

Civil Peace Service Zimbabwe

Dealing with the past and prevention of political violence

Project name	Civil Peace Service (CPS)
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Zimbabwe
Partners	Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights), Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, other grassroots NGOs
Duration	Current phase: 01/2015 – 12/2018

Background

Over the past three decades, Zimbabwe's history has not only been shaped by the achievement of its independence, but also by countless episodes of human rights violations that carry on until today. The great majority of Zimbabwean people suffer from a lack of opportunities also with regard to political participation that would allow them to determine their own future based on civil rights, rule of law and justice.

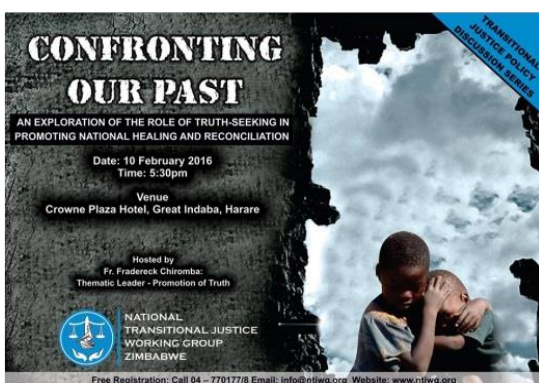
Political violence, especially before and after elections, is a huge challenge that leads to massive human rights violations, including intimidation, torture and enforced disappearances. The most significant of these human rights violations, the atrocities committed against the minority of Ndebele in the Gukurahundi massacres have still not been addressed legally. In fact, the central government has refused to take the responsibility for the killing of an estimated 30.000 people and to recognize the victims of this violent period. Moreover, the Ndebele are still being discriminated against and are mostly excluded from any political and public participation.

Our approach

The GIZ Civil Peace Service Programme (CPS) focuses on two objectives in order to address issues of human rights violations, impunity and political violence:

- 1) Zimbabwe's violent past is being dealt with through a conflict-sensitive and victim-centred process, in which the constitutional mechanisms are applied and closely monitored by civil society.
- 2) Civil society organisations and individuals are strengthened in their fundamental right of freedom of expression. They enter into a constructive dialogue with decision makers and politically dissenting groups on different levels.

With regard to the first objective, CPS cooperates with the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (HRF), a coalition of 21 national human rights NGOs. Since 2009, CPS has advised HRF on how to initiate and implement the national transitional justice process in Zimbabwe. Programmes to reach out to victims and identify their needs and demands towards the state authorities were implemented; advocacy campaigns to push the government to respond to these needs were run. Also as a result of the HRF's effort, the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission has been anchored in the 2013 constitution. Currently, a CPS Peace Expert supports the Secretariat of the National Transitional Justice Working Group that had been formed in 2014 and is managed by HRF. The Working Group serves as an interface between transitional justice stakeholders and the official transitional justice process in Zimbabwe. The technical advice mainly focuses on strategic questions closely linked with the mandate of the Working Group.



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National Transitional Justice Working Group announces an event.

Community dialogue meeting

In order to increase the capacities of civil society organisations to enter into a constructive dialogue with decision makers, GIZ Civil Peace Service cooperates with the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights), a NGO with a more than 120,000 members throughout the country. ZimRights aims at promoting peaceful citizen participation through (re-)claiming national socio-economic and cultural rights based on the bill of rights, including the right to education, health, work and shelter. A GIZ Peace Advisor supports the organization in all aspects of citizen participation, non-violence and conflict sensitivity, dialogue facilitation, monitoring and evaluation as well as best practices research. Amongst others, ZimRights coordinators get trained on how to organize community meeting in a more participatory way, on how to include all relevant stakeholders with the aim to jointly identify solutions that all parties involved benefit from.

Besides the advisory provided by international peace experts, GIZ CPS supports peacebuilding organizations that mainly operate at local level, monitoring human rights violations and facilitating community dialogue to prevent violence.

Our achievements

In terms of dealing with Zimbabwe's past the need for a national reconciliation process has been pushed forward by the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum. GIZ CPS supported HRF to establish a division of Transitional Justice within its organisation. This division has been collecting data of victims of human rights abuses; it organized international conferences on transitional justice with European and African experts; it is currently working on legal procedures on dealing with the violent past and present of Zimbabwe.

The continuous advocacy work by HRF forced the Government of National Unity to prescribe the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission in the constitution that was adopted in 2013. In 2014, HRF implemented recommendations from two international conferences on transitional justice and organised the election of an independent civil society body which became the National Transitional Justice Working Group. Its officially recognized mandate is to build bridges between transitional justice stakeholders, amongst others the victims, and the official transitional justice process in Zimbabwe.

The Working Group has developed and published guiding principles as well as minimum standards for an effective transitional justice process in Zimbabwe, which it also monitors.

In terms of strengthening civil society organisations, GIZ Civil Peace Service and its partner ZimRights have developed a strategy for effective, non-violent approaches for grassroots citizen participation and mobilization for socioeconomic rights. As part of this strategy, ZimRights is, currently, implementing a community dialogue programme that enables vulnerable groups to express their needs in a constructive manner. The programme also covers the question on how to turn diverging interests and needs of communities that have the potential to cause rivalry and hostility into a common ground that eases the communication between communities and local authorities, and thus helps improve not least the quality of service delivery.

An example from the field

In Zimbabwe, there is often a lack of communication between state authorities and citizens, especially when it comes to marginalized people. ZimRights, with the support and advice of GIZ Civil Peace Service, has been training representatives of communities to talk about their realities, present their problems and needs to the authorities through community dialogue in a peaceful and constructive manner.

In one of Bulawayo's high density suburbs, for example, people were very unsatisfied with the medical treatment HIV positive patients received by the state-run hospitals in the respective area. In a meeting, organized by ZimRights, the representatives of the community first learnt methods to present their discontent in a solution-orientated way.

When they finally presented their issue to the representatives from both hospitals and entered into a dialogue, listening attentively to each other, it turned out that the hospitals had not been fully aware of the situation while there had also been misinformation on the community's side about the treatment options these facilities offer. Both sides were satisfied with the outcome of the dialogue and have developed constructive relationships since then.

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