredictable (Moyo, 2019). This severance of good international relations is evident with the smaller number of international partners willing to assist on the clearing of mines. Currently, there are four partners in the country and the areas to be cleared are very large. For example, in the period 2017 -18, Halo Trust removed 31,000 landmines on a 1.7 km/sqr area yet they are faced with a vast space of 850km/sqr. It is not certain if the Vision 2025 of a "Free Zimbabwe without the risks of landmines" will be attained.



There is need for Zimbabwe to review the donor strategies to get support. She has indeed been failing to fulfil her obligations like payment of loans to the Bretton Woods institutions. But certainly, with such a humanitarian issue at hand, it is possible donors may cede but a change in approach is needed. Partners that can also be donors, for example, the African Union, European Union, DANCHURCHAID, and SWEEDISH AID etc. need to be involved and well managed. There have been widespread accusations that more funds were misused in Zimbabwe (Berger and Thorneycroft, 2008). This has to stop to instil professionalism.

CONCLUSION

Realities emerging from Africa of global warming, migration, political instability, terrorism, corruption, the safety of women and children remain a concern. Zimbabwe, in particular, has some of these problems coupled with war remnant perils. An educated and healthy population with assured safety is a pillar of successful national development. Even the World Bank concluded that a healthy and educated population is a good indicator of national development. It automatically revitalises the standard of living and guarantees peoples' dignity especially if it is on children. Education and capacity building should be prioritised in Zimbabwe to provide lifelong training. Good policy initiatives and good governance should be in place and well implemented. This involves providing a platform for people to participate in issues that affect their lives as enshrined in the Agenda 2063: The Africa we want; Aspiration 6. The problem of landmines is causing untold suffering. The year 2020 as the 'Year of Silencing Guns' came at the right time despite being parallel with that of landmines; definitely, it is another form of weapon that is destroying from the underneath of the earth. Zimbabwe needs a fast, result-oriented, supportable and practical plan to silence the landmines.

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