

## Devolution in Zimbabwe's Development Discourse a Tool for Sustainable Peace. A case Study of Umguza

Zivovoyi Tapiwa Enock and Mugoriya Tapera

Zimbabwe Open University and Lupane University

**Abstract:** The Constitution of Zimbabwe, Amendment No. 20 Act of 2013 clearly indicates that Zimbabwean citizens also wanted to enjoy the fruits of spearheading the development discourse as a tool for sustainable peace in of their own areas. The level of preparedness by the general populace in Zimbabwe in embracing and implementing devolution and its opportunities for peace is however, a subject of much debate. The main objective of this study is to identify if the devolution in Zimbabwe's development discourse is a tool for sustainable peace whilst also casting a glance at the opportunities and challenges that the rolling out of devolution has on peace as a strategy in Zimbabwe. And it also sought to probe on the level of the community preparedness and readiness for the implementation of devolution in Zimbabwe. The study was based on the Resources Based Theory and the Principal Agent Theory. The research also sought to check on the existing challenges and opportunities with a view to proffer recommendations for the effective implementation of devolution as a critical element for development and peace in Zimbabwe with Umguza District of Matabeleland North Province being the study area. The research will also find research gaps that will proffer alternative research areas for further study.

**Keywords:** Development, Devolution and Peace.

### INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of Zimbabwe, Amendment Number 20 Act of 2013 opened a new trajectory in both the politics and development discourse of the country. The benefits and prospects of this constitutional dispensation are yet to be fully enjoyed by the general citizenry. One of the untapped opportunities in this constitutional dispensation is the issue of Devolution as it is succinctly embedded in Chapter 14 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe. The same Chapter of the Constitution of Zimbabwe indicates that such devolved powers will only be given to 'capable local authorities.' Devolution brings with it a new window of hope and transformation of moving away from the traditional central governance system which on its own has brought a share of development deficits manifesting mainly in marginalisation and slow pace of development of most rural areas of the country which is a threat to peace. An envisaged solution to this is to devolve the state which is perceived to be the remedy in rectifying inequities that exist across all provinces in Zimbabwe hence, in the process leaves, a reduction of potential conflicts is envisaged. Devolution transfers responsibilities and powers of Central Government to the lower tiers in a subsidiarity principle in order for these tiers to develop their local areas in line with their resource endowments. Most countries in Africa have increasingly adopted devolution as a strategy to improve governance as well as correct institutional deficiencies of highly centralised government systems that are bureaucratic which have played their role in conflicts in her most parts. To achieve

this constitutional imperative to devolve the state, the government will need the full participation of local communities and stakeholders.

The level of preparedness by the general populace in Zimbabwe in embracing and implementing devolution and its opportunities is, however, a subject of much debate and one hopes it does not become a source of conflict. Central government and all its institutions have to be well capitalised as poor preparations might frustrate everyone's dreams of improved livelihoods and in particular, the livelihoods of the most marginalised rural areas in that regard creating sustainable peace. Although efforts have been made in the past to decentralise government, the central government has always played an active role in undermining the same efforts, hence the long history of unequal distribution of resources, exclusion of minorities, poverty and marginalisation of some regions and high level undertones of instability. The gravity of the above mentioned errors can only be rectified if devolution is backed up by the necessary legislation and well capacitated institutions to support implementation of the Devolution development discourse. All the arms of the State; the Judiciary, the Legislature and the Executive, have to be in the spirit of Constitutionalism in order to drive implementation of the Devolution Agenda as mandated by the Constitution of Zimbabwe, Amendment Number 20 Act of 2013. The local communities and all stakeholders have to be on board from the onset and community awareness of this strategy cannot be overemphasised to achieve sustainable peace.

## Theoretical Framework

The study will be based on the Resources Based Theory and the Principal Agent Theory whose theoretical framework is reviewed below. Both theories provide the research with an understanding of opportunities and challenges which devolution can bring in interest of sustainable development in a peaceful environment.

### Resource Based Theory

(Roos & Roos, 1997) propounds that it was Penrose who established the foundations of the resourced-based view as a theory. Penrose first provides a logical explanation to the growth rate of the firm by clarifying the causal relationships among firm resources, production capability and performance. It is in the case of this study that the relationship between resources, community capability or capacity and performance for the inclusive and equitable development of peaceful rural areas is likened to the resource-based theory. The relationships among firm resources, production capability and performance ultimately have a bearing on the manner conflicts manifest and also how there are then resolved.

