Challenges faced by NGOs in the political harsh climate of Zimbabwe: Analysing the effects on sustainability and promotion of human rights.

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ABSTRACT

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have gained a very high status as the leading practitioners of development in Africa. African governments have reacted obscurely to the existence of these agencies. Although they recognise the economic resources NGOs can raise, they tend to resist the political pluralisation contingent to popular development action. This article describes the role of NGOs in Zimbabwe and analyses the dynamics of government-NGO relations and the effects on promotion and protection of human rights. By means of comparative analysis of particular NGOs in Zimbabwe, the article illustrates the factors affecting sustainability of the NGOs. This thesis also explores the challenges faced by NGOs in trying to maintain sustainable promotion and protection of human rights in Zimbabwe. The political crisis that started mainly in the early 2000 until now stirred up grave human rights violations against both the civilians and the human rights defenders. The government's dominant rule and manipulation of the political process through fabricated charges, arbitrary arrest and corruption efficiently undermined the human rights of the citizens. This political environment created many challenges for the NGOs, with some leaving the country or stopping their operations totally, some managed to sustain themselves through these challenges and they are still operating. Through the use of comparative analysis, this paper explores four NGOs to find an answer as to why some manage to sustain themselves, and the effects of lack of sustainability to the beneficiaries.

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CHAPTER 1

"We have now a phenomenon of NGOs, or shall I call them phenomena, for they really are a type of government in the background of a formal government. I don't know whether this creature is for the better or for the worse, but in our country we have seen a situation where they have exceeded their terms of reference, and perhaps we might have to reconsider the advisability of having NGOs." (Robert Mugabe: 2008)

1. Introduction

The above quotation is a representation of how NGOs exist in Zimbabwe, in uncertainty regarding their sustainability. Since the early 21st century, Zimbabwe has been experiencing serious political instability resulting in a series of human rights violations against the people. NGOs became one of the few remaining alternative voices in Zimbabwe on human rights issues. The repressive nature of the Zimbabwean government resulted in NGOs realising the need to work on media policy issues and to lobby for an improved operating environment for the NGOs. The political climate however created a very challenging operational environment for the NGOs. These challenges range from political, legal, economic and social. There is little doubt that NGOs have influenced the human rights practices of governments and popular perceptions on human rights. This background gives a clear indication of the significance and role played by NGOs in promoting human rights in collaboration with the governments. However with the challenges emanating from the political crisis in Zimbabwe, a problem arises on how the NGOs will survive and work with the government in such an environment. In Zimbabwe an NGO Bill was put forward which frustrates the working of the NGOs. The major concern is over the implications of the Bill for the operation of a free and unfettered civil society. With some NGOs leaving the country, some managed to survive in the political harsh climate.

Non-governmental organizations have played a major role in pushing for the protection of human rights at the international level. Increasingly, the existence of NGOs is proving to be a necessity rather than a luxury in societies throughout the modern world. In many developing countries, the role of NGOs has evolved in response to the market gaps left by the government (Gaist: 2009). Impelled by the inadequacies of the state and the market, citizens across the globe have developed NGOs to deal with a diversity of social needs. According to Gotz (2008), the increase in NGOs is one of the most remarkable features of modern-day international politics. While states remain the major 'protectors' and abusers of human rights,

NGOs have materialized as central players in the promotion of human rights around the world. They are increasingly identified as crucial role-players in community and people-centred development. Gaist (2009) stated that the NGOs have frequently been regarded as very important for democracy since they have a strong support at grassroots level and their ability to develop and empower poor communities. This is a well-needed attribute in Zimbabwe as most of the communities are beyond being poor. Nzimakwe (2002) also supported this nature of NGOs saying they are enormously vital mechanisms in rural development as they benefit from the goodwill and reception of the community, consequently the NGOs have become very crucial players in the field of social development.

Although there is no generally agreed legal definition to an NGO, a brief definition according to (Anheier: 2001) would be that an NGO is a legally constituted institute created by natural or legal persons with the aim of functioning independently from any government. In this context, the concept of non-governmental organisation is defined in the framework of service provision focusing on two sides to NGO activities, namely, service with the intention of improving the general welfare of people (humanitarian aid), and involvement in government institutions and policies (advocacy). This paper focuses on both sides of NGOs however with a bit more to the advocacy NGOs, the reason being that although humanitarian organisations focus on human rights as well (e.g. right to food, right to shelter etc), advocacy NGOs are more likely to be targeted as they directly question and campaign for human rights. This means that they are more involved in policies, laws and other issues affecting the promotion of human rights.

Much work has been written on the nature of the relationship between NGOs and the Zimbabwean Government. However, very little has been written on this relationship in time of political instability and its consequences on the promotion and protection of human rights. This paper addresses the implications of non-sustainability within Civil Society, NGOs in particular to the protection of human rights. In doing so, the paper attempts to address questions such as, what role does NGOs play in the development process, what are the challenges being faced by the NGOs in the politically unstable climate and what could be done to maintain sustainability in their work. The questions to be answered in this research include:

✓ What is the role played by NGOs in the politically unstable climate of Zimbabwe?
✓ What are the challenges faced by the NGOs in promoting human rights?

- ✓ How do the NGOs maintain sustainability in such politically unstable environment?
- ✓ How are the NGOs affected by the NGO Bill and what the implications of the Bill to the working of the NGOs towards its beneficiaries in addressing issues of human rights?
- ✓ What are the possible solutions to better the promotion of human rights by the remaining NGOs?

To answer these questions, the paper will compare different characteristics of relevant NGOs and interview the NGO representative and also the people who have, or are still benefiting from the NGOs.

CHAPTER 2

2. Literature Review

According to Nzimakwe (2008), NGOs as institutions that advance development consist of a variety of functional, geographic, membership and organisational groupings which make it complex to develop a standardized definition. However this does not mean that there have not been attempts to define the concept. The term "nongovernmental organization," or "NGO," was first formalized within the United Nations system in 1945 with its inclusion in Article 71 of the United Nations Charter. The Article 71 provides the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations with the power to "make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence." This brief history of NGOs is very important in indicating how their positioning in society and how their role has developed in time. The link between ECOSOC and NGOs was further officialised in ECOSOC Resolution 1296 and ECOSOC Resolution 1996, which demarcated the standard for NGO review status with ECOSOC (Korey: 1998). Although NGOs were influential in attaining the inclusion of human rights standards in the United Nations Charter in 1945, they were a very small number at that time. According to a United Nations report, only forty-one NGOs held consultative status with ECOSOC in 1948 and fewer yet focused wholly on human rights matters. However, since 1960s, the number of NGOs and their influence both nationally and internationally has grown exceptionally (Korey: 1998:16). Korey explained that, NGOs "played a decisive role in transforming the phrase human right from but a Charter provision or a Declaration article into a critical element of foreign policy discussions in and out of governmental or intergovernmental circles" (Korey: 1998:18). Globally, NGOs are involved in pressing forward for international human rights primarily by setting standards, documenting violations and lobbying for successful enforcement of the human rights norms. By setting the standards, NGOs were and are still instrumental in the establishment of international norms by which the conduct of states can be able to be measured or judged. NGOs also give pressure to national governments to sign and ratify the treaties that embody human rights norms and have worked to enhance the use of the complaint mechanisms of these treaties (Paul :2000). This role of NGOs is very essential in bringing human rights abuses to the attention of the United Nations, the international community and the public at large. This however does not mean that all abuses are documented. A huge number of human rights abuses are left unnoticed

internationally. This however proves that there is still more work to be done. The presence of NGOs however makes a vast difference especially in most developing countries like Zimbabwe where governments do not protect or promote human rights and neither do they have respect for rule of law. It is undeniably true that the rule of law acts as a framework for advancing human rights, human security and human development. While most countries (especially African countries- the basis for my study) have ratified UN covenants and conventions for the protection of human rights, human rights abuses are still at its pick. These international laws have been imbedded in most national laws but with nothing to show for it on the ground.

