

Political Violence: Major Socio-Political Consequence of Urban Youth Unemployment in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Urban youth unemployment in Zimbabwe is a worrisome socio-economic and political pandemic that portends serious challenges facing the political economy of the country. Like other countries in Sub Saharan Zimbabwe is currently facing demographic challenges with most of its young people aged between 15 and 24 failing to secure employment. The objective of this study is to analyze the socio-political consequences of urban youth unemployment in Zimbabwe with political violence as a major one. Data was collected through the use of national reports, non-governmental organizations (NGO) reports, books, journal articles and internet. Findings indicate that one of the major effects of urban youth unemployment in Zimbabwe is political violence. High rate of urban youth unemployment in Zimbabwe has had serious political implications in the past decade. Youths out of employment have been the agents of political violence in the country. Unemployed youths are often recruited by political parties such as Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) and others to operate as youth militia members. They have been and are responsible for torturing, intimidating and killing civilians who do not share their political affiliations.

Keywords: urban youth unemployment, political violence, Zimbabwe

Introduction

Background

Zimbabwean politics for the past decade have been characterized by widespread politically orchestrated violence especially during election times.

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Youth militias have been seen as the major perpetrators of political violence. Demographically, youth constitute majority of the population in Zimbabwe. Young people aged 15-29 years are a noticeable segment of the population in urban areas in Zimbabwe. Majority of these youths in urban areas are failing to secure employment. About 80 % of urban youths are unemployed. The Zimbabwe Poverty Assessment study (1995) revealed that the urban youth have the highest unemployment rate among all the age groups in the labor force in Zimbabwe. More recent figures indicate that out of the country's 12 million people, only 480,000 were formally employed in 2008, down from 3.6 million in 2003 (The United Nations Office of the Coordination Humanitarian Affairs [UNOCHA], 2008). Employed urban youths are only a drop in the ocean of the 480 000 employed people in Zimbabwe. Politically sponsored violence has manifested as the major socio-political repercussions of urban youth unemployment.

Since Zimbabwe attained independence in 1980 the youth, during election periods, have been used as tools for politically motivated violence. They have been used to target other youths and their fellow community members. Power hungry political leaders have turned youth into political thugs for selfish political agendas (Newsday, November 2012). It was during the decade of long political and economic crisis that plagued Zimbabwe since 2000 that urban youth unemployment peaked. It is the very same epoch that saw the unprecedented increase in political violence in Zimbabwe. The increase in political violence since 2000 can be attributed to the emergency of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999 as a strong opposition political party challenging Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF). ZANU PF had never been strongly opposed since independence so the MDC emerged as a threat to regime survival. The then ZANU PF government turned to political violence as regime survival strategy to suppress the opposition. Urban youth out of work became the weapons of political violence. As counter-survival technique, the MDC also turned to youth out of work to recruit their militia. Since then Zimbabwe has been the battlefield of MDC militia against ZANU PF militia during election times.

Political leadership from both political parties are responsible for taking advantage of the situation of urban youth unemployment and incentivize unemployed youth to participate in political violence.

The current global crisis has exacerbated urban youth unemployment rate in Zimbabwe. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Africa as a whole has drop by roughly 26.7% in 2009, compared to 2008 (IMF Report). According to the African Development Bank, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of African States fell from an average of 5.6% during 2001 – 08 to 2.5% in 2009 (Newsday, November 2012). This has had disastrous economic and socio-political consequences on African states including Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe registered the lowest growth rate of 4, 4% in 2012 compared to the previous three years after the country adopted the multi-currency system. The growth rates for 2009, 2010 and 2011 were 5,4%, 9,6% and 10,6% respectively (Newsday, February 2013). The rate of urban youth unemployment has not changed despite peaking growth rate since the country adopted the multi-currency system. Urban youth continued to suffer owing to the global economic crisis. Jobs are still very scarce in Zimbabwe partly because of the global financial crisis that has crippled economies. Frustration and desperation has therefore made urban youth out of work vulnerable to political violence as they are given money, alcohol and drugs by politicians to act as their tools for violence.

Urban youth unemployment is the greatest challenge facing urban youth in Zimbabwe. The phenomenon is not new and not peculiar to Zimbabwe alone. However, the rate at which it has increased over the past decade in Zimbabwe is worrisome. Undoubtedly, urban youth unemployment emanates from economic hemorrhage and meltdown that befell Zimbabwe over the past decade. With the scourge of unemployment running rampant, many fallen into the trap of being pawns of political violence.

Statement of the Problem

Political violence manifests as the major socio-political consequence of urban youth unemployment in Zimbabwe. The proverb; “an idle person is the devil’s workshop” is particularly true for Zimbabwe’s urban unemployed youth who have become both the victims and perpetrators of politically motivated violence.

They have become the fertile ground for recruitment of youth militia by political parties in the country to participate in politically orchestrated violence especially during election times.

Youth militia groups and organizations in Zimbabwe are well known for torturing, intimidating and killing those with political views opposed to their respective political parties. Examples are Chipangano in Mbare, Harare and the Al Shabab styled organization in Kwekwe in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe. Over the past decade, the country has seen the proliferation of such youth militia organizations who unleash violence on the electorate. Suffice to say that political violence should not be blamed on the youth. Unemployment is what puts them at the mercy of power hungry politicians who incentivize them to participate in political violence. Political parties such as ZANU PF and the two MDC formations are the chief culprits which recruit militia from the pool of urban unemployed youth.

This study has reached the conclusion that political violence especially in election times is a major consequence of urban youth unemployment. As a result of urban unemployment in Zimbabwe, youth out of work who have no particular goal in mind are used to push the political agenda of political parties through violence. Urban unemployed youths have been turned into hooligans for violent political games played by political parties in Zimbabwe. It is not that urban unemployed youths are violent by nature. Their being perpetrators of political violence is a result of outright manipulation by political leaders who promise them rewards for doing dirty work on their behalf. Some youth out of work are even intimidated and conscripted into youth militia groups to torture and intimidate the electorate. After conscription, they are then deployed in various parts of the country to include rural areas where they intimidate people to support political parties they represent. Consequently, election times in the country have therefore been characterized by violent contest among unemployed youth across the political divide. Temperatures are high due to fear that even the upcoming watershed elections could be characterized by excessive sponsored violence unleashed by youth out of work.

Methodology

The study combined both qualitative and quantitative methods and analysis, but it is predominantly qualitative. Survey research was used to gather information for this study. There are ten provinces in Zimbabwe. To make sure that there is equal representation the researcher decided to select one biggest city or town per province.

In these cities informants were identified to lead the researcher to urban youths who perpetrated political violence. About one hundred youths were interviewed per province. The following cities and towns were selected; city of Harare in the Harare province, city of Kwekwe was in Midlands Province, city of Bulawayo in Bulawayo Province, city of Masvingo in Masvingo Province, city of Mutare in Manicaland Province, Bindura in Mashonaland Central, Chinhoyi in Mashonaland West, Marondera in Mashonaland East, Gwanda in Matebeleland South and Lupane in Matebeleland North.