(Elgar, 2002) also uses the Resource-Based Theory to explain performance as well as performance improvements. To perform is to produce valued results. A performer can be an individual or a group of people engaging in a collaborative effort. Likewise, availability and control of resources is a critical component in the development of rural areas. For there to be improved performance in the development of rural areas, emphasis is put on bringing the government closer to the people and this is key for continued peaceful existence. This is the very essence of devolution and hence, it ensures a unity of purpose which brings greater understanding of different parties. It is asserted in this study that the government will be better informed of local needs and preferences resulting in increased accountability and inclusivity of local and regional levels which leads to togetherness. Developing performance is a journey, and level of performance describes location in the journey. The current level of performance depends holistically on six components: context, level of knowledge, levels of skills, level of identity, personal factors and fixed factors. Likewise, for there to be meaningful development in rural areas, it is important to take into account some factors mentioned above like knowledge levels, skills and level of identity. These factors provide a

foundation or basis of what kind of developmental strategy can be introduced in an area and how it can affect peace in that area with the above-mentioned factors in mind as a starting or guiding point.

Three axioms are proposed for effective performance improvements. These involve a performer's mind set, immersion in an enriching environment, and engagement in reflective practice. The Resource Based Theory puts emphasis on the efficient and effective use of resources to increase and improve efficiency. Azfar. *et al.*, (2004) posits that improved allocation of resources is the most common theoretical argument for decentralisation. Chema and Rondineli, (2007) emphasise the need to put devolution of resources to local levels of governance accompanied by enhanced decision-making powers. Devolved authority and control of resources is to be viewed as pivotal in the economic and social development of rural areas. Increased citizen participation accompanied with increased capacities of communities to make political and financial decisions affecting their economic and social life is the very thrust devolution has on peace that this study seeks to research.

### Principal Agent Theory

The Principal-Agent theory also referred to as the Agency Theory was proposed by (Jensen and Meckling, (1979). This theory propounds that a "principal" and "agent" have an interconnected relationship that is a basis to development ultimately to sustainable peace. The theory further posits that the "agent" can be the central government and the "principal" can be local governments." In this scenario, local governments cannot exist separately or independently from the central government. The interconnectedness is interdependent. For central governments to fully function, limited decision making is given to local governments for them to exercise on behalf of central government. Mews, (2011) links the Principal and Agency Theory to the top-bottom and bottom-top models, where in the top-down model local governments "agents" exercise responsibilities on behalf of central government "principal." Decision making is delegated on a subsidiarity principle by central government to certain levels while central government still maintains its supervision role. In the bottom-up the ultimate principals are the citizens or service users, while politicians are the agents working as

representatives in decision making organs which ultimately has positive implications for peace.

This theory is relevant in a devolved state or system of government as it provides a good basis in which one party the “principal” central government delegates work or decision making to another the “agent” local governments to perform tasks and decision making at local levels with limited influence and supervision. This theory bases its thinking on the very essence of devolution where equitable and inclusive development of rural areas can only be achieved if a state realises the opportunities that devolution brings. Chigwenya, (2012) defines devolution as the transfer of administrative and political powers from central government to lower tiers. The lower tiers become semi-autonomous but having decision making powers. The Principal -Agent Theory analyses the fact that public accountability is key. It sees the potential in agents to influence the development of their local community which is the thrust of the opportunities that devolution offers for the peaceful equitable and inclusive development of rural areas.

**METHODOLOGY**

A qualitative approach has been adopted in this study which acted as a means of accessing in depth information on the opportunities and challenges for peace in light of devolution. This helped to come up with a somewhat true picture on what and how much the community and government are prepared in the rolling out of devolution. Denzin and Lincoln ,(1994) asserts that qualitative research “.... is multi-method in focus, encompassing an interpretive and realistic approach to the subject matter.” For the purposes

of this study, the qualitative approach was used in data collected and analysed it will also integrate the findings and draw inferences. The study gathered vital information from all government offices and key informants representing the community of Umguza district. Government offices include the District Development Coordinator’s office (formerly District Administrator’s office,) the Umguza Rural District Council offices, Umguza Member of Parliament Constituency office and other Government Line Ministries, Departments and Agencies in the district of Umguza. Key informants included the District Development Coordinator, two substantive Chiefs in the district, Umguza Rural District Chief Executive Officer and all Council Executive Officers, Umguza Rural District Councillors who are WARDCO chairpersons. Selected VIDCO chairpersons and a representative from the business community were interviewed. Henn. *et al.*, (2014) contextualises population as the entire target group under investigation. According to the census 2012 Umguza District has a total population of eighty-nine thousand six hundred and eighty-seven (89 687) with forty-seven thousand and nine-one (47 091) and forty- two thousand five hundred and ninety-six (42 596) males and females respectively. The district also has nineteen wards (19) wards with one hundred and sixty-eight villages (168). The sample population is drawn from three (3) wards with a total population of nine thousand (9000) of which four thousand seven hundred (4 700) are adults. Mungenda and Mungenda, (2003) recommend that a sample size of at least 10% of the target population is convenient in a descriptive study.