Thomas (1993) explained that,

> 'Human rights practice is a method of reporting facts to promote change. The influence of nongovernmental organizations is intimately tied to the rigor of their research methodology. One typical method of reporting human rights violations in specific countries is to investigate individual cases of human rights violations through interviews with victims and witnesses, supported by information about the abuse from other credible sources.' (Thomas :1993:16)

The publishing of such human rights reports according to Korey (1998) create negative media exposure which can serve as a useful "shame sanction" in working to enhance the government's conformity with international human rights norms.

NGOs are also involved in creating and supporting the UN enforcement mechanisms to enforce human rights standards whilst providing the UN instruments with the assembled documentation making their investigations productive. There are a number of UN mechanisms that have been formed to a certain extent because of NGO lobbying. These include the thematic and country mandates under the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. NGOs were also the very influential in the creation of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Korey: 1998).

The role of NGOs within the United Nations system will continue to evolve. What makes the evolving of the role of NGOs more important is their ability to reach the grassroots level. Their encounters vary from with big international organisations like the UN to a household in rural communal area of Zimbabwe. NGOs have many programs; functions and roles which

support community empowerment aimed at eventual attainment of sustainable development. NGOs according to Tengende (2005), have achieved more attention amongst scholars and practitioners of development. They have turned out to be increasingly crucial agents of the development process in many developing countries for their work such as humanitarian relief, long-term development, policy formation and political advocacy (Tengende :2005). On the other hand, there is a current view that NGOs constitute a viable alternative to government as channels of development assistance, particularly in developing countries. Streeten (1997) mention the most important functions and advantages of NGOs. He said;

i) they are good at reaching and mobilizing the poor and remote communities;
ii) they help empower poor people to gain control of their lives, and they work with and strengthen local institutions;
iii) they carry out projects at lower costs and more efficiently than the government agencies and
iv) they promote sustainable development.

In Zimbabwe NGOs are playing an important role in supporting women, men and households, and expected that they can meet the welfare. This role ranges from counselling and support service, awareness raising and advocacy, legal aid and microfinance (Desai: 2005). These services help the people to achieve their ability, skill and knowledge, and take control over their own lives and finally become empowered. This is very important in a country like Zimbabwe where the State does not make provision for such services. There is an argument that NGOs are today still seen as possible alternatives to government in addressing the needs of communities which are not reached by official development programmes (Desai: 2005).

The number of NGOs and their involvement in national and international policy-making has increased remarkable over the last half century and over the last decades. This highlights a significant emergence of NGOs and indicates the important role they are playing in development. However Most African governments do not see it this way. Zanu-PF national chairman Cde John Nkomo argued that western countries are using non-governmental organisations to foment political instability and to pursue a regime change agenda in Zimbabwe. He also said that NGOs receive money from Britain and the United States of America to create disturbances in the country. "They are creating an unAfrican culture,

giving money to people to remove their leaders. They are fronts for regime change who have no real purpose or reason to be in the country," (The Herald Newspaper: 2007: 2). This is however contrary to what neither the NGOs nor their beneficiaries say. NGOs play a major role in development especially in Zimbabwe mainly because they have characteristics that make them more suitable than public and private sector institutions to advance micro-level development. Davids (2005) argues that NGOs gain a comparative advantage from their features justifying the financial backing they get from international donor agencies and national governments. This is however not the real picture for many NGOs in Zimbabwe. With reference to the statement by the Zanu-PF national chairman above, the NGOs surely do not have the backing of the Zimbabwean government. As per the backing of international donors, this will be discussed below. Merrington, quoted by Davids (2005) identified some advantages of NGOs as instruments of micro-level development. These are as follows:

'I. They are good at communicating with and mobilisingthe poor;

II. They employ participatory, bottom-up approaches in project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. They are effective in assisting the poor to participate in matters affecting them and as a result thus gain more control over the quality of their lives. This ability of the NGOs to promote public participation is due to their partnership relations with the communities they serve;

III. They work well with, and strengthen, ineffective local institutions;

IV. They are innovative, flexible and experimental. This means that they can transfer technologies developed elsewhere and adapt them to local conditions, as well as formulate innovative responses to local needs, i.e. they are able to adopt a social learning process approach; and

V. They undertake projects at no or minimal cost to government and at lower costs that comparative public sector projects because of their commitment to using low-cost technologies. Supporters of alternative development believe that NGOs rather than governments or international institutions are the primary agents who will carry development forward' (Davids: 2005: 45).

According to Liebenberg (2000), NGOs function as a catalyst of the development process aiming at producing participation, empowerment and sustainability in terms of the development process. NGOs function as effective agents of development in areas where government is not so effective hence NGOs have a very crucial function to play in the course of development..

The relationship between NGOs and government is essential because both institutions are supposedly aimed at strategic development on public activities. One of the essential functions of government is to promote the social, physical and emotional well-being of society through facilitating development. This has been one of the major objectives of many NGOs. This clearly shows that due to the nature of their work, interaction between NGOs and governments in inevitable. However a huge problem arises where the relationship is really bad. De Beer and Swanepoel (2000) identified three ways NGOs are likely to relate to the state.

i) *Complementing the state*; this involves that an NGO participating with the state in the provision of the services which the state would otherwise not be able to provide. Consequently, the NGO becomes a mechanism of government policy implementation.

ii) *Opposing the state*; an NGO can contest the state directly or through a variety of pressure groups in an attempt to engage government regarding its policies which the NGO and the community might believe are badly affecting them.

iii) *Reforming the state*; NGOs can stand for interest groups working at grassroots level and negotiate with government to improve their policies.

It is important to identify the nature of the relationship as this has a huge impact on the way the NGOs operate. Different NGOs can have different relationship with the government. In Zimbabwe, just like in many other African countries, it is hardly that an NGO can complement the state mainly because the unfavourable government policies and the vast human rights abuses. However, not all NGOs have to fit in the above categories as some try to remain neutral. Below, the paper will identify the different NGOs for the case studies and try to group them in any of the above categories to see if that had an impact on sustainability. The grouping will be based on their response to the interview questions. Maharaj and Jaggernath (1996) highlighted that there is need for cautious management of NGO/government relations. The most challenging task for NGOs is the role of policy advocacy above that of programme implementation. This is critical to their long-term survival and status as viable and effective institutions of civil society. Usually there is direct and indirect interaction between NGOs and government and this interaction can have positive or negative results.