However, the sensitivity of the topic of political violence limited the gathering of adequate information to a greater extent. Many people do not want to discuss about political violence especially with a stranger. The researcher ended up dwelling on undercover researcher which violates ethical considerations in research.

Snowball sampling which is a non-probability sampling method was used to gather data in every city or town per each province. The researcher identified informants who know urban youths who participate in political violence. The informants led to other informants and urban youths who perpetrate political violence. As a result the sample kept growing and about one hundred urban youths who have fallen to political violence victim as they were used as tools of political violence were interviewed. This method suited the study and worked perfectly well given that the researcher did not know the urban youths who participate and have participated in political violence.

Interviews were also employed in this study. The researcher used conversational interviews to interview key informant youths per selected city/town in every province. No predetermined questions were asked. More so, the use of questionnaires was utilized in this research. Open ended questions were asked to youths in a selected city or town. The respondents supplied their answers without being constrained by a fixed set of possible responses. Moreover, focus group discussions were used to gather data for this study. Using focus groups the researcher asked people about their perceptions and opinions in relation to political violence as a major socio-political consequence of urban youth unemployment. Questions were asked in an interactive group setting where participants were free to talk with other group members. Key informants were be used to come up with focus groups.

The study collected qualitative data from books, government reports, NGO and civil society organizations reports, magazines, journal articles and from the internet. Various reports on political violence and the involvement of urban youth in politically orchestrated violence were used to obtain the needed data.

Quantitative analysis was done thoroughly. Pictorial presentation of data was utilized.

Organization of the Paper

The first section of this paper looks at the background to urban youth unemployment and political violence in Zimbabwe. Second, the paper discusses conceptual and theoretical issues related to topic. This section is the basis of paper as it guides the whole paper. The third section analyses political violence as a major consequence of urban youth unemployment. Empirical presentation of data is done in this fourth section of the paper. Evidence of research, sources, qualitative and quantitative analysis of data also constitute the fourth section of the paper. The fifth section covers policy recommendations and the conclusion.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Theories have been propounded to explain the involvement of youth in organized violence. This study is informed by the youth bulge theory as well as the greedy and grievance perspectives. Youth bulge theory is one of the most recently developed theories of conflict and social-political unrest (Council on Foreign Relations). The two major proponents of the theory are political scientists Garry Fuller and Jack Goldstone. According to the theory youth bulges, combined with economic and social anomalies provide a foundation for violent conflicts (Fuller 1995, 151). In support of the youth bulge theory, Heinsohn (2003) argues that an excess in especially young adult male population predictably leads to social unrest, war and terrorism, as the "third and fourth sons" that find no prestigious positions in their existing societies rationalize their impetus to compete by political ideology. The above propositions provide an explanation for the phenomenon of political violence as a consequence of urban youth unemployment in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe has one of the largest youth bulges in Southern Africa. Statistics reveal that as of 2012, the largest youth bulge was found in Zimbabwe, which has a population structure with 56.57% between the ages of 15 and 29 (International Futures Forecast, 2012).

Furthermore, the youth bulge theory asserts the youth are associated with risk-taking, especially among males. The theory argues that youth bulges in developing countries are associated with higher unemployment resulting in a heightened risk of violence and political instability (Urdal 2006, 50). This is very true of the situation in Zimbabwe. Demographically, the youth have the largest population. Young people constitute about sixty seven percent of Zimbabwe's population. The larger part of this percentage is found in urban areas and unemployment is rampant among urban youths. Urban youth out of work in Zimbabwe are at very high risk of political violence as they are targeted by political leaders who give them incentives to unleash political violence on the electorate. A build-up youth bulge in Zimbabwe has provided fertile ground for recruitment and conscription of youth militia that participate in politically motivated violence during election times. As a result unemployment frustration urban youth end up taking the risk of indulging in political violence for beer, drugs and money.

According to the World Bank Report (2011), if a large cohort of young people cannot find employment and earn satisfactory income, the youth bulge will become a demographic bomb, because a large mass of frustrated youth is likely to become a potential source of social and political instability. Urban youth out of work are indeed a deadly time bomb in Zimbabwe. Urban youths have very high hopes of securing employment and become independent. In majority of cases this has been to no avail. Failure to find jobs means that they is no income yet young people have got needs and wants. They need cloths, food and other basics. They want entertainment and other social and economics necessities which can be accessed without money. Frustrated by failure to find jobs and lack of income, urban youth end up indulging in dangerous acts such as political led violence especially during election times. In Zimbabwe they have become a pool for recruitment as well as conscription of youth militia by political parties. Some get involved in political violence voluntarily just to ease their frustrations or to occupy themselves. Some are conscripted and forced to participate in political violence and they do it without their consent. This was especially the case in 2008 June run-off elections which were marred by excessive violence against the electorate. Some are incentivized to participate in political violence. They are promised large sums of money in turn to terrorize the electorate.

Or they are given beer, drugs and money as payoffs to intimidate, terrorize and kill people who do not share same political affiliations with them or their bosses who are political leaders.

The youth bulge theory is useful and relevant in explaining the phenomenon of urban youth unemployment in Zimbabwe and political violence as the consequence thereof. It posits that youth bulges combined with economic and social anomalies provide a foundation for violent conflicts in society. In Zimbabwe there is a large youth bulge of unemployed youth in urban areas. There is also a situation of economic instability that has emanated from the decade long political crisis that hit Zimbabwe. Politically, there is a lot of political bickering, tensions between political parties and power struggle. This is the situation in present day Zimbabwe since year 2000. A combination of urban youth unemployment, economic and political problems has provided a strong foundation for political violence in the country. Youth out of work are disgruntled by failure to find jobs and lack of income. Directly or indirectly, idleness forces them to take part in political violence. Directly, they volunteer and enjoy being agencies of political violence. Indirectly, they are forced to indulge in acts of political violence.

Echoing with the youth bulge theory, Goldstone (2001) is of the view that youth often play a prominent role in political violence and the existence of a "youth bulge" has been associated with times of political crisis. The above is true to a greater extent as has been observed in Zimbabwe. As a consequence of urban youth unemployment youth out of work in Zimbabwe have been and are seen playing a prominent role in political violence. They are the ones who lead other youths in perpetrating political violence in the country. Furthermore, they play an active role in intimidating, torturing and killing fellow citizens in politically motivated violence. This phenomenon is often observable in times of elections in Zimbabwe. Elections in Zimbabwe are associated with violence unleashed as a campaign strategy across the political divide. In essence, elections characterize more of a political crisis in the country. Unemployed youth have been and are always seen at the forefront of political violence in election times. In most cases, it has been observed that young males are often the main protagonists of political violence. Young females join youth militia groups largely as a result of conscription by their male counterparts. This has been observed in Mbare, Harare in the 2008 harmonized elections.

