Chapter 2

UNEMPLOYMENT AND CONFLICT IN ZIMBABWE: AN ANALYSIS AND RESOLUTION

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“Subsequently, unemployment has led to poverty and conflicts in society which have also had negative downstream effects”, Dodo and Dodo, 2014.
Overview
Just like most developing economies the world over, Zimbabwe is in a state of transition from near death to recovery. During this phase, it is expected that the economy recovers and be able to create employment for most of its needy citizens. Presently, Zimbabwe’s unemployment rate stands at over 85% and literacy rate at over 92% despite the census report’s assertion that employment rate stands at over 89%. While there is talk and policy on paper regarding black indigenous economic empowerment, there has also been an influx of immigrants who have along the way grabbed some of the empowerment opportunities much to the disappointment of local citizens. It is this ‘disappointment’ that has motivated this study which endeavours to analyse the relationship between unemployment and potential conflict in Zimbabwe. The discussion is a product of an intensive desk research which unravelled various policy papers including the 2004 Zimbabwe Labour Force Survey (LFS) and archival literature using constant comparison method. The study established that while poverty may lead to conflicts, there should be other influences supporting it. However, in respect to Zimbabwe, the hypothesis may not really manifest due to the following factors amongst others; lack of a willing
tool, lack of a culture of violence, levels of literacy and economic empowerment and tolerance driven by ‘unhu’.

**Introduction**

Zimbabwe has been undergoing a very long phase of economic hardships and suffering while experiencing the least of democratic systems possible. This study is a follow up to a previously published research on unemployment and insurgency in Zimbabwe. However, unlike the previous study which focused on youth, this one focuses on the general population in Zimbabwe.

The study is motivated by various arguments by various scholars who believe that poverty and in some cases, deprivation lead to conflicts, chief amongst them being the Relative Deprivation which argues that people become rebellious when they see an incongruity between what they believe they are supposed to benefit and their actual benefit. While this discussion may have some reservations on that argument, various cases have been presented to buttress the poverty/inequality/violence hypothesis; the Casamance conflict in Senegal (Humphreys, 2003), the 1970s Maitatsine riots of Nigeria, the Kikuyu/Masai-land conflict of the 1960s, and the Mozambican civil war of 1975 (Weinstein and Francisco, 2003). The study also proffers the view that in some of these poverty-induced conflicts, there will be
few individuals in need of power and wealth who then coerce innocent and defenceless civilians to join the campaigns. However, the study focuses on unemployment in Zimbabwe and the prospects of a conflict with a view to crafting a possible solution. The study is also forced to develop interest in this particular area largely because of the fact that Zimbabwe boasts of over 92% literacy rate, Zimbabwe once boasted as the industrial hub of southern Africa second to south Africa, Zimbabwe once played the bread basket role within the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), that almost all the prominent industries in Zimbabwe are shutting down in the people’s faces and that immigrants are finding it easy to prosper courtesy of the Zimbabwe indigenous economic empowerment policies while Zimbabweans are struggling.

**Background**

Unemployment and underemployment in Zimbabwe remains a major challenge. Zimbabweans have ambitions to become active people and participate in their countries’ growth. They demand more rights, more prospects and for their opinions to be recognized. Since the imposition of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme in 1991, the unilateral payment of former freedom fighters in 1997, Zimbabwe’s participation in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo,
unregulated land invasions and the imposition of targeted sanctions, Zimbabwe’s economy has never been the same. Poverty, hunger, unemployment, crime, diseases, migration, and several other ills have characterized Zimbabwe and its people and yet the same country is awash with various natural resources that could turn it into a world jewel and economic hub.

Zimbabwe has various policies, initiatives and laws which seek to arm and protect indigenous people in various economic fronts. However, for some time, Zimbabweans have languished in poverty; working for immigrants and playing second fiddle while most of the immigrants control the bigger chunk of the economy. Some of the economic policies have not been used to safeguard the interests of the locals like the 2007 Indigenous Economic and Empowerment Act which clearly preserves some sectors for the locals. Unfortunately, that has not happened as goal posts continue to be moved unilaterally. Unemployment in Zimbabwe also comes at a time when most Zimbabweans fall within the literate category and yet cannot get formal jobs.