In order to capture the dynamics of the working of the NGOs in Zimbabwe, there is a need for a theoretical framework that gives an understanding to the inter-actions of state and society taking into consideration how power is exercised. According Dirlik (1987), regimes reproduce their rule through the use of both the coercive forces at their disposal as well as through the organization of assent. It is however difficult to ignore the role of culture and ideology in creating this hegemony. Zimbabwe is a common law country with a strong influence of customary laws and traditions. The operation of NGOs in Zimbabwe has always been addressed through legislation since the colonial era. With the increased demand for democratic space and reforms in Zimbabwe, NGOs and CSOs became targets of state harassment through increased legislative and administrative intervention (International Journal for not for profit: 2002) .With the end of the Cold War and the rise of global civil society, NGOs have played an increasingly major role in world politics, yet due to the nature of their work, they often struggle to remain effective amid complex political, military and social dynamics (Rieff:2002). NGOs face real problems when operating in violent environments. Platter (1945) argues that the ability of civil society to function is often threatened through laws, official policies and other practical restrictions. He argues that the power of the dominant groups/ institutions (in this case the Zimbabwean government) may be integrated into laws, rules, norms or policies. The power will then weaken the operations of non-dominant groups resulting in a situation where 'either you operate according to the needs of the dominant institutions or you fail to operate'. The power of a dominant group lies in its ability to control constructions of reality that reinforce its own status so that subordinate groups accept the social order and their own place in it (Bourdieu: 1977). The powerful cannot maintain their positions without the cooperation of the less powerful. The dominated are as involved in the use and maintenance of power as the dominant (Spain: 1992). ZANU-PF used legislation, state-funded violence and election rigging to create and then maintain its dominance within the country.

During the 1980 independence, NGOs in Zimbabwe were relatively insignificant in both financial and political terms. However, from the late 1980s forwards they turned out to be progressively more significant as employers, participants in development provision, and as commentators on political events (Rich-Dorman: 2001). For much of the 1980s and early 1990s, most Zimbabwean NGOs emphasized that on a day- to- day level they interacted regularly and informally with individual ministries within the Mugabe government. NGOs described these relationships as "co-operative," positive or "good" (Tengende: 1994). Most

NGOs often emphasized the extent to which they complement governmental development efforts saying, "We are the hand of the government to help it boost the people ;"(Tengende: 1994). They regarded themselves as supplementing and complementing the government to reach everyone, working hand-in-hand with government. According to the research done by Rich (1994), although some NGO leaders wished to make demands upon the government, the majority of rural development NGOs described the state as primarily co-operative (60%) or as both co-operative and interfering (27%). Similarly, 43% described their relations with the state as generally positive, 18% had mixed positive and negative relations, and 25% had isolated problems, leaving only 14% with generally negative relations. This close relationship between the government and the NGOs according to NANGO (NGO umbrella organisation) made the working of the NGOs sustainable. It created close relational networks between all development actors thus includes the NGOs, the government, donors and the beneficiaries.

 NGOs however attempted to influence policy but this was hardly ever taken as adversarial action. Tengende (1994) however argued that most NGOs avoided confrontation with the government because they thought it wasted resources and was self-defeating. It seems that although there might have been issues that needed confrontation, generally the NGOs and the government sought of had the same goals and objectives towards development. Although NGOs with links to opposition parties were required to prove their loyalty, the 1980s were relatively free of conflict between NGOs and the state. In addition to their ideological and social tendencies, material and organizational factors reinforced NGOs' inclination to work co-operatively within the state's framework (Rich: 1994). This fancy relationship between the NGOs and the Zimbabwean government did not however last for long.

While the 1990s represented a growth period for NGOs in Zimbabwe, it was also a time when economic and social conditions became much more difficult. Despite NGOs' involvement with the social welfare of both urban and rural peoples, few NGOs were involved in lobbying and advocacy work concerning economic policy. Even when legislation was implemented to control NGO activity, NGOs were reluctant to intervene. In 1995 the state introduced the Private Voluntary Organizations (PVO) Act. This Act gave the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare the mandate to register and de-register NGOs, and to suspend executive committee members if it appeared to the Minister on information supplied to him that: (a) the organization no longer operated according to the objective specified in its constitution; or (b) the organization was being poorly administered,

jeopardizing its activities; or (c) the organization was involved in illegal activities; or (d) it was necessary or desirable to do so in the public interest (PVO Act :1995). Since then the Government of Zimbabwe has been issuing policy directives since 2003 which the relevant ministry says are meant to clarify certain issues and to be read and interpreted in conjunction with the PVO Act (NANGO : 2006). These policies have instead only brought more confusion.

With the beginning of the new millennium 2000 politics in Zimbabwe changed dramatically, culminating in the constitutional referendum in February 2000 and the election in June 2000. The ruling party ZANU-PF experienced its first strong opposition in years. The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was formed in 1999 as an opposition party to President Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF). The MDC was made up of many civic groups who campaigned for the "No" vote in the 2000 constitutional referendum, which would limit a president's service to two terms, before the introduction of a Prime Minister, as well as giving legal immunities to the State. In the 2000 parliamentary elections, the MDC won 57 of the 120 seats up for election. This marked the first time that an opposition party had achieved more than a handful of seats since the merger of ZANU and ZAPU in 1988. This changed the whole set-up in Zimbabwe. NGOs began to see the need to be critical of the government whilst the government started questioning the existence of the NGOs. Raftopoulos (2001) noted that some NGOs developed a more openly critical political stance against the state, particularly on the issue of constitutional reform. The development did not mean that such NGOs had completely discarded their more cautious political strategy towards the state.

The above events fundamentally influenced the state-society relations. The ruling party attitudes to NGOs, church and unions were affected by their involvement in the constitutional debate and the parliamentary election in June 2000 and also by the prospect of the presidential election in 2002. Until 1997 the politics of Zimbabwe may, by in large, be construed as the politics of inclusion, in which the ruling party and the state sought to incorporate most groups into their alliance, on their own terms. However, following 1997, the politics of exclusion strengthened especially after the constitutional referendum, the ZANU (PF) government became increasingly intolerant of groups organized outside the state (Rich-Dorman: 2001). After the June 2000 election, violence moved from the rural areas into urban areas and was increasingly perpetrated by sections of the formal security apparatus, including

the army and police, and not by the war veterans and party youth alone. This violence was mostly against civilians. This is when Zimbabwe started to experience gross human rights violations.

In 2008, the government of Zimbabwe introduced the NGO Bill. The NGO Bill essentially maintains the most repressive features of the PVO act but goes further by introducing new provisions that expand the range of organisations required to register under the law, while at the same time proscribing a broader range of NGO activity. essential common features include a system of compulsory registration, a controlling organisation appointed by the minister, the appointment of a registrar to coordinate registration of private voluntary organisations PVOs, certain restrictions on fundraising, minimum standards for administration of PVOs relating to finances and accounting and processes for investigations into the affairs of PVOs, including conditions in which PVOs may be dissolved or have their registration certificates either cancelled or amended (International Bar Association Analysis of the Zimbabwean Non-Governmental Organisations Bill: 2004)

The key additions in the definition section of the Bill include definitions of 'foreign funding or donation', 'foreign non-governmental organisation', 'issues of governance',2 'local nongovernmental organisation' and an expansion in the definition of the organisations to which the Bill will apply. The key difference between the definition of 'non-governmental organisation' in the Bill and 'private voluntary organisation' is its expansion to include 'any foreign or local body' with the additional objects of:

(g) The promotion and protection of human rights and good governance;

(h) the promotion and protection of environmental rights and interests and sustainable development.' (NGO Bill)

With all the above laws and policies being introduced, the question that has been addressed by many authors is the implications of the laws on the NGOs in general. The international community centred more on a simple equation 1+1=2 in the sense that they just looked at the unfriendly laws and policies, and concluded that's the reason for some NGOs leaving the country or collapsed. This research is not going to argue against the above equation, but will find out other possible reasons why some NGOs survived/are surviving the environment whilst others are not. The second part will be an evaluation of the influence of the sustainability of these NGOs to the promotion of human rights. This is done through mostly comparative analysis of different NGOs and then interviews.