Another theory that provides explanation for political violence as a consequence of urban youth unemployment is the greed and grievance theory. Greed and grievance refer to the arguments put forward by scholars of conflict on the causes of civil war. The argument has been extended to other forms of violence. The same arguments can be extended to political violence as a consequence of urban youth unemployment in Zimbabwe. Greed is based on the argument that combatants in armed conflicts are motivated by a desire to better their situation, and perform an informal cost-benefit analysis in examining if the rewards of joining a rebellion are greater than not joining. Grievance is premised on the argument that people rebel over issues of identity such as ethnicity, religion, social class among others rather than over economic issues. Applied to the situation of urban youth unemployment and the major consequence thereof, political violence, both greed and grievance motivate urban youth out of work in Zimbabwe to participate in politically motivated violence. Greed motivates them in the sense that youth out of work are incentivized to take part in political violence. They are lure with money, drugs, beer and other resources. Some take part in political violence voluntarily knowing that they get some incentives from political leaders as payment. Some youth of work indulge in political violence out of greed to be in control power positions among fellow youths. Grievance motivates youth out of work in the sense that they are frustrated by joblessness and lack of income and as a result they turn to political violence hoping that if the political part they are inclined to wins the elections their situation of being unemployed would change. This is most common with urban unemployed youth inclined to opposition political parties in the country.

Scholars of the greed and grievance theory such as Keen (2000) elaborates on the economic incentives for participating in violent conflict and argues that there is more to violent conflict than simply "winning." The scholar talks of the economic incentives of violent conflicts in the context of both greed and grievance which he says are interconnected and work hand in glove. Keen's one of the examples of violent means to promote economic gain is pillaging, whether to gain resources or to supplement. He further asserts, another function of violence is extortion of money and other resources from people who can afford it so they can be spared violence inflicted upon them. The above is true of the nature of political violence in Zimbabwe where the urban unemployed youth are involved in acts of politically orchestrated violence for economic incentives.

Its either they get the incentives from their recruiters who are politicians or they go about intimidating fellow citizens and extort money and other resources from them. Some of the urban unemployed youth in Zimbabwe would travel to rural areas to intimidate and torture people and money, extort goats, cattle, sheep and chicken which they would eat at their night vigils. This was especially the case in the 2008 bloody harmonized elections. All such acts of political violence can be attributed to greed and grievance. The greed and grievance theory is therefore relevant in explaining political violence a major consequence of urban youth unemployment.

The greed and grievance theory posits that young impoverished people may both be considered a potential low-cost recruit and at the same time aggrieved individuals motivated by economic and political exclusion. As a result, those who recruit young people to use as tools in conflict know very well that this demographic group is not financially costly to maintain. In Zimbabwe politicians and political leaders who recruit youth for political violence purposes only provide them with drugs, beer and a few dollars for food. Majority of youth all over the world need beer and drugs in addition to food, shelter and clothes. Unemployment deprives them of beer and drugs that is why they end getting involved in crime, political violence and other dangerous acts. This is the situation with urban unemployed youth in Zimbabwe. The phenomenon of urban unemployment deprives them of alcohol, drugs and money to maintain their girlfriends. They end up being recruited by politicians at low cost as they are lured with alcohol, food, drugs and money to participate in political violence. As anticipated above, the mere existence of an extraordinary large pool of youth may lower the cost of recruitment since the opportunity cost for a young person is generally low (Collier 2000, 94). This is an assumption that hinges on the extent of alternative income-earning opportunities. If young people are left with no alternative but unemployment and poverty, they are more likely to join violent groups as an alternative way of generating income.

Discussion of Issues

Political violence on its own is a symptom of a greater problem and unless the root cause is addressed, it will continue to grow and will only get worse. In the Zimbabwean context, this paper has concluded that political violence is major socio-political consequence of urban youth unemployment. Violence begets violence and in order to break that chain government needs to set up structures and programmes that assist in keeping urban youth out of work occupied and out of trouble.

Failure to do so will lead to perpetual political violence by urban youth out of work in Zimbabwe. The abuse of young people during elections as they are forced to participate in political violence has been observed in Zimbabwe. They have been used to target other youths and their fellow Zimbabweans. Instead of the politicians guiding the young to be embodiments of positive energy, morality and diligence for national development, these misguided blood thirsty power-mongers turn them into political thugs for narrow political agendas.

The Minister of Youth, Indigenization and Empowerment Saviour Kasukuwere admitted that youth poverty is a major driver of political violence in Zimbabwe. Addressing the 'violence stand' in November 2011 the minister said, "...the youth are vulnerable to violence. We have seen in recent weeks the increasing number of incidences of violence. The reason is because many are idle and not employed. They have become vulnerable to the whims of cheap politicians who hope to gain support through violence" (newzimbabwe.com 2011). Undoubtedly, the youth premier's statement substantiates the key argument of this study that political violence is the major consequence of urban youth unemployment in Zimbabwe. Indeed idleness makes them vulnerable to violence as they are promised money by politicians in turn to indulge in political violence. This has been the order of the day during election times in Zimbabwe. The fact that the youth minister himself acknowledges unemployment as a major driver of political violence reinforces the argument that political violence is the major consequence of urban youth unemployment. The statement by the youth premier indicates that the problem of urban youth unemployment that the country is facing is known by government officials but they are not doing much to rectify the problem.

Research conducted in the ten provinces of the country indicates that political violence is a major consequence of urban youth unemployment in Zimbabwe. The researcher visited one big city per province to gather information for this study. Problems were faced due to the sensitivity of the topic of violence in Zimbabwe, but undercover information gathering helped the researcher to accomplish his research goals. Fieldwork confirmed that youth out of work are the ones who perpetrate political violence. Furthermore, the research has confirmed beyond reasonable doubt that idleness is the driving force behind youth participation in political led violence around election times.

The conclusion drawn from literature and fieldwork of this study is that the youth bulge in Zimbabwe provides both a motive and an opportunity for political violence in the country. The risk increases under times of political, economic and educational stress with the greater opportunities for political violence around election times. According to Urdal (2006), conflicts occur when the proportion of youth bulge exceeds 20% and the percentage of urban youth bulge in Zimbabwe exceeds this threshold. Going by Urdal's measurement, the urban youth bulge in Zimbabwe provides a near perfect explanation of political violence in the country. Direct observation overtime indicates that the risk of political violence by this urban youth bulge reaches the peak during periods of political stress such as election times.

The country is holding harmonized elections this year and signs and symptoms of politically orchestrated violence are already depicting. The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the Forum) report records acts of politically motivated violence in Unit O and L Chitungwiza a tributary town of Harare in February 2013. According to the reports, ZANU-PF youth militia assaulted a group of MDC youths who were carrying out civic education in Chitungwiza on 20 February 2013. To gather evidence the Forum has interviewed two female youths aged 18 and 26 who are currently receiving medical attention. The two respondents claim that they were indiscriminately assaulted by ZANU-PF armed youths and were told not to conduct any civic education in the area (NGO Forum Report, 2013). Furthermore, a publication by the politics news section of the *Newsday* on February 25, 2013 tells the tragedy of a 12-year-old son of an MDC-T parliamentary aspirant in Headlands in Harare who was burnt to ashes when a house he was sleeping in was allegedly petrol-bombed by ZANU PF youth militia.