Culturally and socially in Zimbabwe, one is expected to seek and get employed as soon as he/she attains some
academic or professional qualification. However, that has not been possible. Compounded by the fact that most immigrant are doing well, anger, impatience and hate for the foreigners begins to boil up in the locals in a manner reminiscent of the South African xenophobic attacks that were experienced from 2008 till this day. While unemployment is affecting Zimbabweans across the divide, the impact on the youth is soon becoming a worry to the safety and security of the people given the trend that was witnessed in North Africa over graduate joblessness and in South Africa over immigrants’ sustenance. Therefore, the study endeavours to look at the scourge of unemployment in Zimbabwe with a view to finding a nexus with conflict.

Methodology
The study following up on a previous action research was conducted through formal interviews with 5 key informants in collaboration with a desk approach whereby policy documents, the 2004 Zimbabwe Labour Force Survey (LFS) and archival literature were analysed using Constant Comparison method which created subjects across texts before they were consistently coded manually. Deliberately, literature review stretched from year 2000 when the crisis started up till 2013.
Education system
After Zimbabwe gained its independence from colonial rule in April 1980, the majority have witnessed unbelievable developments in school expansion, vocational skills training, teacher training, and resource improvement. This has resulted in the Zimbabwean levels of literacy becoming the highest in Africa at 92% as at 2012/13 (Coltart, 2012).

Zimbabwe's education system is made up of 7 years of primary and 6 years of secondary school before students can enter into university which also normally takes from 3 to 5 years duration. The seven years of primary school culminates in four nationally-set examinations in Mathematics, English, Shona or Ndebele and Content (a combination of sciences and social sciences). Secondary School period also consists of three levels: Zimbabwe Junior Certificate (ZJC) which is made up of Forms I and II; Ordinary level (O) which is made up of Forms III and IV; and Advanced level (A) which has the following Forms V and VI. The Core Curriculum of ZJC comprises the following subjects amongst others: English, Shona or Ndebele, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, Bible Knowledge, and a Practical Subject; Food and Nutrition, Fashion and Fabrics, Woodwork, Agriculture, Metalwork, Technical Drawing or Computer studies.
However, the precise number of subjects and the specific subjects depend on the resourcefulness of the school and its location amongst other factors. At Ordinary level, students are generally encouraged to attempt not more than 12 subjects while at Advanced level, 3 subjects are mandatory. Most of these subjects are drawn from the following: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Further Mathematics, Management of Business/Business Studies, Economics, Accounts, Computer Science, English Literature, Geography, Shona/Ndebele Language and Literature, Divinity, History, French, Art, Music and Woodwork, Metalwork, Agriculture, Technical Drawing, Fashion & Fabrics, Food & Nutrition.

After 2002, the Zimbabwean government established Zimbabwe Schools Examinations Council (ZIMSEC) which is responsible for the administration of all local schools’ examinations taking over from the previous authority; University of Cambridge International Examination (GCE) system. The system had to be moved from Cambridge following a political and diplomatic stand-off following the 2000 land invasions which were immediately followed by economic smart sanctions on some Zimbabwean personalities. However, some individuals still sit for Cambridge examinations, which are generally considered
expensive though of international standards and repute. What must be realized is that following the establishment of ZIMSEC, the system has been characterized by corruption, fraud and shoddy work so much so that certificates have been finding means to people who would not have written examinations. From 2007 up till 2009, ZIMSEC failed to administer examinations as over 8000 schools were closed owing to an economic crisis (Dodo et al, 2014) while over 90000 teachers were not attending classes and textbook to pupil ratios had fallen to an average of 1:15. In the entire Education ministry, according to the relevant Minister Coltart (2012), during the economic crisis era, there were no operational Education Management and Information Systems (EMIS) and no correct statistics since 2006. This has seen the industry and most tertiary institutions refusing to recognize schools’ graduates who were produced during this era. This has seriously affected the quality and credibility of the Zimbabwean education system.

Social culture
The Zimbabwean social culture is generally characterized by hard work and enterprise. It is within the nature of things Zimbabwean that some systematic path is followed from birth till ones’ death; skills acquisition, practice, employment, family-hood, growth and prosperity and retirement. Traditionally, within the
Zimbabweans; Shona, Ndebele and other minority groups, the concept of ‘unhu’ defines how people relate with each other and with the surrounding nature. This ‘unhu’ and several other social expectations then force people to want to work and follow some lifestyle which may be emulated by the entire community before creation of one’s social status.