Although power has been used as a control mechanism by the dominant group, there are other social factors to be taken into account to give a full analysis of the issues surrounding NGOs in Zimbabwe. Most importantly is the lack of social capital. Social capital has been defined as a sociological concept, which refers to connections within and between social networks (Putman: 2000). The political instability in Zimbabwe can be said to have broken these connections both among the NGOs themselves, and between the NGOs and the government of Zimbabwe as discussed above. The theory behind social capital is that just as ill will drives the occurrence of many things, goodwill causes things to happen. Though there are a variety of related definitions, in which some scholars describe it as 'something of a cure-all' for the problems of modern society, they tend to share the core idea "that social networks have value' (Portes:1998). Just as a screwdriver (physical capital) or a college education (human capital can increase productivity (both individual and collective), so do social contacts affect the productivity of individuals and groups.

The World Bank (2000) defined social capital as *"....the rules, norms, obligations, reciprocity and trust embedded in social relations, social structures and society's institutional arrangements which enable members to achieve their individual and community objectives."*. The political instability in Zimbabwe created an environment where the rules or trust in social relations among social structures where broken resulting in a severe lack mutually beneficial collective action towards sustainable development. The government lacked trust in the NGOs as they suspected them of being machinery send to pursue western ideologies, whereas the NGOs lacked trust in the governments' agendas and policies. This cycle of lack of trust continued even amongst the NGOs themselves, not being sure who is working for whom resulting in donors being sceptical with funding the NGOs. It appears there is a broader conformity in the literature about what social capital does, in particular, it is widely agreed that social capital facilitates mutually beneficial collective action which is lacking in Zimbabwe. It has been argued by many scholars that people's participation rarely happens spontaneously, but rather involves social preparation (Albee & Boyd, 1997)

Narayan and Pritchett (1997) describe five mechanisms for how social capital affects outcomes. They are:

> ➢ Improve society's ability to monitor the performance of government, either because government officials are more embedded in the social network or because monitoring

the public provision of services is a public good:

➢ Increase possibilities for co-operative action in solving problems with a local *common property* element;

➢ Facilitate the diffusion of innovations by increasing inter-linkages among individuals;

➢ Reduce information imperfections and expand the range of enforcement mechanisms, thereby increasing transactions in output, credit, land and labour markets;

➢ Increase informal insurance (or informal safety nets) between households, thereby allowing households to pursue higher returns, but more risky, activities and production techniques.

According to authors like Walzer et al (2000) it is through civil society, that individuals are able to establish and maintain relational networks. This highlights the importance of NGOs in maintaining and creating social capital. The NGOs also connect people with each other, build trust and reciprocity through informal, loosely structured associations, and consolidate society through altruism without obligation. Putnam (1995) then stated that it is *"this range of activities, services and associations produced by... civil society"* that constitutes the sources of social capital (Putnam: 1995) Onyx (2000) believes that social capital depends on an already functioning community. Foley and Edwards believe that "political systems...are important determinants of both the character of civil society and of the uses to which whatever social capital exists might be put"(Putnam: 1995; 35). A number of intellectuals in developing countries have argued that the idea of social capital, particularly when connected to certain ideas about civil society, is deeply implicated in contemporary modes of donor trust. This idea will be elaborated further below when discussing particular NGOs. Although the idea of social capital works well in explaining the effects of bad relations between the government and the NGOs, it has its own weaknesses. Interesting to note is the fact that it cannot be measured. According to Morlino (1995), both the social capital and its effects cannot be precisely measured in a comparable way. This however does not mean its presence or its effects cannot be identified and appreciated.

CHAPTER 3

3. Methodology

It is important to indicate how and why I chose the specific NGOs for my study. The criterion was mainly based on the classification of the NGOs. There are numerous classifications of NGOs based on the work they do. The primary aim of NGOs however, is to improve the living conditions of people through development in general. This entails various aspects of human life, such as literacy, human dignity, justice and economic ability, essentially the joy of life. According to the typology used by the World Bank divides them into Operational and Advocacy. Operational NGOs seek to "achieve small scale change directly through projects." They organize financial resources, materials and volunteers to generate localized programs in the field. They hold large scale fundraising events; apply to governments and organizations for grants and contracts in order to raise money for projects. They often operate in a hierarchical structure; with a main headquarter that is staffed by professionals who plan projects, create budgets, keep accounts, report, and communicate with operational fieldworkers who work directly on projects. Operational NGOs deal with a wide range of issues, but are most often associated with the delivery of services and welfare, emergency relief and environmental issues. Operational NGOs can be further categorized, one frequently used categorization is the division into relief-oriented versus development-oriented organizations; they can also be classified according to whether they stress service delivery or participation; or whether they are religious or secular; and whether they are more public or private-oriented. Operational NGOs can be community-based, national or international. The defining activity of operational NGOs is implementing projects.

Campaigning NGOs on the other hand seek to "achieve large scale change promoted indirectly through influence of the political system. Campaigning NGOs need an efficient and effective group of professional members who are able to keep supporters informed, and motivated. They must plan and host demonstrations and events that will keep their cause in the media. They must maintain a large informed network of supporters who can be mobilized for events to garner media attention and influence policy changes. The defining activity of campaigning NGOs is holding demonstrations. Campaigning NGOs often deal with issues relating to human rights, women's rights, and children's rights. The primary purpose of an Advocacy NGO is to defend or promote a specific cause. As opposed to operational project

management, these organizations typically try to raise awareness, acceptance and knowledge by lobbying, press work and activist events.

However, some NGOs can be both Operational and Campaigning NGOs because it is not uncommon for NGOs to make use of both activities. Many times, operational NGOs will use campaigning techniques if they continually face the same issues in the field that could be remedied through policy changes. At the same time, Campaigning NGOs, like human rights organizations often have programs that assist the individual victims they are trying to help through their advocacy work (Willitts :2002)

My case studies are more of campaigning NGOs, although there are also traces of operational activities. These types of NGOs best suit the contemporary nature of most NGOs in Zimbabwe due to changing times and roles. David Korten described the role of NGOs as evolving through generation of activity. First are the *relief and welfare* NGOs which involve primarily the delivery of inputs such as humanitarian assistance. The, *small scale local development* will be the second involving service delivery and building of some local capacities for self-help, and lastly the, *sustainable development systems* involving grassroots mobilization and policy advocacy. This evolution has since been experienced in Zimbabwe alongside the political arena as discussed above.