Research conducted for this paper indicates that the youth bulge has become an immediate explanation for political violence in Zimbabwe. The existence of a youth bulge of urban unemployed youth provides opportunity for recruitment of these unemployed youth to commit acts of political violence. In other words this youth bulge actually increases the risk of more organized forms of political violence around election times. Part of the explanation is that large youth cohort reduces recruitment costs for youth militia organizations across the political divide. Furthermore, as frustrations mount young people who are unemployed and poverty stricken are more likely to join youth groups that participate in political violence. Unemployment as a socio-economic problem provides fertile ground for youth militia recruitment (Urdal 2006, 90).

One informant from Mbare in Harare whose name will not be revealed provided information of three university graduates whom she saw participating in political violence ahead of the June runoff elections in 2008 because of unemployment frustration. In her view, the three joined Chipangano, a youth militia organization in Mbare, due to frustration of not getting jobs since they graduated in 2006. The three were operating as strategists since they are educated, she elaborated. The above justifies Urdal's argument that prevailing unemployment amongst highly educated youth populations can cause frustration and grievances. High unemployment amongst the educated unemployed youth is the most destabilizing factor that leads to political violence by urban unemployed youth in Zimbabwe. This therefore serves as enough evidence to argue that political violence is a major consequence of urban youth unemployment in Zimbabwe.

Urban unemployed youth are the seeds of political violence. The existence of a large pool of youth out of work is a recipe for political violence. Research carried out indicates that idle young people both male and female are prone to taking risks evening that of participating in violent acts. They do that to compensate for their idleness. A respondent from Redcliff, a mining location in Kwekwe in the Midlands Province whose name will not be revealed confesses that he and his unemployed friends took part in political violence just to have something to do. In other words they did it preoccupy themselves. They are frustrated by joblessness and lack of income. Taking part in political violence provides some sort of relief to youth out of work. The above goes in line with the youth bulge theory. The youth bulge theory explains that a large cohort of youth especially among male is associated with risk taking. The research carried out in Kwekwe confirmed this.

Political parties in Zimbabwe have secret funding for financing unemployed youth to participate in acts of political violence. Part of the research carried out at human rights civil society organizations and NGOs suggests that political parties commit the atrocities of funding unemployed youth to indulge in politically motivated violent acts. Five respondents from human rights civil society organizations argue that political parties in the country are guilty of financial acts of political violence by youth out of work. Admittedly, political demagogues from political parties forming the inclusive government in the country are blaming each other for diverting state funds which should be used for national developments to finance rebel like youth who intimidate and torture the electorate ahead of the upcoming harmonized elections.

The MDCs accuse ZANU PF and the Chinese of clandestine dealings in Chiadzwa using illicit diamond money to create a war chest perpetrated by youth militia ahead of elections (Newsday, 19 March 2013). On the other hand, ZANU PF has been demonizing the MDC –T leader Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai as a “Western puppet” alleging his party is funded by Britain and its allies, particularly America to effect regime change (Newsday, March 19). All that being said, one can conclude that political parties in Zimbabwe commit atrocities of funding youth out of work, whom they use to kill, intimidate and torture the electorate ahead of elections.

Urban youth out of work who participate in political violence are like mercenaries. Mercenaries are hired to kill for money or other rewards (Oxford Advanced Dictionary of Current English 2009, 125). Unemployed youth are hired to intimidate, kill and force the electorate to vote for political parties they are aligned to. Research carried in Mutare, the capital city of Manicaland Province suggests that urban unemployed youth act as mercenaries. An unemployed youth who identified himself as Razor confessed that he participates in acts of political violence around election times for money and other material gains. According to him, politicians who hire him and other unemployed youth pay them handsomely that they could not resist the offers in their state of being unemployed. Razor confessed that they get money, clothes, beer and marijuana from their bosses. The respondent added that in his current state of being unemployed and depending on his parents he could not afford such things. Unemployment drives urban youth to act as mercenaries. Therefore, political violence is a major consequence of urban youth unemployment.

The above shows that youth are motivated to take part in political motivated violence by financial viability during violence times. Politicians sustain youth financially and materially. According to Stieglitz rebel movements are not motivated by power but financial viability. He posits that rebels are not motivated by lust for power but lust for money. The way rebels operate can be likened to the way urban youths operate in terms of their objectives, source of income, source of influence and the methodology of their operations. Both employ violent acts to coerce citizens to buy their ideas and causes. Judged by this, just with rebels lust for money and material things motivates urban youth to indulge in dangerous acts of violence. The biblical statement; ‘the love of money is the root of all evil’ is therefore true to a greater extent in the context of urban youth doing violence for money. Urban unemployed youth cannot resist money even if it comes for evil deeds like political violence.

The reason is they lack financial stability due unemployment. Had they have employment and income they could not be participating in political violence.

Participation of urban unemployed youth in political violence is more likely where committing acts of political violence involves a higher economic opportunity cost than being jobless. This echoes with the research by Collier and Hoeffler (2000, 2004), who used three 'proxies' to measure the opportunity cost of participating in violent conflicts. The first two proxies were mean income *per capita* (a population with high income may have more to lose from conflict). The second proxy will not be analyzed since it is not useful to phenomenon of political violence in Zimbabwe. According to Collier and Hoeffler, the third proxy indicator was the male secondary school enrolment rate. They argued that young males are the group from which rebels are most recruited, the number of years of secondary education affects earning potential, and therefore having more years of schooling is likely to affect the opportunity cost of participating in violent conflict. The above is correct of the Zimbabwean experience. Urban unemployed youth participate in political violence because of the opportunity cost associated with committing act of political violence. The first proxy indicator used by Collier and Hoeffler is reflective of what transpires in Zimbabwe. Unemployed youth participate in acts of political violence because they lack income. The above characterizes 'greed' as the main driver of political violence in Zimbabwe.

A population of employed youth in urban areas does not participate in acts of political violence because they have stable income. In fact they have a lot more to lose if they get involved in political violence. They are preoccupied with advancing their careers. Two respondents for Masvingo city in Masvingo Province who work at an Inscor food outlet argued that they have a lot more to lose if they get involved in political violence. They added that they are concentrating on their careers and look forward to be promoted to prestigious positions within their organizations. Asked if they would consider joining youth militia groups which commit acts of political violence had they not been employed they said a they cannot rule that out because human beings can do anything for money. One of them argued that money tempts and most of the time when push comes to shove one can accept money even for gravest criminal jobs. This suggests that unemployed youth commit political violence for the cost associated with it. Those in employment are reluctant to engage in political violence for fear of obstructing their careers.

According to Collier (2000), the grievance perspectives stress the relative deprivation and social, economic and political exclusion suffered by youth as a motivation for their engagement in violence. That is the case with urban unemployed youth in Zimbabwe. The explanation is that the structural exclusion and lack of opportunities faced by urban young people out of work in one way or the other block or prolong their transition to adulthood and can lead to serious frustration, disillusionment as well as their engagement in political violence. There is enough evidence that social and economic statuses required for adulthood are increasingly unattainable for most urban unemployed young people in Zimbabwe. Although the relative importance of factors that stall the transition to adulthood may vary from context to context, unemployment is the major structural factor that appears to underlie youth exclusion and lack of opportunity and is argued to increase the likelihood of urban youth engagement in political violence (DFID's Equity and Rights Report, 2009). The above holds much water given that youth are at the stage of development and transition. Unemployment appears to be the stumbling block to their transition thus generating frustration that forces them to engage in dangerous, life threatening and counterproductive activities.