**RESULTS**

**Demographic Factors**

**Demographic data**

Community				
Category		Gender Age		
Members	Subtotal	18-34 years	35-54 years	55-74 years
Male	35	5	15	15
Female	12	3	5	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>

**Questionnaire Response Rate**

Out of a total of forty – seven (47) respondents thirty-five (35) were male and twelve (12) were female. This huge disparity between male and female respondents might imply that there is patriarchal dominance within the African culture

where males take in a lead in developmental issues that defines leadership roles. This is further exacerbated by the demographic structure of Umguza district where there are more males than females. The response rate of having more males than females might also shows that the female

gender is also lagging behind in leadership and elective posts and this may impact negatively on peace processes since women are the most populace in Zimbabwe. Community respondents also had members from development committees that is the VIDCOS and WARDCOS and these are by far mostly male dominated. Leadership and decision - making roles are mostly male dominated hence, the huge disparity in female and male respondents. The researcher managed to get perspectives of both genders on the effects state of preparedness for Umguza district to embrace devolution.

Overall the study had eight (8) respondents in the 18-34yrs bracket, twenty (20) were in the 35-54 years bracket and nineteen (19) were in the 55-74 years' bracket. The respondents' ages ranged from 18-74 years and the highest number of respondents

was in the 35-54 years. The researcher managed to avoid the dangers of a 'single-side story' but getting multi-perspectives from all age groups. The majority of the respondents are either representing community leadership structures or just ordinary community members. All the different variables allowed for the collection of rich in-depth data. The majority of respondents in the 35-54 bracket that totalled twenty (20) of the respondents implies that this age group is the most active and vocal on developmental issues in rural communities and it is still the most active physically and can walk to community centres that can either be too far for older age groups. This also implies that this age group is also considered as mature and better able to represent the community unlike the 18- 34 bracket that can be perceived by the community as young.

### Academic Qualifications

Grade 7	O'Levels	A 'levels	Diploma	Degree	Total
5	28	6	-	8	47

On academic qualifications five (5) had grade seven level education, twenty-eight (28) had Ordinary Level, six (6) had Advanced Level, with eight (8) being degree holders. No respondent had never been to school. The level of education in the community determines their reasoning capacity and conceptual ability. This contributes to an individual's ability to be more effective and contribute positively to developmental initiatives and conflict resolutions. The level of education therefore was sought to know whether the community in Umguza are able to conceptualize and fully understand the devolution concept and if it was to be implemented whether the community ready to embrace it without creating conflicts in future.

### Interview Response Rate

The researcher sought to corroborate information obtained from the community representatives and community members by conducting interviews with the government heads of departments. Eight (8) heads of Government departments were purposively selected for the interviews to help the researcher gain an in-depth appreciation on how Zimbabwe can successfully implement devolution by probing on the opportunities and challenges in Umguza district because of centralisation.

Out of the eight (8,) five (5) were males and three (3) being female. Two (2) of the heads of government departments which made up of the key informants were in the 18-34 years' bracket, four

(4) of the key informants which summed to were in the 35-54 years' age bracket and the remaining two (2) were in the 55-74years age bracket. This shows that the government departments have few employees heading towards retirement and these employees still have some years of productive service which if tapped into can present an opportunity of training them on devolution strategies. This also implies that the quality of responses in the interviews is coming from a perspective of experienced personnel who have been in the service for some time. This then in turn implies that the quality of responses was coming from an informed point of view.

All the eight (8) heads of government departments were holders of degrees in different fields. Not only were the heads of departments better informed because of their job experience but they were also educated and, in a position, to respond to the best of their knowledge.

### Stakeholder and Community Preparedness and Awareness

It is important to access the level of community preparedness and readiness to embrace the devolution concept in Zimbabwe. Different elements were explored to assess the levels of community and stakeholder awareness. Thirty (37) were aware of the devolution concept but different definitions and views of what devolution really is being characteristic of most community members. Different respondents had different views of



devolution. The remaining two (2) had never heard of devolution. It is important to note, that those that had an idea of what devolution was had misconceptions of what it entailed. All forty-seven (47) respondents concurred on two factors namely community participation and increased awareness on an agreed definition of what devolution in Zimbabwe meant. Two (2) out of the (47) forty-seven respondents indicated that they had no idea of what devolution was and six (6) respondents had a general idea, twenty-four (24) knew what devolution was exactly and fifteen (15) were highly knowledgeable of the devolution initiative.