After attending education in Zimbabwe for an average of 11 years, one expects to secure a decent job that is able to provide a normal life. However, with the situation in Zimbabwe where there are 14 internationally rated universities and several other tertiary institutions and with literacy levels hovering around 92% (Zimstats, 2012), almost everyone would want a job, a descent one for that matter. Therefore, the concerns about employment are not so much about people’s desire to work but rather, social pressure to seek work so that the entire family’s life is transformed for the better. It is this pressure again which raises levels of unemployment in most economies, Zimbabwe included. Failure to secure the desired job and being laughed at in society becomes a cause of conflict.

**Unemployment in Zimbabwe**

There is no doubt that Zimbabwe is facing a problem of inescapable unemployment especially amongst the youth.
Yet there is no agreement on the exact statistics of youth unemployment (Dodo, 2012). The same applies to disaggregated data on the nature of this youth unemployment. At independence in 1980, Zimbabwean labour was comparatively unskilled, with the wage distribution tilted against them while unemployment among blacks was close to 10% (Ncube, 2000). It is expected that the national figures of youth unemployment also includes graduate joblessness since most university and tertiary college graduates fit within the 15-39 year age bracket. However, officially, the Zimbabwean government argues that unemployment figures stagger between 15% and 17% as most of the people are somehow engaged in some work which pays at the end of the day. This argument does not however consider the following factors; levels of income, levels of education vis-a-vis the nature of work and whether the type of work is taxable or not. While the general unemployment in Zimbabwe stands at over 85%, youth unemployment stands at over 70% (ILO 2006, Dodo, 2012).

According to CSO (2006: 27), unemployment ‘refers to the population age 15 years and above who during the seven day reference period, did not work and had no job or business to go back to, but who were available for
work’. The CSO definition also expects that those without a job and are available for work actively look for work. The definition also stipulates that an unemployed person who may be engaged in some activity providing services and goods for at least one hour is deemed employed. In short, the argument here is presenting the following key factors: ‘without work’, ‘currently available for work’, and ‘seeking work’. This definition simply tells that there is no unemployment in Zimbabwe as there may not be people actively looking for work. The simple reason being that there are no places to look for that work as most of the industries and workplaces have long shut down. Besides, the few available industries including jobs in government pay paltry that none of the informally employed would want to secure them. In Zimbabwe, an average graduate selling talk-time in street earns an average of US$20-28 a day (US$868/month) compared to US$480/month remuneration paid by government and most factories.

Globally, youth unemployment has of late become a security issue following the Arab Springs that are connected to the anxiety amongst the unemployed youth and graduates in countries like Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt amongst others (ILO, 2011). However, like in several other developing economies, Zimbabwe has not
deliberately come up with a clear policy meant to address this scourge. Some scholars have attributed this laxity to lack of resources rather than arrogance. According to some participants, it was revealed that young women, especially single mothers, were more susceptible to joblessness, underemployment, discrimination and sexual harassment. The same participants hailed Zimbabwe for leading in ensuring that the question about ethnicity in employment and economic sectors was never accommodated. This is contrary to situations in other countries where such resources and opportunities are availed along ethnic lines.

There are other agencies in Zimbabwe like the Zimbabwe Youth Council (ZYC), Ministry of Youth, Empowerment and Indigenisation and individual political movements which have crafted various papers on possible employment creation. However, most of these initiatives have not yielded much owing to lack of political will, conflict of interests and lack of economic resources amongst others. According to the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (Zimstats) (2012), at least 3,7 million Zimbabweans are involved in informal sector activities with women making up 55%. From the Zimbabwe’s 13 061 239 people, the economically active
group staggers at 68.8% while the inactive group stood at 32.5% as at 2013 (ibid).

Unemployment in Zimbabwe has been driven by various factors; some being described as political, economic and social while others are considered self-made from poor governance. However, most of the factors point to the fact that the education curriculum and the needs of the industry may not be in tandem while others attribute the problem to a shrinking economy which has failed to accommodate all needy youth and graduates. According to a study by Chingarande and Guduza (2011), some of the causes of unemployment in Zimbabwe were the incompatibility between the curriculum and the needs of the industry thus leaving graduates’ skills irrelevant to the needs of the nation, and the shrinking economy failing to absorb all the youth. From an international relations and governance perspective, it is argued that unemployment in Zimbabwe has been influenced by poor investment policies citing the 2007 Economic and Indigenisation Act, lack of democracy citing the continued hold on power by a failed regime, bad governance which includes corruption, lawlessness and lack of property rights and an undefined international policy regarding international investments and targeted economic sanctions.
There is also an argument that unemployment has been perpetuated by the carelessness of the leadership and its dishonest approach, leading to a culture of retaining power and financial misuse instead of channeling it towards developing the economy. In other instances, joblessness is usually triggered by urban migration that usually takes place before the industrial growth required to employ those migrants (ILO, 2012). Some schools of thought proffered by some participants argued that Zimbabweans were more susceptible to unjust treatment in the workplace because they are desperate for formal employment.