Unemployment and lack of livelihood opportunities are push factors for urban youth involvement in political violence in Zimbabwe. Millions of young people in urban areas in Zimbabwe are unable to access economic opportunities. Without access to employment or livelihood opportunities, most young people cannot afford a house or a car, they cannot marry and their transition to adulthood is effectively blocked. Menial jobs with little prospect for advancement may also be a cause of youth frustration, embarrassment and social separation by these youth out of work. This study suggests that youth unemployment can lead to urban youth involvement in dubious activities such as political violence even if they offer little or no livelihood opportunities.

For urban unemployed youth participating in political violence is largely an economic activity. It should be noted that urban youth are socially and economically disadvantaged. As a result of unemployment, they face social exclusion. They are not recognized in society because they do not depict any form of social success. Success in Zimbabwe is not measured by the form of economic activity one is involved in. majority of these unemployed youth are educated, they have diplomas and degrees or they are educated to Ordinary Level as well as Advanced Level certificates.

However, failure to secure jobs means that they are not involved in any economic activity. Society does not ascribe their failure to secure jobs on the political economy of the country, it just, directly or indirectly, labels them failures.

In conjunction with the above, the situation is more detrimental for the male ones. After finishing school prospects for getting jobs and getting married will be high priority. Failure to secure employment spells disaster for the male youth because they cannot find girlfriends. Girls of nowadays do not go for guys who do not have income or put simply money. A male youth respondent from Gweru in the Midlands Province almost cried when he narrated the ordeal of losing his girlfriend simply because it's been four years after graduating with marketing degree but no job has materialized. Lack of money to 'spoil' the girlfriend, to make sure her hair is done every month made the girl go for another guy who has got money. This amounts to social exclusion. The respondent asserts that he has joined a youth militia group to operate in Gweru in the upcoming presidential elections in June 2013. To him join the group is an economic activity because they are getting allowances so far and more will come if they start what they code named 'Operation Nyika Yaenda Nyika Haiendi (meaning the county has gone the country cannot go)'. According to him the operation will be characterized by violence unleashed on all those that are not aligned to ZANU PF to make them vote ZANU PF as a way of preserving political and economic independence and sovereignty gained in 1980. Their group is of the view that other political parties are extensions of western imperialism. Unequivocally, the respondent said he has found an economic activity to occupy him and obtain income. It is crystal clear for the above that political violence is a major consequence of urban youth unemployment in Zimbabwe as they participate in it as compensatory economic activity.

These findings about the relationship between youth exclusion and violence go in line with broader research on the relationship between economic inequality and exclusion and political violence. However, it is important to recognize that there are many contexts where youth suffer high levels of exclusion but do not get involved in acts of violence. Furthermore, large numbers of urban unemployed youth often suffer the same conditions of exclusion in Zimbabwe, but most of them do not get involved in political violence. The question that remains unanswered relates to the distinction between those who are mobilized and those who remain on the sidelines.

Research on the determinants of participation and non-participation in political violence in Zimbabwe is still in its infancy, but suggests a number of proximate factors that, given underlying conditions of exclusion, can lead to the mobilization of specific individuals and groups into acts of political violence.

Politicians and youth extremists deliberately manufacture and generate grievances to induce urban unemployed youth into indulging in political led violence. They do so because they that without grievance violence cannot function. Urban unemployed youth are told that their problems are caused by other political party policies and agendas. Politicians who hire the youth know very well that their grievance is unemployment and lack of income. These politicians pretend to sympathize with the youth out of work and tell them that their problems emanate from policies of other political parties opposed to them. Movement for Democratic Change aligned unemployed youth are made to believe that the problem of unemployment is caused by Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front policies and mismanagement. On the other hand, ZANU PF aligned unemployed youth are made to believe that their predicament arises from the sanctions called upon by the MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai as part of the regime change agenda. They end up becoming gullible to political parties ideologies. At the end of the day unemployed youth across the political divide end up believing that they have a role to play in making people support their respective political parties to alleviate the problem of urban unemployment. Methodologically, they use violence to intimidate the electorate to vote for their parties.

Evidence from research carried out indicates that grievance popularizes the agenda of politicians and political parties. The language of politicians is that of protest against problems. Urban youth out of work are lured by the grievances manufactured by politicians to violently protest against joblessness. Some of the grievances are however correct given that it is true that urban youth unemployment is partly a result of economic mismanagement, sanctions and failure to address the existence and accumulation of a youth bulge in Zimbabwe. Failure on the part of the government to introduce policies that create youth employment is one of the genuine grievances. Economic sanctions called upon by the MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai in 2003 are also to blame for the predicament facing urban youth. However, it should be noted that politicians from across the political divide use such grievances to manipulate urban youth into indulging in violent acts to serve their selfish political agendas.

Others are of the view that political violence in Zimbabwe is a consequence of insufficient, unequal and inappropriate education and skills among urban unemployed youth. Three respondents in Gweru city in the Midlands Province blame insufficient education for the production of political violence because youth with insufficient education can easily be mobilized and indoctrinated. They based their argument on the incidences of 2005 elections when they witnessed urban youth whom they know have insufficient education participating in political violence in Mkoba, a high density suburb in Gweru. Be that as it may, this advances the argument that uneducated people lack wisdom and can easily be enticed into evil deeds such as political violence. In accordance with that it is said that unemployed youth who take part in acts of political violence in the country are the ones who lack wisdom as a result of inappropriate education. The above analysis finds a relationship between low education levels and risk of political violence, but other researchers suggest that educated youth often play a key role in political violence. However, the greed perspective stresses that material and other benefits like protection that engagement in political violence might offer, particularly for like poor and uneducated youth provides motivation for involvement in acts of political violence (Collier 2000, 11). Judged by the above, the respondents who advanced their argument of urban youth participation in political violence in Gweru on the basis of lack of education are correct although to a limited extent.

In 2008 in the run up to the June runoff presidential elections urban unemployed youth faced recruitment, coercion and indoctrination by politicians. Majority of them were abducted and indoctrinated into violence in an operation code named Operation Red Finger. Operation red finger is the name given to acts of political violence that was perpetrated by ZANU PF youth in 2008 to coerce the electorate to vote for the political party despite calls by the MDC to refrain from voting in the June runoff elections amid intensifying political violence during the period.

However, research carried out in other urban areas shows that there was also an important element of volunteerism, especially among young males, in young people's participation in 2008 political violence as potential recruits were often offered a range of material and individual incentives to join violent groups to operationalize Operation Red Finger. This was the case in Chitungwiza.

A 20 year old girl who was 15 in 2008 narrated the tale of a fateful day when she was forced to join other youths who were part of the operation red finger campaign in Chitungwiza. According to her, one prominent youth leader in her area led a group of armed youth militia forcing her and other young females who were not going to work to participate in acts of political violence. Those who refused could be severely beaten or raped in front of their parents. Fear of victimization made her join the group, she narrated. She blamed idleness for her recruitment as she was neither employed nor attending school during that time. Similarly incidences were happening in other parts of Harare. A 24 year old male who was 19 in 2008 also narrated the chronicle of his abduction in Mbare by a group of youth that was led by a senior politician. According to him, the senior politician who was wielding a big gun could organize a day vigil at a shopping centre in Mbare at which all youth were told to make all people in the area to show leaders of the evidence of voting. Youth were urged to make people show the thumb with red ink to them signifying that they had voted. Those without red ink on their thumbs could be severely tortured.