The main objective was to examine the extent at which the community was aware of the devolution initiatives and its implications for sustainable peace. It is paramount for the successful implementation of devolution to consider from the onset the need to have the community and all stakeholders aware of devolution as a strategy for peace so as to harness their full participation. Azfar. *et al.*, (2001) hammers on the fact that local authorities have limited authority to influence service delivery whilst citizens' influence at local levels is hampered by limited information. The responses from most community leaders and representatives showed that there was very limited knowledge on devolution in communities. Brynard, (2009) defines public participation as a two-way exchange of information between the public and their local authority. Therefore, the target of devolution to involve the local community to be part of the development of their local areas starts with communication and information sharing which cannot be separated from peace. In the interviews with the heads of government departments they showed vast knowledge on devolution initiatives but also noted there were low levels of awareness on what devolution is in the community members and leadership. They noted that there are mixed views on what devolution in Zimbabwe is and that the government plays a critical role in shaping the community's perception on devolution.

One Community leader had this to say;  
*“It is important to rope in everyone with progressive minds to pull in one direction to have peace and effective community involvement. However, one must note, that as long as there are interested in creating peace and development, government employees must only play advisory roles, not functional.”*

This then implies that devolution is a community driven initiative that needs the central government to put the community on board from the onset of the program, the communities that will implement devolution initiatives in a way that suits their locality.

Another respondent had this to say;  
*“Devolution can only be truly realised if it has the people at the forefront leading the development of their own area. Devolution should include and involve the community from the onset and Government should resist the urge to lead the process.”*

This implies that from time immemorial, Government has been rolling out programmes in the communities without involving the beneficiary communities from the onset. The desire to have the community participate is thwarted by the community's negative attitude towards a program they will be expected to fully take part in but never involved from the onset. This in most cases causes harm and in the process leaving communities in conflicted states.

Another respondent had this to say  
*“Devolution like most good government development strategies still faces the threat of remaining a blue print, well documented and shelved in government offices. Only government employees being aware of it and community members left in the dark as was the case with most programmes. The fear is that it will be another program only known by the elite and with little benefit to us.”*

This implies that the failure of most well planned and well documented government programs can be blamed on their elitist nature where it has been programs documented, planned and implemented by executives without involving the community. Hence, this creates a community not at peace with their leadership.

Another respondent had this to say,  
*“Government has been talking about devolution but as a government employee I am honestly unaware of what it will entail, for me it's still shrewd in enigma and most people in my department have mixed views.”*

Training of government employees is a must if devolution has to fully succeed because these government employees are community advisors and if they are not fully on board and aware of government programs, they run a risk of ill

advising community members in the process becoming sources of conflict.

### **Opportunities and Challenges Presented by Devolution for Peace**

Responses from the questionnaires administered showed that thirty-six (36) of the respondents felt that devolution would bring with it opportunities but eleven (11) felt that challenges were already awaiting devolution before its implementation. Eight (8) heads of departments interviewed were key informants and all felt that devolution poses as a mixed bag of blessings and curses, as it comes with both opportunities and challenges. They noted, that it was difficult to fully harness and enjoy the fruits of devolution as there is an acute skills gap in the district. They concurred if properly implemented devolution would pave way for the much-needed job creation and peace.

One of them had this to say; *“Devolution offers vast opportunities in the creation of employment through establishment of industries, allowing home grown policies and ownerships hence reducing cases of abuse such as GBV.”*

This implies that devolution is a low hanging fruit that if properly implemented can speak to some of the fiscal and social challenges that communities are facing. Some respondents felt that devolution would mean provinces tasked on raising their own GDP and in turn increase industries.

Another head of department concurred:

*“Devolution will bring about employment of locals, infrastructural development and economic development of regions-provinces”.*

The people are custodians of provinces that are endowed with resources and that implies that standards of the living of local communities can be improved hence, at the same strengthening day to socialisation which is critical for peaceful coexistence. Focus on improving utilities and infrastructure are low hanging fruits of devolution. A sound infrastructure should be viewed as key in the development of the economy. Infrastructural development is an economy, as it affects trade, the assumption is with a road network that links the provinces to other countries in the region and brings growth to the economy. Provinces through devolution are better positioned to prioritise infrastructure that will aid the development of that area.