3.1.Comparative Analysis

Comparative research, simply put, is the act of comparing two or more things with a view to discovering something about one or all of the things being compared. Cesarini and Shareen (2009) argues that there are a number of approaches in comparative politics that can be applied to provide theoretical advances in the field of human rights while at the same time addressing the urgent needs on the ground. This approach is very important to my study because by comparing NGOs working in a politically unstable climate, the aim will be to identify the effects on the ground. This technique often utilizes multiple disciplines in one study. In order to answer the questions listed above, the paper first identified the NGOs to be compared and the basis for the comparison. After identifying the NGOs, the next step will be looking at the common features between the NGOs taking into account the notable differences. Some of the factors taken into consideration are whether the NGO is local or international, source of funding and the type of work. In line with how a lot of theorizing has

gone in the last century, comparative research does not tend to investigate 'grand theories', but it instead occupies itself with middle-range theories that do not purport to describe our social system in its entirety, but a subset of it. Comparative research can take many forms. Two key factors are space and time. Spatially, cross-national comparisons are by far the most common, although comparisons within countries, contrasting different areas, cultures or governments also subsist and are very constructive. The comparison in this paper only considers space but not time in the sense that the NGOs existed at the same time.

This comparative analysis focuses on four NGOs as case studies. These are Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), Amnesty International (Amnesty), and Christian Care (CC) and National Constitutional assembly (NCA). A notable distinction between the above NGOs is the fact that two are international that's VSO and Amnesty, and the other two are local NGOs and that's CC and NCA. This distinction had a huge influence in choosing the NGOs for the case studies. Another factor influencing the choice of the above NGOs is the possible availability of information either through written documents or intended interviews. The paper will use the above mentioned factors as the basis for comparing the NGOs. Before discussing the factors, it is important to give a brief overview of the current status of the chosen NGOs regarding their existence and sustainability in Zimbabwe.

VSO previously had its African headquarters in Harare Zimbabwe. However, from around 2006, the offices began to become smaller and smaller until all its operations were moved to Johannesburg South Africa. Due to political insecurity, VSO is currently unable to manage an international volunteering programme in Zimbabwe. Amnesty wrote one of the current country reports to the UN on human rights issues in Zimbabwe. Most of the research and consultations were done from South Africa; however they are still actively involved in Zimbabwe. The NCA was formed in 1997 with main objectives are the promotion of awareness, critical debate and participation in the making of Zimbabwe's constitution through an open, transparent and accountable and people driven process (NCA homepage). It became more relevant in the past two years because of a recent urgency to have a new constitution. The NCA is still active and operating well in Zimbabwe. The last NGO is Christian Care which was formed in 1967 by the Zimbabwe Council of Churches and registered as a Welfare Organization. Christian Care is under diminished operations and for a certain period they had to suspend their operations.

3.2. Source of Funding

All NGOs whether national or international depend on some source of external funding however the source might vary. Generally the sources of funds for NGOs are from three different areas, firstly the Government, secondly the public at large and lastly foreign development agencies (Muthupandian: 2006). However, for many NGOs in third world countries like Zimbabwe foreign funding is mostly their source. The wording of an NGO's objects becomes very important because if a local NGO includes human rights amongst its objects, it is precluded from receiving any foreign funding. The only reason for this provision is to attempt to prevent local NGOs from carrying out human rights work as local companies lack the resources to fund human rights initiatives especially considering the prevailing economic conditions. However, local NGOs involved in democracy, human rights and media advocacy fear they may be denied accreditation. National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) chairman Lovemore Madhuku's said they were already suffering from the withdrawal of funding by international donors but would continue operating. He said, 'The issue of donor funds is one problem that has been created by this Bill' (Zimbabwe Independent Newspaper: 2008)

VSO as an international NGO receives most of its funding from international agencies and Governments of the first world countries. These include UK aid, US aid, Canadian International Development Agency and European Commission. Amnesty's funding depends on the contributions of its worldwide membership and fundraising activities to ensure its independence, it does not seek or accept money from governments or political parties for its work in documenting and campaigning against human rights abuses. Norway, Sweden and Canada have been NCAs main donors. Christian Care is no different from the others much when it comes to sources of funding. They get their funding from foreign donors.

3.3. Type of Work

One common feature among all the NGOs is that they to a certain extent do advocacy work because purely humanitarian NGOs were not really affected by the laws and the policies. VSO's high-impact approach involves bringing people together to share skills, build capabilities, promote international understanding and action, and change lives to make the world a fairer place for all. One of VSO's main goals is participation and governance. They regarded participation to involve disadvantaged people being able to exercise their rights and

responsibilities, and to access the basic services to which they are entitled. In order for them to be able to do this, they need to be able to actively participate in mainstream decision-making processes, for example by having a say in local development plans for education, health or water supply services or voting in elections. Governance according to VSO is about power, relationships and accountability: who has influence, whose voice is heard, who makes decisions and how decision-makers are held to account. As such, 'good governance' is an issue for all individuals, agencies and organisations (state, private sector and civil society) that hold power in making decisions affecting access to rights.

Amnesty works with the promotion of human rights by investigating and exposing abuses, educate and mobilize the public, and help transform societies to create a safer, more just world Christian Care initially worked only with humanitarian aid, however advocacy work became one of the most significant thematic area of concentration for Christian Care since it is seen as a vehicle for development capacity-building and facilitator of an enlightened beneficiary community. The aims of the NCA are to help bring about the initiation of an inclusive and broad-based constitution-making process in Zimbabwe ; to foster, protect and deepen a culture of human rights and respect for the rule of law in Zimbabwe and to implement, incorporate and protect human rights. NCA carries out grassroots campaigns, informing people about rights-related issues such as the need for an inclusive, broad-based constitution; facilitates debates; organizes meetings, seminars and debate workshops; issues public statements; monitors legal, political and social developments in Zimbabwe; publishes reports on human-rights related topics such as the plight of women in Zimbabwe; and engages in local and international networking.

Although there seem to be similarities on the work of the NGOs, it is important to take into account the differences. The difference so far seems to be on the type of advocacy they do. That is whether the organization does active or passive advocacy. Passive advocacy can be described as the advocacy that is neither assertive nor aggressive, this can be linked to what VSO and CC does. Although they advocate for human rights and issues of democracy, their main objectives lie within humanitarian aid and development. They do not directly challenge laws and policies. Active advocacy then may refer to a direct involvement marked by energetic activity. This is what Amnesty and NCA does. They challenge policies and laws, question government decisions and make reports to the international community like the UN. Moyo (1992) identified different modes of advocacy: passive resistance, collaboration and

opposition. He defines passive resistance as a tactic used by NGOs who want to empower people through alternative development strategies different from those professed by the state: "we do what the government official tells us to do while he is there, and as soon as he leaves, we do our own thing." The collaborative model reflects the existence of NGOs which work closely with ministries but which have little interest in policy change; instead they are more concerned with implementing particular projects (Moyo: 1992). This difference is now considered to see how that might have influenced the continuance to operate and sustainability of some NGOs whilst others fail to continue. After identifying the differences, then comes the most important part of comparative research issues which is the analysing of the noted differences.