**Poverty**
Since the early 2000s, the economic situation in Zimbabwe deteriorated to unprecedented levels where most of the working class people and the rest of the ordinary citizens were rendered destitute till they resorted to finding better pastures across the borders especially in South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Mozambique and other destinations. For those that were in employment, remuneration had become valueless owing to the astronomically shooting levels of inflation. In other words, almost every household in Zimbabwe was characterized by poverty and hunger. It may honestly be
unfair discussing poverty and several other challenges in Zimbabwe without mentioning the International Monetary Fund (IMF)/World Bank (WB) imposed Economic Structural Adjustment Programme which was adopted by Harare in 1991. The effects of this programme were extreme and devastating as they left almost the entire industry closed and hopeless (Bond and Dor, 2003). Several other African governments in the late 1980s and early 1990s were victims of this prescription.

The concept of poverty is understood differently in various forums. However, Bjorn (2002) developed five classifications; administrative, relative, consensual, contextual and absolute poverty. According to Bjorn (2002), administrative poverty is that which results from the state’s failure to provide to eligible beneficiaries who may be unemployed or aged while consensual poverty rests on the opinions of what the community believes to be lower than basic provisions. Contextual poverty is grounded on a contrast of poverty to the social, economic and cultural ranks of a specific society. On the other hand, absolute poverty arises when people live in a state of scarcity due to inadequate earnings while relative poverty is viewed from a comparative point of view (Ibid). Poverty is also understood culturally, contextually
and multidimensionality. However, the Poverty Assessment Study Survey of 2003 (PASS II) conducted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare defined unemployment as ‘including the frequently unemployed, those in the informal sector not by choice, the very poor and the poor communal and resettlement farmers, very poor and poor unpaid family workers, very poor and poor in the informal economy and the very poor and poor engaged in public works’ (ZiNEPF, 2009: 2). With this definition, the rate of structural unemployment in Zimbabwe rises to nearly the right levels of over 85% contrary to ZimStats figures of 15% (ZimStats, 2012). Soon after the land reform programme in the early 2000s, structural unemployment was higher for females hovering over 70% and males at 56% (ZiNEPF, 2009). However, with the 2007-2009 economic melt-down, structural unemployment for males has also risen to over 80% since most of the previously employed males have since lost their jobs and are into informal business. It has been realized by those in the informal sector that the informal business has no job security that bread-winners are able to plan for a reasonable period without getting stressed up. Besides, there is no pension and the entrepreneurs may not be able to access capital from the lending institutions for development and growth.
Conflict
This is a situation when different parties fail to see things from a common perspective. In other words, there will be contradicting goals and perceptions. Conflicts occur in various situations and are a common phenomenon which characterize societies the world over. In some circles, it is actually argued that conflicts are a necessity that drives societies. Galtung (1996) posited that generally conflicts are caused by attitudes, behaviours and contradictions. However, in Zimbabwe and several other African states, conflicts are caused by different influences; the need for power, scarce resources, criminal tendencies, religious reasons, selfishness, cruelty, and poverty amongst others.

Conflicts are experienced in different forms and severity and the above is dependent on the following amongst others; duration of the conflict, primary parties involved, types of weaponry, culture of violence, ideological/religious motivation, gravity of hostility, availability of fuelling resources, state governance system and the nature of propaganda media available. It has been argued by other scholars that conflicts may be caused by poverty as well. However, in this discussion, we choose to differ and the argument will be proffered in detail later in the discussion. What may be necessary to highlight is that conflicts have often negatively impacted
on economies and employment creation in most countries.