Urban youth unemployment is the major driving force behind political violence in Zimbabwe. But one should note that urban youth do not get involved in political violence by virtue of being unemployed. Furthermore, they do not impose themselves as tools of political violence. The core issue centers on political power. Unemployed youth are the tools of political power games played by political parties in Zimbabwe. In these political games urban unemployed youth are used in the apportioning of blame worthiness in conflictual situations on one part or the other. On one hand MDC is blamed for sanctions imposed by its so called sponsors, western countries. On the other hand, ZANU PF is blamed for human rights abuses and economic woes facing the country. The battle for political power between political parties is played by youth for across the political divide. In other words political parties target unemployed youth and use them as tools of political violence in their political games played in pursuit of power.

Problems caused by unemployment can lead psychological disorders which may force youths to indulge in acts of violence. The manner in which people approach problems they face in life differs. According to Freud (1986), people approach problems through various internal unconscious states for example aggressiveness. Such a state of mind can have direct influence on the way one perceives events around him/her and the options available to them. It also influences their judgment and shapes their behavior.

Internal tensions and pressure in an individual accumulate to a point where they demand release often in destructive ways such as committing acts of political violence. In an effort to lessen internal pressure the aggrieved part directs aggressive and violent behavior at the perceived source of their problems. There is considerable measure of truth in the above arguments in the context of urban unemployed youth engagement in political violence. Political violence committed by urban unemployed youths in Zimbabwe is, to some extent, a result of internal tensions and pressure caused by the frustration of failing to secure employment. In other words, it is a result of psychological disorder that emanates from failure to get a job. Unemployed youth from across the political divide direct political violence at each and other because they perceive each other's political affiliations and ideologies as sources of their inner tensions. This sometimes happen unconsciously. According to Hilgard and Bower (1966), "unconscious internal drives cause people to do what they know might harm them". That is true of urban unemployed youth in Zimbabwe who engages in political violence when they know how destructive violence is to them and to other people. The psychology of deprivation and social, economic and political exclusion suffered by unemployed youth is a motivation for their engagement in acts of political violence. To this end, since acts of political violence are committed around election times, such a time presents the opportunity for these youth out of work to release their internal tensions.

Research carried out in Lupane indicates that the government is guilty of recruiting and training unemployed youth to participate in political violence under the pretext that once they finish national youth service they will automatically get employment. The researcher interviewed one young male who claimed that he joined national youth service after graduating with a marketing diploma Bulawayo. Part of the training involves being deployed to various parts of the country to carry out military style operations aimed at making the electorate vote for the party they instruct them to vote for, the youth confessed. The youth further indicated that he joined youth training hoping to get a job after finishing the programme. He said he never expected to be used to commit acts of political violence. The National Youth Service is a programme that was introduced by the government for Zimbabweans of ages 10 to 30 (National Youth Service Act, 1979). It was authorized by the 1979 National Service Act, passed by the government of Zimbabwe, (NYS Act) and established in 2001 under the presidency of Robert Gabriel Mugabe, the Zimbabwean president (Madondo 2003).

Its stated purpose is to "transform and empower youths for nation building through life skills training and leadership development." The National Youth Service has been condemned in Europe and in Africa for gross human rights violations on behalf of the ZANU PF party. Within Zimbabwe the graduates of the service are known pejoratively as green bombers after the military uniforms they wear (Meldrum 2003) and more recently as the Youth Brigade (Madondo 2003). It should be noted that the government decided to take advantage of the unemployed youth, recruit them for the so called national service in a guise to use them to perpetrate political violence.

Responsible for a great deal of the political violence in Zimbabwe, the youth militias are also known locally as the 'Green Bombers'. The service claims to instill in young Zimbabweans a sense of national identity and patriotism. While it proposes to unite people above party lines, it also promotes wariness of "foreign influence and intervention" in national politics (Makamure 2003). The opposing view, both inside Zimbabwe and abroad, holds that the service indoctrinates its members with absolute loyalty to ZANU-PF and trains them for military operations to enforce its dominance (Ginger 2008). The government plans to make the program mandatory for all youths (MG). Ideologically, members of the youth service are taught exclusively from ZANU-PF campaign materials and speeches. These include an collection of Mugabe's speeches titled *Inside the Third Chimurenga*. *Chimurenga* is a Shona word for war of liberation. The speeches glorify Mugabe's land reform programme which was a land redistribution exercise and ZANU-PF leaders Border Gezi and Chenjerai Hunzvi. Gezi and Hunzvi were war veterans and political commissars in Zimbabwe. They accuse the Movement for Democratic Change, an opposition political party in Zimbabwe, of seeking a return to white rule (Ranger, 2004).

The above does imply to apportion all the blame for urban youth out of work engagement in political violence on ZANU PF only. Other political parties such as the mainstream MDC, MDC led by Welshman Ncube, Mavambo Project and others are also to blame for the scourges of political violence by youth out of work. A case in point is a certain incident that occurred around 2001. During that time an uncle of mine, 28 years old then, who had lost his job at Fawcett Security Guard Company in Harare. The Movement for Democratic Change had just been formed, in 1999. My uncle claimed that he was approached a former classmate who working for the MDC. He was told to join the youth wing of the MDC which was a secret youth militia organization of youth aligned to the party. Upon recruitment he claimed he was told that they were going to be trained in Britain.

All the logistics and immigration procedures and requirements were said to be the responsibility of the party organizers.

After training he was told that they were going to destabilize the country to effect regime change. One should note that only youth out of work were the targeted group because they are vulnerable to taking risks and they were lured by financial and material benefits associated with joining the group. The good part is my uncle could not be enticed with the material benefits promised by the MDC. In 2008, youth militias belonging to Mavambo Project were terrorizing residents in Harare forcing them to vote for the party leader, Simba Makoni. Judged by the above, one can see that all the political parties in Zimbabwe are guilty for recruiting youth out of work to use them as pawns in committing acts of political violence.

Testimonies of Urban Youth as Victims and Perpetrators of Political Violence

Name not supplied reported that he was putting up posters in Bindura as well as writing on the walls to encourage people to vote for Tsvangirai. He was caught by 5 ZANU PF armed youths and they beat him with clenched fists. He was then taken to their base where they assaulted him on the back and buttocks with a baton. He was then taken to the police station where he was accused of writing on someone's durawall. The police then started beating them, he was beaten 4 times on the back and he fell to the ground. One of the police officers then stepped on his right eye. He was kept in custody up to when he was taken to police station where the CID refused to accept the responsibility that he had been in custody for too long. He was taken back to police station and was made to pay a fine. The above suggests that urban youth are the perpetrators of political violence and what drives them to commit acts of political violence is unemployment. If they are employed they could not find time to indulge in counterproductive activities such as political violence.