3.4.Interviews

This paper also made use of interviews as a research methodology. The interviewees are members of the above mentioned NGOs and also the people who have and/or still benefiting from the work of these NGOs. I did the interviews mostly by email and also over the phone. From the interview with the NGO representative(s), I was directed to people and areas where they have been operating mostly. I couldn't visit the areas as I had intended, but I managed to contact a few people who have been beneficiaries of these NGOs. The interviews with the NGO representatives is intended to answer the first main part of the research question which is why the NGOs managed or failed to sustain themselves during the politically unstable climate. This will be discussed further in the chapter below. The interviews with the residents will then seek to answer the second part of the question which is the implications and the consequences of the failed sustainability of these NGOs to the people who are/were the beneficiaries. Interviews are used in this research because they compliment the comparative analysis discussed above. By using interviews, I got first hand information that might not be easily accessible due to a number of reasons including lack of transparency.

The paper used both open and closed ended questions will be used. See attached appendix A and B for sample of the questions. The reason why I chose to use both types of questions is because of the advantages they both offer and complement each other. Open-ended questions allow respondents to include more information, including feelings, attitudes and understanding of the subject. This allows researchers to better access the respondents' true

feelings on an issue. Closed-ended questions, because of the simplicity and limit of the answers, may not offer the respondents choices that actually reflect their real feelings. Closed-ended questions also do not allow the respondents to explain that they do not understand the question or do not have an opinion on the issue.

3.5. Challenges and other considerations

- *Time constraints*. Collecting data requires time especially primary data, and this much time will not be available.

- *Limited Finance*. I intent to do interviews with people in Zimbabwe. Initially I intended to travel to Zimbabwe for the interviews, however due to limited finance I ended using the email and Skype for the interviews.

- *Difficulty accessing data.* It might be difficult to access some government publications because some departments are not update and not willing to give information. It might not be easy for some NGOs to give the relevant information as well as it is politically sensitive.

- *Politics.* The biggest challenge of the research will be the political instability in the country. It will not be easy to freely gather the information where freedom of speech or information is not respected. This however does not mean that the information cannot be gathered.

3.6. Ethics:

There are a number of ethical issues to be taken into consideration. Ethical standards also require that researchers not put participants in a situation where they might be at risk of harm as a result of their participation. This is very important because by participation, the NGOs or the beneficiaries might end up in a more difficult situation than they were before. One possible way to minimise this risk is by guarantying the participants confidentiality meaning they are assured that identifying information will not be made available to anyone who is not directly involved in the study.

CHAPTER 4

4. Findings

NGOs in Zimbabwe have hastily gained an international reputation due to the political crisis; they became the eyes and ears of the world. They are being consulted on the current situation in Zimbabwe as they are regarded as more objective and less biased by the international community. They also bring new perspectives with so much experience in matters affecting the country such as grassroots development, poverty and most importantly defence of human rights. They have a broad knowledge base and strong commitment to issues relevant to the emancipation of the country. They have shown more sensitivity and understanding of Africa's severe economic and political crisis than their respective governments and the multilateral institutions. Keeping in mind that Africans at the grassroots level must have the lead in defining their needs and formulating development strategies, NGOs have recommended an action-orientated 'compact' for African development which must be translated into coordinated programmes for long-term solutions. Indeed, many NGOs are more active and knowledgeable in the area of development needs of poor countries than are their governments. They have demonstrated an awareness of the fact that conventional development models have not changed the situation of the poorest in Africa and they have been quick to recognize that people are poor because they have no power.

According to a representative of the National Constitutional Assembly, relations between state and NGOs in Zimbabwe are complex. Many NGOs do not undertake lobbying and advocacy activities as they prefer their relationship to be based on non-confrontation. However, some NGO activists in Zimbabwe have tried to network with each other and engage the state in order to challenge its autonomy in policy-making in several key issue areas. Although NGOs in Zimbabwe cannot be said to be complementing the state due to the nature of their relationship, the NGOs fill in the gaps left by public services. The NGOs represent the interest of the people they work with. The biggest challenge for the NGOS in influencing policy is that they are not fully accepted by the government to engage in political dialogue. The NGOs despise the systematic and escalating violations of human rights perpetrated by the government; most of these NGOs then take the role of being watchdogs and holding the state accountable. Although NGOs in Zimbabwe cannot be said to be complementing the state due to the nature of their relationship, the NGOs fill in the gaps left

by public services. The NGOs represent the interest of the people they work with. The biggest challenge for the NGOS in influencing policy is that they are not fully accepted by the government to engage in political dialogue. The NGOs despise the systematic and escalating violations of human rights perpetrated by the government; most of these NGOs then take the role of being watchdogs and holding the state accountable. A representative from National Constitutional Assembly described NGOs' relationship with the government as 'cat and mouse'. He said, 'It's a cat and mouse one. The government accuses NGOs of regime change whilst NGOs "fight" for the citizens to have space to input in national policy formulation. That tension between NGOs and the government therefore breeds and oils that cat and mouse relationship'. This contrived action is never-ending he also commented, it only ends when the NGO decides to close-down or move to another country. This clearly shows how some NGOs fail to maintain sustainability in Zimbabwe. Another representative of Christian Care described their relationship with the government as a mixed relationship. He said 'it can almost be characterised as a love- hate one, where we are tolerated in some cases but also considered oppositional in some instances'. This type of relationship results in lack of social capital. The absence of social capital and the effects thereof are really felt by many NGOs in Zimbabwe through diminished donor funding, withdrawal of space for independent activity by the state etc.

Human rights NGOs are highly unpopular with politicians in Zimbabwe because they demanded observation of the rule of law as well as respect for human rights, which those who were found in breach of did not like. Hence they will try to push them out as much as possible. For many African NGOs, politics is a forbidden and dangerous area. They argue that the best way for them to fulfil their development roles is to remain apolitical. Yet this is an unrealistic strategy, not least because many NGOs' operational activities are themselves political in that they seek to shift existing inequities in favour of the poor. Instead, they prefer to promote democracy by supporting grassroots organizations with resources, training and information. By their own actions, especially in participatory projects, NGOs have created practical schools of democracy from which members from grassroots organizations are able to follow democratic practices. Nevertheless, the feeling is that NGOs in Africa should do much more to contribute towards a more democratic Africa.

Bratton: 1989 & Biggs: 1993 make a very important argument by stating that although NGOs are crucial actors as such, they are not a "system on their own" operating in a vacuum,

but part of a wider environment. This means that dialogue between all relevant actors is essential to promote human rights. According to Hadenius and Uggla, total independence is practically irreconcilable with political influence and the state needs civil society to achieve its objectives. The state has the capability to strengthen NGOs. Hadenius and Uggla define a continuum of five stages of the relationship between the State and civil society, from a situation in which the State is hostile to civil society to one of benevolence. The first stage characterizes authoritarian system and the last stage is when the government actively promotes civil society. This five stage approach is very important in illustrating the status of the relationship between the state and NGOs in Zimbabwe. It also gives a guideline of how far it is from achieving an 'ideal' relationship between the institutions.

Table 1: State treatment of civil society the table;

Stage	State treatment	Type of State
1.	➢ The State does not tolerate independent civil activity. ➢ *Threshold*: de facto right to form autonomous organisations.	Hostile State
2.	➢ The State accepts autonomous organisation, but does not provide a space for it. ➢ *Threshold*: state withdrawal opening up a space for independent activity.	Benevolent State
3.	➢ A space for independent activity exists, but the practice of governance does not promote autonomous organisation. ➢ *Threshold*: favourable institutional structures.	
4.	➢ The State provides favourable structures, but no active support. ➢ *Threshold:* active state programs in support of civil society.	