A sketch survey has shown that some of the conflicts that were experienced in Africa seriously devastated economic and physical infrastructure so much so that there were no industries and workplaces for formal employment. Cases in point include a civil war that was waged in Mozambique and left thousands of people jobless, the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo also left millions of potential workers in the bush and poverty-stricken while the Lord Resistance Army in the northern part of Uganda has also led to serious under-development of the region as people cannot engage in meaningful agriculture and other productive work. Similarly, wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s also meant that people could not engage in any formal developmental work thus bringing poverty, hunger and diseases. The newly established South Sudan has also suffered the same fate. Ever since the creation of this state and the subsequent declaration of a civil war, the economy and the social systems; education, health and family units have been going down while in the neighbouring Somalia, a 15 year old civil war has seen the dilapidation of almost the entire economic infrastructure. Resultantly, there has been an acute
poverty, hunger and disease epidemic and children’s education has been affected as well. Back in Zimbabwe, Matabeleland region could not experience development during the 1980s as it was under a military insurgency. During the entire 7 year insurgency era, it is reported that over 20,000 people were killed (Dodo, 2010), investment confidence lost and other vital installations broken down. As a result, thousands of Ndebele and other moderate Shona people crossed into South Africa for safety and employment.

**National employment initiatives**

There is need to recognize that productive employment and decent work, for the youth and graduates, cannot be accomplished through disjointed and isolated interventions. Instead, this entails continued, determined and intensive efforts by all stakeholders, especially those most affected: youth, women and the disabled.

It must also be realized that Zimbabwe does not exist in isolation of the rest of the global economy. Has it tries to fit into the main world economic system and political dynamics, it has to be guided by several of the global and regional commitments like the following: UN Millennium Declaration of 2000, UN resolution on promoting youth employment of 2002, UN resolution on youth policies and programmes of 2004; all domesticated
through the Ouagadougou Declaration of 2004 and the 93rd International Labour Conference resolutions on youth employment of 2005 and the International Labour Organisation’s (ILO) Decent Work Agenda amongst others. In that regard, the Zimbabwe government crafted a National Employment Policy framework which intends to make available the necessary articulate and harmonized approach that summarises complementing policies on dual perspectives; specific intercessions to help the un/under-employed overcome exact obstacles to their access into the labour market and a combined approach for growth and advancement of morally standard and fruitful employment. The framework was also established following a realization of a failure especially without a clear employment policy where economic and social objectives were unified deliberately into the growth matrix, approaches and programmes taken to deal with un/under-employment and poverty reduction (ZiNEPF, 2009).

The national employment initiative is strongly expected to acknowledge that formal employment plays an intermediating role between growth and poverty reduction. However, for growth to be unbiased and contribute in the direction of maintainable poverty reduction, it must be facilitated through policies that
reinforce the capabilities and generate prospects for poor people so that they too can add towards, and profit from the growth process. Anything short of this and many more positives is likely to lead to an informalised economy which has many disadvantages like the following:

- Informal business operators are non-taxable thus weakening national revenue collection base.
- No clear and coherent national data. Informal operators are difficult to register because of their high mobility and inconsistency.
- Promotion of illegality and corruption. Within this sector, there is a lot of illegal and corrupt operation of business as people try to maximize their profitability. Besides, in a corrupt economy, operational costs tend to rise as every head within the chain has to be ‘greased’.
- Non-adherence to constitutionalism. The concept of following strictly the country’s constitutional laws and policies falls out as people try to make ends meet. Besides, government agencies also fail to stick to the written policies and laws as they work towards achievement of the people’s desires.
- Fertile ground for conflicts of all forms. Informalised economies are usually characterized
by conflicts as operators seek to control and access valuable resources.

- Conducive breeding arena for an immoral youth. Because of lack of formal systems and regulations, the youth involved in such environments tend to behave anyhow in the process losing their cultural morals and discipline.

- Failure to fit into a global standard measure. Zimbabwe has often argued that unemployment stands at around 15%. Interestingly, it has failed to collect taxes as expected in an economy with employed people. This is a typical failure to fit into a global standard measure.

- Poverty stricken citizens. While people have activities that afford them food on a daily basis; life is not only about food but other aspects like health, education, security, entertainment and peace of mind. These are lacking in most Zimbabweans.

- Creation of barons and war-lords. In an informalised economy, it is difficult to regulate conduct let alone police operators. There have been allegations that some of the most prominent vending markets in Harare are controlled by a few individuals who collect revenue before they
remit a minute percentage to the responsible authorities. These individuals have in a sense created kingdoms.

- Creation of classes in society. An informal economy does not set standard measurements and labour regulations so much so that there are irregularities created. Some of the irregularities have led to distinctive classes where some people continue to suffer lack while others progress.

- Lack of formal channels for coordination and resource distribution. Most government policies and programmes have not been able to reach the intended people due to non-availability of legally recognized mechanisms and avenues through which they can be cascaded down to the recipients.