Name not supplied reported that he was asleep when a mob of about 40 MDC youths stormed his house and started beating him and his relatives. They came back again in the morning and forced his relative and his wife to go to a place where he was getting ready for work. They knocked at around 0400hrs wearing the party regalia and he managed to identify one of them as a resident in his area. The identified is an unemployed youth who finished secondary education two years ago.

The identified youth bragged telling the victim that he had found of a job of being a youth militia. He was assaulted by all of them. They apprehended him, slapped him and put the barrel of a gun in his mouth and tried to force a confession about his political affiliations.

They made him carry a rock around his community admitting to everyone that he had done what they accused him of. The testimony is revealing in terms of political violence as a major socio-political consequence of urban youth unemployment. The mere fact that one of the identified youth gang bragged about having found employment working as a youth militia is enough evidence that unemployment forces urban youth to take part in acts of political violence.

He claims that he was sleeping when he suddenly heard his dogs barking. He went out only wearing an underwear and that's when he realized many ZANU PF youths have surrounded his homestead. He then shouted asking them what they wanted and in turn they told him they had come to recruit him to join their militia camp. They told him that urban unemployed youth like him are the ones who are selling the country. They then started throwing stones. He tried to runaway but before he could go anywhere he was tagged and fell to the ground and they started beating him up using sticks and. They continued assaulting him until he was weak. They then tied him with wire on both hands and dragged to their base. There he was brutally assaulted several times by different youths taking turns. The next day they then released him. They claimed that they were engaging in acts of political violence to guard the country's sovereignty and independence so that they would find jobs.

I had been threatened for four days prior to the incident. They told me that they working for the development of the country and they wanted him to join them. One day I was moving around in the suburbs and met youth militia [political party affiliation not supplied] met me on the way. There were about 12. They took me handcuffed and my legs tied with wire. I was then transported to their base out of town. They poured me with cold water all night, again poured me with contaminated water. There they assaulted me once more on the buttocks and back and left leg using a wire.

Anonymous reported that ZANU PF youths organized a meeting to plan for the anticipated re-run in 2008. They abducted MDC supporters from their homes and made them lie down on their tummies.

They took turns to beat them with logs and detained them until midnight. They told them that they wanted to convert them to support the party they represented. They told them that their bosses were giving money and beer to those who were willing to work with them. In addition, they were told that they were the perfect candidates since they did not have jobs. Refusal attracted punishment.

Name not supplied was sleeping at home when people called for a meeting at an individual's house. The time they got at that place the house was on fire. That's when three armed youth started beating him saying he was involved since people used to gather at his place when listening to the radio. They beat him up using sticks while being made to line down on his stomach. They also deliberately made a lot of noise while beating him so that people could not hear him scream.

Anonymous testified that on the day in question he was in a public place with his friends. Two twin cab vehicles filled with young men arrived and these people whom he suspected to be ZANU PF supporters accused him of being in the MDC party and they started assaulting him. He was assaulted with clenched fists and booted feet before being thrown into the back of the truck and taken to a location in down town and assaulted again. They then took a dish filled with water and submerged his head in water and threatened to kill him. They asked him to identify his colleagues who are also in the MDC and they forced him to put on a ZANU PF t-shirt. He was blindfolded and taken back to a public place.

The above testimonies are suggestive of the fact that political violence is a consequence of urban youth unemployment. They suggests a strong correlation urban youth unemployment and political violence. This goes with Richard Cincotta argument that, "a large proportion of young adults and a rapid rate of growth in the working-age population tend to accelerate unemployment, prolong dependency on parents, diminish self-esteem and fuel frustrations," (Marks 1992). While this kind of frustration and competition for jobs do not directly fuel violence, they do increase the likelihood these urban youth out of work will seek social and economic advancement by alternative, extralegal means such as engagement in political violence. And because young people have fewer responsibilities, like families or careers to attend to, that makes them more prone to taking part in extralegal activities. This is especially the case among the youngest sons of a family, who are desperate for respectability and social advancement.

Political parties regard urban unemployed youth whom they use in political violence as 'useful idiots', alluded a lecturer of conflict at a university in Zimbabwe's second largest city called Bulawayo. According to him, it is in the databases and clandestine records and policies of political parties in Zimbabwe that there is a large pool of useful idiots that can be utilized for violent campaign around election times.

This large pool of useful idiots is a pool of unemployed youth in urban areas. They regarded as useful idiots because they are gullible to political parties' ideologies. Furthermore, they are regarded as such because they can be easily lured by money and other material things to kill, torture and intimidate fellow countrymen for unfounded political objectives. As a consequence of unemployment, political parties take advantage of the large pool of urban unemployed youth, recruit them and use them as pawns in their selfish and counterproductive political games. Instead of regarding the youth as the leaders of tomorrow they see them as mercenaries. Instead of nurturing them for a better tomorrow for the development of the country by coming up with policies geared towards alleviating urban youth unemployment problems they view them as agents of political violence.

The occurrence of political violence in Zimbabwe can be readily explained by a built-up youth bulge in the country. The youth bulge in Zimbabwe combined with economic and social woes facing the nation provide a foundation for political violence during election times. It should be observed that in Zimbabwe there is a large youth bulge of unemployed youth in urban areas. There is also a situation of economic instability that has emanated from the decade long political crisis that hit Zimbabwe. Politically, there are tensions and power struggle between political parties in the country. A combination of urban youth unemployment, economic and political problems has provided a strong foundation for political violence in the country. Youth out of work are disgruntled by failure to find jobs and lack of income. Some have gone for years without employment after graduation. Some do not have the appropriate education and skills required in the industry in the country. Directly or indirectly, idleness forces them to take part in political violence. Directly, they volunteer and enjoy being agencies of political violence. In most instances, they are promised financial and material rewards. Indirectly, they are forced to indulge in acts of political violence.

The phenomenon of political violence as a consequence of urban youth unemployment is not unique to Zimbabwe. Heinsohn claims that most historical periods of political instability and social unrest lacking external triggers such as rapid climatic changes or other catastrophic changes of the environment and most genocides can be readily explained as a result of a built-up youth bulge, including European colonialism, 20th-century fascism, rise of Communism during the Cold War, and ongoing conflicts such as that in Darfur and terrorism (Goldstone 1991). This factor has been also used to account for the Arab Spring events.

Economic recessions of the 1930s and the recession in late 2000, are also claimed to be explained in part due to a large youth population who cannot find jobs (Korortayey 2011, 24). Youth bulge can be seen as one factor among many in explaining political unrest. To this end, urban areas in Zimbabwe are harboring a youth of unemployed youth who always participate in political violence during election periods.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has examined the socio-political situation of political violence in Zimbabwe as a major consequence of urban youth unemployment. It has been observed that the large youth bulge of urban unemployed youth in Zimbabwe. The measures taken to address the problem of urban youth unemployment in Zimbabwe have been insufficient and ineffective. It has been observed that the urban youth engage in acts of political violence due to grievances of being unemployed and greed emanating from the opportunity cost involvement in political violence offers. In this context, it is to be feared that the young generation of urban unemployed youth in contemporary Zimbabwe, who constitute the majority of the population will continue to indulge in political violence if the problem is not prevented.