5.	➢ The State actively promotes autonomous organisations.	

From the information that I gathered during my research, it is safe to say that the treatment of NGOs by the state is somewhere between stage 1 and stage 2. This is so because in as much as the state does not tolerate independent activities of the NGOs, it's done indirectly. They frustrate the NGOs with the laws, policies, bureaucracies and so forth

The other factor affecting the sustainability of the NGOs according to the interviews is the issue of funding. The major sources of funding for NGOs continue to be voluntary private sources and governments. Before, African governments were the only key recipients of official aid from donor countries and multilateral organizations nowadays more aid is being conveyed through NGOs, many of which are recognized by the donor community to work more competently in sustainable development and to work in those areas which are not accessible to governments (Ndegwa: 1996). The re-direction of aid from the governments to NGOs had both positive and negative impacts on NGOs. On one hand it meant more resources for them to pursue their work, however creating some tension with the governments as they were being bypassed as implementing agents. In turn, most governments are trying to 'coordinate' NGOs anticipating that they might be able to 'control' them now that they are recipients of more official funding. The government control over the NGOs however scares away many donors says a former VSO (Zimbabwe) Placement Officer. The donors could no longer trust the NGOs with their funding. She said, ' we lost our important donors bit by bit until we got to a point where VSO Zimbabwe was totally unsustainable and we had to close down'. The Christian Care representative however admitted to one of the biggest challenge to this way of funding stating that dependence on donor governments or multinational institutions for funding may compromise their flexibility to deal with grave development issues. It may also undermine their ability to speak out against those policies of funders which they see as harmful to the interests of the poor.

Across the four NGOs many challenges have been highlighted. These can be placed under three broad rubrics i) financial, ii) environmental and iii) challenges associated with migration, brain drain and skills flight. Under the first rubric, NGOs has been finding it difficult to be well sustained within the context of the global economic crisis whose effects are being felt in the donor countries. The Austerity Measures that have been introduced

domestically in these countries have also applied to general developmental work, leading to reductions n the pots of resources that can be accessed for NGO work. Under the second rubric, the political environment, fraught as it is with repressive pieces of legislation, violence and replete with intimidation and polarisation, has made it very difficult to operate from. Often enough civics has been targeted for persecution through prosecution under the auspices of the stern laws and harsh and intolerant environment. Under the third rubric, given the harsh economic conditions, a lot of skills left the sector, amongst them were some civic actors who got frustrated or chased out of the country. The net effect has been that huge responsibilities have been thrust of relatively inexperienced shoulders presenting challenges on delivery and quality of work within the NGO sector.

There have been a barrage of laws that have impacted negatively on the work of NGOs amongst these are laws such as the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), Criminal Law Codification Act, amongst others. They have served to severely curtail NGO activities because of the limitations that they place on Freedoms of Association, Assembly and Information. In some instances these laws have been used to bar NGO activities, as in the case of POSA, or derail NGO work through arrests under the premise of POSA or the Codification act. There were also plans to re-introduce an NGO law which would have banned foreign funding for NGO's working in the Human Rights and Governance sector- however this process has since stalled, leaving the above laws to have the most negative impact on the work of NGO. The law is a direct attack on human rights in Zimbabwe says the Crisis Coalition Zimbabwe director. If the NGO Act is enforced across the board, tens of thousands of people being assisted by NGO programs could suffer. Human rights organizations in Zimbabwe make available critical medical and psychological care and legal advice to victims of human rights violations. Most of these victims have nowhere else to turn to. According to Amnesty International, any legislation governing the operation of NGOs must be consistent with Zimbabwe's human rights obligations. "Preventing local NGOs from receiving foreign funding for human rights work would effectively mean the end of many vital human rights programs, as there is so little local funding available," said the Amnesty International representative. The legislations being introduced are a disaster for victims of human rights violations and human rights defenders, he said. It is entirely inconsistent with Zimbabwe's responsibility under international human rights laws to which it is party to. There are always serious fears that

those organizations that are raising awareness of the human rights situation in Zimbabwe will be embattled for closure.

The lack media independence plays a major role in the sustainability of NGOs and the protection of human rights. The media promotes awareness on the human rights situation. The Media Information Commission established by the 2002 Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) brought severe suppression of independent media in Zimbabwe. According to human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch the government of Zimbabwe violates a series of human rights including the rights to shelter, food, freedom of movement and residence, freedom of assembly and the protection of the law. There are assaults on the media, the political opposition, civil society activists, and human rights defenders. A villager in Chipinge a town in southeastern Zimbabwe said the withdrawal of local NGOs has heavily impacted on health delivery system. The Zimbabwean Newspaper interviewed some villagers who said, "They chased some of the NGOs that were supplying us with drugs and medicines, but now people are dying in homes as there are no any drugs and medicines in some clinics. We are appealing to the local NGOs to come back to our rescue, as many people are dying of malaria." Zimbabwe Hope Foundation (ZHF) and Zimbabwe Rural Development Agency (ZRDA) are some of the NGOs that suspended operations due to political pressure from Zanu-PF (Zimbabwe Independent Newspaper: 18 June 2010).

According to the Amnesty International representative, the frustration of NGOs goes beyond the laws to physical violence. The National Association of Non Governmental Organisations (NANGO), a membership body representing nongovernmental organisations in Zimbabwe also noted that there has been continued harassment of civil society activists by law enforcement agents. The harassment of activists is evidenced by a disturbing chronicle of events indicative of a crackdown on civil society organisations; in particular, human rights focussed organisations. Torture, harassment and politically motivated prosecutions of human rights defenders and perceived opponents have persisted, while villagers in parts of Zimbabwe have suffered ceaseless intimidation by supporters of former ruling party ZANU-PF. NANGO mentioned on their website a number of recent violations against human rights activists in Zimbabwe. These violations have a grave impact on the promotion and protection of human rights of ordinary citizens. On March16, members of an NGO called Women and Men Of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) were harassed by the police at a gathering and six of them were arrested and charged with contravening section 140 of Criminal Law (Codification and

Reform Act) Chapter 9:23, malicious damage to property (Zimbabwe Independent Newspaper : 28 April 2011). A further illustration of the crackdown on civil society organisations is the arrest of Crisis Coalition in Zimbabwe director, Mr McDonald Lewanika, on the 14th of March 2011 for allegedly distributing subversive material. According to NANGO, the 'subversive material' in question consisted of advocacy materials used frequently as part of the Coalition's activities. NANGO's Eastern region offices were also raided by police on 16th March 2011. Close to 50 human rights activists were also arrested for watching a video footage of the Egyptian uprising. This leaves no doubt of the pure limitation of fundamental freedoms of expression and association. It is also a strong indication of the imposed restriction of civil society activities and an apparent shrinking of the NGO operating space illustrated on table 1 above. The above examples are an indication of the environment the NGOs are operating in. I managed to speak with Mr Mcdonald Lewanikwa after being referred by a friend. It was just a week after his release from prison. He said the law enforcement agencies are a major source of human rights abuses in Zimbabwe. Reports indicate that there have been a growing number of cases in which police have assaulted and tortured opposition supporters and civil society activists.