- The law frequently creates barriers to those who have no capital or personal connections. In an informal economy, most laws are either inapplicable or irrelevant due to the barriers that are usually deliberately and corruptly built to bar other participants from penetrating through to the other side.

It is also important to mention the fact that while most of the national initiatives have either failed or fallen by the
way side, there are some positives that have to be highlighted. The 2003 land reform programme which saw over 300 000 indigenous people benefitting from the land has made an impact on the economic arena. However, according to various relevant Ministries and economic departments and agencies, it has been very challenging coming up with clear and accurate data on the production and contributions made by this new sector on the general national economy. This is attributed to the haphazardness in which some records are kept by some individuals as they seek to cover illicit and corrupt dealings and the informality of the economy in general. What is clear with this sector unlike other initiatives is that most of the beneficiaries were drawn from the people who really wanted land and had endured the challenges that accompanied the programme especially from year 2000 up till 2003 when the exercise was first formalized through an Act of Parliament.

**Effects of unemployment in Zimbabwe**

Considering that employment is reliant on growth, all aspects that have a bearing on growth eventually impact employment generation. It is disturbing that this condition has not been satisfied even prior to the start of the crisis under discussion as growth had already dropped to a very low level, suggesting a serious feature of employment formation and poverty decline. It is this
decline in employment that the discussion attempts to focus and understand the ultimate effects of un/under-employment in Zimbabwe.

Unemployment has been found to be prevalent among the youth in Zimbabwe who are now developing serious psychological effects due to their idleness against a backdrop of having attended college and passed. According to Lith (2007) unemployment has a well-researched adverse effect on psychosocial well-being caused by joblessness. Therefore, employment has an important responsibility in upholding psychological wellbeing: the financial self-sufficiency which it affords is fundamental to describing social position. Public recognition of young males as men may demand the capacity to start and support a family.

It has been noted from the experiences in North Africa that extended joblessness ordinarily ends up in some form of social disease typically mirrored by an increased rate of crime and violent protests. Joblessness has been seen to generate disgruntlement against the state so much so that any minor provoking subject could activate vicious protests and social strife typical of the 2010 Tunisia, 2011 Egypt, and 2011 Syria amongst others. In Zimbabwe, family disintegration is another social result of joblessness. When the head of a family is rendered
jobless, the only alternative would be to seek better pastures across the borders where for years the partners do not meet eventually resulting in the breakage of some families. This was typically experienced in Zimbabwe from year 2000 when the economy went into a depression. In some cases, families have had to break simply out of poverty as family heads failed to provide the basics leading to the wife disserting her family or vice-versa. Some of the effects of joblessness in Zimbabwe have been indulgence in extreme intake of cheap quality and toxic alcohol, drug abuse, violence and petty crime or, in the case of females, engaging in prostitution for survival.

**Stop-gap measure for idle youths**

Previous studies have indicated that Africa has an active youth population which has proved its capabilities and strength through its participation in some recorded insurgency cases, criminal escapades and several other productive efforts. The Zimbabwean liberation war was largely waged by the youth who had either left school or had failed to secure employment, (Bhebhe, 1999). Reports have also shown that several other wars elsewhere are supported by these youth mostly in their adolescence periods.
I have argued before in various publications and conferences that most idle youth in Zimbabwe have resorted to seeking shelter in other economies around as they have either failed to secure appropriate jobs or failed to resolve their challenges locally. It has been argued that some of the options considered by the youth include being trafficked to other economies, refuge in neighbouring economies and simple resignation locally where they have exposed themselves to potential abuse by political vultures. Most of these youth have resorted to imported spirits or intoxicants as some of the solutions to their economic challenges. These intoxicants have the capacity to take consumers into drunken stupor within minutes and have a disturbing effect on people’s health, including swollen feet, laziness and loss of memory. Draman (2003) interestingly looks at this ‘crisis narrative’ of the intensity of youth and unemployed young graduates in African cities as an essential constituency of their communities forming the informal sector, without which most African economies would fold. This view is different from seeing them as a threat to society as advocated by Kaplan (1994).

**Conflicts in society**

Most societies in Zimbabwe have experienced various challenges at one point or another due to either economic or political movements. Some of these challenges have
often cascaded down to the grassroots person thus affecting daily lives and often developing into perennial conflicts. In the case of Zimbabwe, there have been various conflicts which either impacted heavily on the youth and unemployed graduates or were perpetrated by the same constituencies.