The conclusion drawn from this paper is that political violence is indeed a major socio-political consequence of urban youth unemployment in Zimbabwe. Research carried out for this paper empirical suggests that the youth bulge in Zimbabwe is associated with an increased risk of political violence. Frustration, disillusionment, social and economic exclusion and many other grievances generated by unemployment put urban youth at the risk of committing political violence.

Zimbabwe has a large youth bulge of more 20 % (Urdal 2006) of urban youth out work . A manifold of economic and political problems are to blame for this problem. Unless these political and economic factors are addressed faithfully, any purported solution to urban youth unemployment will at best be temporary. A lot needs to be done to address this socio-economic pandemic facing Zimbabwe. Political bickering by political parties making the government of national unity in Zimbabwe is one of the most stumbling blocks in achieving this.

There is need for commitment in promoting youth empowerment in Zimbabwe. Given the fluidity of the political economic situation in contemporary Zimbabwe, there is great need to empower the urban youth economically and socially by promoting youth enterprise capacity development and self-employment. There is also dire need to promote entrepreneurship and employment among urban young people in the country. However, not all urban youth out of work can be entrepreneurs. So far the education system in Zimbabwe has included a subject in entrepreneurship to groom business minded young people and promote self employment among the youth. At higher and tertiary education level, a compulsory entrepreneurship module has been introduced. For instance, at Midlands State University in Gweru in the Midlands Province all level two students from across the disciplines take a module called entrepreneurship on a compulsory basis. The module was introduced to prepare the graduands for self-employment if they fail to secure employment.

First and foremost there is need to initiate and support national youth policies aimed at alleviating urban youth unemployment. But the first port of call should be to identify and acknowledge the problem. There is also need of political will to back such initiative as well as resources for effective implementation. Moves of commitment to national policies and projects to combat urban youth unemployment are there in Zimbabwe. In 2011 the government allocated the sum of USD 11 000 000 to youth empowerment projects. The picture below shows the vice president of Zimbabwe, Joyce Mujuru, receiving a youth empowerment fund cheque from the Old Mutual Chief Executive Officer.



Investing in youth ... VP Mujuru receives cheque from Old Mutual CEO Luke Ngwerume (newzimbabwe.com)

The youth empowerment fund was availed on 16 November 2011 as part of the government's initiative to mitigate youth unemployment in the country. Introducing the youth empowerment fund signifies the government's commitment to eradicate youth unemployment. The fund comprises USD 11 000 000 which is a lot of money to finance youth projects as a way of capacity building to support entrepreneurship among unemployed youth. Under the youth empowerment fund, all unemployed youth are encouraged to apply for the funding of up to USD 5 000 to start new projects or support existing ones. The objective is to create opportunities for youth out of work in a bid to prevent political violence among other things. Such an initiative shows the political will of the government of Zimbabwe to address and deal with the problem of urban youth unemployment.

However, the implementation of the youth empowerment fund leaves a lot to be desired. There is a lot of corruption involved in the giving of the funds. Nepotism is at the centre of this initiative.

The money is not getting the desirable beneficiaries as a result of rampant corruption characterizing the system. One female respondent who works at the Ministry of Youth, Indigenization and Empowerment testified that they make sure that applications which comes from politicians, relatives of senior government officials and other popular figures are processed fast. The rest will take a minimum of three months to sail through. The respondent added that some relatives of politicians in the country used the money from the fund to pay for bride price and they brag about it. Allocation of youth empowerment fund is also said to be partisan. This emanates from political bickering between and among political parties making the inclusive government in Zimbabwe. This depicts the highest level of corruption in the processing of application for the youth empowerment fund. The extent of corruption in the implementation of the youth empowerment fund raise doubts in so far as the government's recognition and acknowledgement of the magnitude of urban youth unemployment is concerned. The government is to blame for failure to put mechanisms and structures aimed at making sure that corruption is discouraged in handling the fund. Accountability oriented structures need to be put in place if the government is dedicated and committed to use the fund to mitigate youth unemployment.

Furthermore, the level of corruption in the administration and processing of the youth empowerment fund is suggestive of the lack of political will by the government to deal with the problem of urban youth unemployment. The mere fact that government officials are the ones at the core of corrupt activities reflects lack of political will to eradicate youth unemployment in Zimbabwe. Government officials should be at the forefront of guarding against corrupt acts in the administration of the youth empowerment fund.

More so, there is need to cultivate strong political will to address problems facing urban youth in Zimbabwe. Above all, and perhaps more significantly, there is need to promote strong political will among the country leadership to address the problems facing urban youth out of work. Nothing much can be derived and achieved in youth capacity development without the commitment of political and government leaders in the country. Without genuine political commitment to improving the situation of youth out of work, there will be no improvement in resource allocation to youth policy, projects and services, and the ability to implement programmes will be greatly constrained and compromised. There is therefore need for a greater degree of political commitment to youth throughout government agencies and political parties.

Political tensions between parties in the government of national unity in Zimbabwe need to set aside to concentrate of policies addressing urban youth unemployment. Political bickering and sabotage should also be thrown into dustbin of politics in order to address youth development projects. Hopefully, this could also lead to abandonment of the tendency to view youth out of work as mere stepping stones to higher political office.

According to the Final Report prepared for the DFID's Equity and Rights Team on 30 April 2009, countries with large youth bulges need to develop a guidance note on youth and violence prevention. The report listed important aspects to be included in the guides; the evidence on key drivers of youth engagement in violence, when and why country offices should be concerned about youth exclusion, how to conduct a country-level assessment of the situation of youth and potential risks of involvement in political violence, lessons learned about approaches and priorities to address these drivers and risks and guidance on specific programming options (DFID's Equity and Rights Report 2009). Zimbabwe has so far done well on the first aspect that is identifying the key drivers of youth involvement in political violence. The political leadership in Zimbabwe is aware of the fact that political violence in the country is a socio-political consequence of urban youth unemployment. Saviour Kasukuwere, the Youth, Indigenization and Empowerment minister acknowledged at a press conference in 2011 that youth poverty compounded by youth unemployment is the driver of youth engagement in political violence. However, the youth premier failed to identify that political parties have a hand in youth involvement in political violence or he rather deliberately swept under the carpet the issue of political parties incentivizing urban unemployed youth to participate in acts of political violence. That raises a lot of suspicion because they know what is happening. In terms of the aspects, the government has done little, if any at all.

In view of the afore-stated recommendations, it is prudent for the Republic of Zimbabwe to review the current national youth employment policy to address the causes and challenges of youth employment in the country.

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Interviews

Anonymous Respondent 1, Mbare, Harare,

Anonymous Respondent 2, Chitungwiza, Harare.

Anonymous Respondent 3, Lupane.

Anonymous Respondent 4, Mutare.

Anonymous Respondent 5, Bulawayo.

Anonymous Respondent 6, Bindura

Anonymous Respondent 7, Kwekwe.

Anonymous Respondent 8, Gweru.

Anonymous Respondent 9, Marondera.

Anonymous Respondent 10, Gwanda.

Anonymous Respondent

Anonymous Respondent

Anonymous Respondent