The Amnesty International representative was very aggressive towards how they promote human rights. When asked how they work he said, 'We demand the observance of the rule of law and respect for human rights, we owe our allegiance to the protection of human rights and not to any other person. We believe in the protection of human rights, especially the rights of the weak and marginalized.' He acknowledged that the State, through the Zimbabwe Republic Police, has the obligation to protect the citizenry; however he argued that the protection cannot be delineated by the harassment of innocent activists. The continuous harassment of the human rights activists according to the Amnesty International representative has resulted in numerous small to medium sized NGOs taking a step back and never forward for fear of their lives. Only those with strong international support survive.

It seems that although the NGOs might be involved in more or less the same nature of work, having foreign donors, the main distinction lies in the extent the NGO is prepared to fight. A representative from Amnesty stated that they have a role to play and they will not rest until they see improvements in human rights. Willingness to fight however is only viable in cases where there is a strong national and international support. This is achievable with big organisations like Amnesty, and quite difficult with smaller ones like the NCA.

5. CONCLUSION

Owing to their strong interest in local development processes and their ability to connect local processes with national and global processes, NGOs, if incorporated in the policy-making process, contribute to the internalisation and localisation of international development goals. NGOs have the capacity to contextualise international goals and develop them more so as to make them appropriate on the national and local levels. They are very important in connecting the global with the local. Additionally they carry out the conventional role of keeping a watchful eye. This is very important in a country like Zimbabwe where there is no rule of law. They have the capacity to hold national governments accountable to their commitments, and contribute to, as well as oversee the implementation and realisation of these commitments at the local level. Notwithstanding recognizing the significance of civil society participation for sustainable development, there are serious gaps and lack of political will to foster more inclusive processes in most African countries. In order to achieve sustainable and equitable development, there is a pressing necessity to re-evaluate the way NGOs generally work all over the world. According to the World Bank (2003), empowering NGOs and making them more efficient will generate a forum where people can work with each other in planning a future for themselves, their families, and their communities at large. In this era of deteriorating international aid and assistance, it is crucial for African NGOs to realign themselves to keep up with the complexities involved in development. According to Ndegwa (1996), if NGOs are given the essential structure and operational focus, they can undeniably serve as efficient agents of sustainable development and good governance.

The working of NGOs cannot be separated from its relationship with the governments where they work. At the same time, in every structured society, governments need to be accountable to civil society organizations, which in essence represent the core people in the development process (Tandon :1991). This then is the biggest challenge to maintaining a positive relationship. The positive relationship works well for the NGOs especially as it creates a better platform to work on. It also increases the donor trust as an assumption of a free and impartial working environment is created. Although NGOs have the capability of to promote democracy and sustainable development policies in Africa, the state should be prepared to accept these reforms which possibly permit the decentralization of power and

responsibility for the use of resources and their managing from the centre to the communities (Muir :1992). Further, a better democratic environment embodying democratic laws and institutional reform, will definitely have a major impact on the environment the NGOs operate in. These positive changes will moreover be supported by a change of attitude by of state officials understanding that NGO's are legitimate actors who have a role to play in aiding the state. This is a very crucial issue in Zimbabwe where the phenomena of NGOs is being questioned as indicated by the statement above made by the President of Zimbabwe.

 NGOs' successes or failures depend so much on the benevolence of donor national governments, and that of the international community. As mentioned above, most if not all NGOs in Zimbabwe largely depends on donor funding. This creates a risk of disintegration if and when the funding cease. This is the greatest danger against NGO sustainability. NGOs need to find ways of generating their own income. Tendon (1991) argued that even when the funding from such sources continues, greater dependence on them may also threaten NGOs performance by distorting their autonomy and weakening their legitimacy. The beneficiary national governments can be extremely helpful by showing goodwill in creating a domestic environment which allows for a liberal democratic framework plus an accommodating legal framework. Favourable macro- and micro-economic policies would equally present a complimentary framework within which NGOs would thrive (Buturo: 2002).

The field of human rights according to Cesarini and Hertel (2009) is both international and intensely domestic because it spans the two levels of analysis. This is important in showing the relevant actors who can bring a difference in the field of human rights. Every state brings its own distinctive historical experience and socio cultural perspective to the issue of human rights. This is because the protection and protection of human rights in every country can never be separated from its culture historical experiences. What is important however is to use these experiences to become the best they can be.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The issue of human rights is of paramount importance and their violation amount to a severe affront to justice (Cranston: 1967). In order to promote and protect human rights, there is need for the NGOs and the government to make a shift towards working as partners in development. Although on the one hand government wants to control the functioning of NGOs, realistically it needs NGOs to perform the function that they are unable to. It is argued that if a government is not able to make available all the services necessary in the fields of welfare, development, local government and economic growth, it ought to make use of NGOs to carry out these functions (Reddy:2005). NGOs therefore have a very crucial role to play as partners of government in the development process. In order for the NGOs and government to complement each other, the political hegemony of the regime must be weakened. In that case, the NGOs will be willing and able to engage into more adversarial confrontation with the state, thereby creating a better relationship between the institutions. Narayan (1997) argues that social capital builds up as a result of all actors entrusting themselves to dialogue based on shared understanding of common goals. By negotiating on the common goals, NGOs will have a better chance in influencing policy and laws that promote human rights. Newman, (2001) argues that building a better relationship with government, instead of keeping stringently to the independent status, can lead to a perception that both institutions complement each other in the working of the society and possibly will make the government feel at ease in contracting NGOs to provide services they usually provide. On the other hand however, there is also a need for a proper regulatory framework to facilitate NGO independence to a certain extent thereby creating a workable balance.

NGOs in Zimbabwe and the world at large are playing a major role in pushing for sustainable development at the international level. The aim being to empower ordinary people to take charge of their lives, to make communities more responsible for their development, and to make government listen to their people (Newman: 2001). Sustainable development, according to the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the capability of future generations to meet their own needs. This means that to achieve sustainable development there is need for a change of attitude of all the actors involved, working together to maintain their own sustainability. The Government and all sectors of the community must work hand in hand in order to achieve a sustainable future. NGOs are a very crucial

component of this undertaking because they command wider access to foreign aid than the respective governments where they operate as they are easier heard by international development and donor agencies.

13 450 words

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Appendix A (questions for the NGO representative)

1. How long have your NGO been operating in Zimbabwe?

2. What is the nature of the work you do and who are the main beneficiaries?

3. What is the nature of your relationship with the government?

4. What are your major sources of funds? (International, regional or national?)

5. What is the nature of your relationship with other NGOs?

6. I understand there have been some laws/policies introduced by the government affecting working of NGOs, what were/are the implications of these laws/policies being passed to your operations in Zimbabwe?

7. What are the major challenges you have been facing in your operations?

8. Do you think some of these challenges can be addressed if the government change their laws and policies regarding the operation of NGO?

9. How do you deal with challenges emanating from the political instability?

10. What do you think should be done to improve promotion and protection of human rights in areas you have been working on?

Appendix B (questions for the beneficiaries)

1. What are the major problems you face as a community?

2. What have been the NGO doing to help with those problems?

3. How long have you known the NGO?

4. How long have you been benefiting from the NGO?

5. Has there been any change in your benefits from the NGO since it started operating?

6. What is the nature of your relationship with the NGO?