It is appreciated that after experiencing conflicts, there are very high chances of transformation into violence where lives may be either lost or maimed. Violence is explainable by economic or non-economic influences, or their blends depend on the form of violence. Contextually, conflict is any activity that is capable of disturbing development, peace and stability in any system while violence is an act of inflicting terror, pain and killing through any means possible and during the process, disrupting peace, stability and development. What must be noted is that there can be a conflict which is non-violent but there cannot be violence in a non-conflict situation. According to Justino (2006), violent conflicts have a multidimensional occurrence, sometimes covering a variety of intensities of violence from demonstrations to full military war.

Various schools of thought have been proffered on the possible causes of conflicts and poverty the world-over. However, here we argue that it is a complex puzzle as
poverty leads to wars while the same wars may then worsen poverty. In this study, the complex puzzle creates a situation of poverty, hopelessness, collapse, devastation and human sufferings. Conflicts have resulted in high figures of deaths, immigrants and exiled people, physical damage and even state collapse thereby costing years of investment and development efforts (Verstegen, 2001).

To some extent, we wish to differ in this study on the belief and argument that has been widely presented by various scholars; Richards, 1996, Luckham et al, 2001, Beehner, n.d, Urdal, 2007, and Heinshson, 2010, that poverty leads to conflict. Instead, there are various factors that come into play like governance system, level of repression, level of economic empowerment, level of citizen naivety, experience in violence, willing organizer, alternative voice, and level of literacy and a general culture of violence. Our view is also shared by Justino (2006) and Ikejiaku (2012) that poverty may only cause conflict when other influences are existent. It is not a given. Our argument here derives from the economic and political crises that were experienced in Zimbabwe from year 2000 up till 2009 where the rate of inflation went as high as 131 million percentage points with completely empty grocery shops, no electricity, water and fuel and yet no-one raised his/her head. All some could do was to cross the borders as refugees leaving the governance
systems running. Actually, poverty alone is not likely to steer conflict as the poor usually lack voice and organization. It may be necessary to discuss some of the conflicts so that there may be some clarity.

The Zimbabwean youth are hired by different political parties to conduct campaigns which unfortunately do not involve explaining policies to the electorate but intimidating opponents and voters. They are given money and alcohol and are asked to travel round the constituencies disrupting meetings of rival parties and intimidating opposition voters. The youth terrorize innocent Zimbabweans, brutalise opposition supporters, force people to buy political party membership cards and have been implicated in politically motivated murders over the 32 years. During the drought and food shortages of 2002 and 2003, they played enforcers of government policy; attacking overcharging retailers, arresting people in possession of scarce commodities, confiscating goods and stopping opposition supporters from getting food aid. In several other cases, the youth have been reportedly on a spree of raping innocent and defenceless girls and women especially in the areas where ZANU PF party is dominant. In return for their services, they are rewarded with immunity from prosecution and with jobs in the security sector. The youth militia has therefore become
the government’s tool of choice for subduing any form of dissent.

The Zimbabwean society is always known for its love for peace and harmony. However, the young people are sometimes forced to lose their cultural and moral paths mainly because of poverty and joblessness. As a response to the above, they engage in crime so that they earn a living. Some may even engage in drug abuse, violence and hooliganism as a means of safeguarding their spaces; politically, socially and economically. In the case of Harare, the extreme that could be experienced is that inequality can only be a spring of social strain and low level conflict in the form of crime and prostitution and never full scale violence as projected by Atwood (2005).

**Impact of unemployment on conflicts**

Unemployment in Zimbabwe has forced people especially the youth and graduates to resort to anything that they believe made their day. One such option is informal sector which is but not recognized by the law, and that those who work within it writhe from an array of drawbacks that characterise this lack of legal recognition. One scholar, Luebker (2008) has rightly noted that the informal sector is not a new phenomenon in Zimbabwe having been embraced soon after independence in 1980 when people were exposed to small-scale income
generating businesses. This is in view of the fact that the contemporary commentators have presented a situation whereby the 2000s economic crisis did usher the concept in response to formal unemployment challenges.

What has also been established in the study is that Zimbabweans are so literate, tolerant, civilized, lenient, open-minded, cultured and educated that they may never rise up against any of the situations that have forced others elsewhere to rise up. In Zimbabwe, most people have been empowered in one way or another so much so that it becomes difficult to protest violently and especially destroying properties as the same properties; cars, shops, houses, bicycles and vending markets are owned by locals unlike in other economies where locals are sheer spectators. Like I always argue in my studies, I argue here again that unemployment and poverty only lead to violence only if other necessary conditions are available; level of citizen naivety, level of economic empowerment, experience in violence, willing organizer, alternative voice, level of repression, governance system, and level of literacy and a general culture of violence. It may then be not clear in the case of Zimbabwe whether these conditions are now available.
Policy response
Poverty alleviation policies and programmes are designed and implemented by both government and the donor community. The government is the responsible authority in as far as citizen and welfare administration are concerned while the donor community has the needed resources both financial and material so much so that it can determine the direction and pace in which development and welfare programmes are developed. The government of Zimbabwe has crafted policies and laws to deliberately empower and protect locals from unnecessary competition economically. However, some of the initiatives have lost steam along the way while others have been deliberately manipulated to benefit selected individuals in society.

As the donor community in collaboration with the people on the ground realized the areas that need attention and intervention, the mandate is given to the government to design provisional frameworks through which any interested part could intervene. The government should never fool itself into thinking that it can operate without other stakeholders like non-state actors, the international community, civil society institutions, and the ordinary men and women. The policy development approach
should never mistake tolerance and peace by Zimbabweans as naivety and docility.

**Recommendations**
The study, having looked at all the perspectives and arguments presented by both participants and reviewed literature, puts forward some recommendations which are believed to be part of the solution to the unemployment crisis in Zimbabwe. Some of the recommendations are as follows;

- Ensure effective implementation of policies on employment so that unnecessary immigrants do not hijack the benefits and opportunities at the expense of locals.
- Create a national organizing mechanism comprised of pertinent ministries, educational and training institutes, worker and employer groups, and the private sector to guarantee appropriate organization and incorporation of professional and academic programmes with the needs of the industry so that graduates are not rendered idle.
- Avail tax reprieve for employers who generate the highest numbers of jobs.
- Identify gifted and trained entrepreneurs at grassroots level to partake in the business incubation and mentorship schemes.
● Eradicate corrupt tendencies like nepotism, favouritism, and bribes through a deliberate national pronouncement especially by the highest political leadership.

● Training and education systems should gear themselves away from informal entrepreneurial spirit. Rather, the economy should re-invent itself into a formal system so that it fits into the international economic and employment standards.

● Develop incentives for employers who engage young people as interns to encourage more formal work related exposures.

● Review and improve international relations with the capitalist nations so that there may be investment.

● Given the levels of polarization and hostility within the society especially between the unemployed youth and graduates and some foreign nationals and between the youth and some political leaders, there is need for some deliberate conflict resolution policy at the lowest level possible. This calls for the establishment of local peace advocates which this presentation calls ‘peavocates’. ‘Peavocates’ will be responsible for the identification of potential conflicts, interested
stakeholders, and areas of possible eruption before they recommend possible remedies and implementation of peace projects on the ground. This is in view of the conflict resolution theory which views youth as either drivers of conflict or as peace advocates.

**Conclusion**

Unemployment matters and challenges in Zimbabwe are not a new subject of research and discussion. Several scholars and policy makers have made noise about this in the past and libraries are full of material on the same subject matter. In an effort to add on the body of knowledge, the study touched on a variety of aspects ranging from the nature of Zimbabwean education and curricula, societal expectations from adults who are supposed to be employed, unemployment and its effects to both humanity and conflicts, poverty and its relationship with conflicts, conflicts and related effects, unemployed young people options in society, employment initiatives and policy responses to the question of unemployment. It was established in the study that Zimbabwe has a very high literacy rate and yet the curricula may not be suitable for such an ailing economy. The study noted that some of the actions by the young graduates are a result of pressure from the society
which expects them to be working and transforming their families’ lives soon after college.

It was also pointed out in the study that unemployment in Zimbabwe has become a scourge threatening peace, security and development. Unemployment has also been noted to have been a result of various factors; political economic, social and policy-related. Subsequently, unemployment has led to poverty and conflicts in society which have also had negative down-stream effects. Various constituencies in society have had to react differently to the challenge of unemployment; positively and negatively. The study concluded by touching on the efforts and initiatives by government in its endeavor to resolve the unemployment challenges in Zimbabwe. It was generally noted that while unemployment might have reached near climax, the nature of Zimbabweans’ culture and morality may be far from instigating violence and instability. It is in the nature of Zimbabweans that peace and tolerance are prioritized always.