Another head of department had this to say on some of possible challenges that could be faced in implementing devolution:

*“Social and skills gap including mobility and low employment opportunities coupled with educational facilities, politically-diverse political opinions linked to political affiliation and acceptance and administratively-capacities of people to be involved in taking up key roles for decision making and implementation are a threat to peace.”*

This implies key implementers of devolution like Rural District Council play a major role in pushing the economic and infrastructural development to benefit more than 60% of the country's population which is resident in rural areas. This requires training and capacitating councils to deliver and eventually leading to peaceful existence.

It was also very important to ascertain if there were existing structures on the ground in wards and villages for example that were put in place to ensure that devolution is fully supported by decision making structures at grass root-level and systems in place that could also support fiscal devolution. This was important to ascertain the opportunities and challenges that devolution might have for peace in communities. The research established that twenty-seven (27) were well aware of decentralisation structures and no devolution structures at grass root level, eleven (11) agree that there are structures at grass root level and are for decentralisation that may support devolution. Six (6) strongly disagrees that there are existing structures on the ground that support devolution, two (2) disagree and only one (1) was not aware of any structures at grass root level. These already existing local government imply that if devolution was to be introduced Government can use these decentralisation structures, however the problem is that most people are not aware of the structures and their mandate.

### **Resource Availability and Devolution Implementation**

All of the respondents felt strongly that if resources are not availed devolution initiatives will be futile. Availability of resources help in the delivery of services to citizens. No respondents out the forty-seven (47) disagreed that resources were a key factor in the successful implementation of devolution. This research established that resource availability is key for the successful implementation of devolution. Imendi, (2009)

posists that lack of financial resources hinders the effective implementation of devolution. The proposed provincial initiatives to grow their own GDP also received criticisms from respondents who felt that the raised funds would still be expected to go to central government then central government would then disburse 5% to devolved units. (Rao and Singh, 2006) opines that there is always a conflict between central government and devolved units. Respondents feel that central government needs allow devolved units to have fiscal autonomy without any interference from central government if they are to be labelled devolved. Chema and Rondinelli (2007) state that devolution of resources to local levels of governance proves that the enhanced decision-making power, authority and control over resources plays a pivotal role in the economic and social development of an area. The respondents felt very strongly that Central Government has no intention to fully devolve and allow sub-national levels to have total control over resources. (Mitchinson, 2013) notes that central government needs to resist the temptation to over e.

One respondent had this to say;

*“There is no where you can find a well full of money. You will have to create that money. However, it depends on the mind set and moral obligation of your people. As government we must give the local authorities two things, the first is the power to determine the specific resources that they have and how they should be used which I think will ultimately create unity amongst us.”*

This then implies that resources do not only need to come from Central Government but are actually in the provinces. Provinces need to harness the vast resources within their areas and use them for the benefit of their communities. Government however, has a key role to play in resource availability that is to give local authorities power to tap into these locally available resources and utilize them for the development of that area.

Another respondent also had this to say;

*“Without resources devolution will never succeed. Government has always come up with good programmes that are never backed up with resource availability. Our province is endowed with mineral resources and these should be channelled first and foremost to the development of that province. If resources are not there, then how can a province be expected to change the lives of its citizenry? Service delivery needs money.”*

This then concurs with the view that devolution can only be fully implemented successfully and bring meaningful peace and development in Zimbabwe if it is supported by resources. It also implies that resource availability greatly influences the successful implementation of devolution.

Another respondent had this to say as well;

*“Let us consider that economic drivers and opportunities differ from province to province. What is endowed in Matabeleland North Province in terms of natural resources might not be found in the next province. Lest one province develops more and faster than others because of the resource disparity measures and mechanisms need to be put in place to rope in everyone equally in the development agenda of our country.”*

This implies and concurs with mentioned fears at the beginning of the study that the devolution structure and model Zimbabwe will take needs to take into cognisance the difference in economic drivers and opportunities in provinces and create a way even though devolved to have provinces depend on each other so as to maintain peace in the country.

### **Legislation on Devolution**

It was critical to assess if there were any existing laws and supporting legislation for the devolution initiative. Supporting legislation will assist in the implementation of devolution and it will offer guiding mechanisms on how devolution is to be implemented. The findings above show that twelve (12) of the respondents felt that there is no supportive legislation on devolution, ten (10) felt that the constitution stood on its own as the only visible legislation on devolution, twenty-five (25) of the respondents felt highly that there were supporting laws on devolution and special mention of the 2013 national Constitution was made. Twelve (12) of the twenty-five (25) respondents who felt highly that there were supporting legislation showed appreciation of the Devolution and Decentralisation Policy launched in August 2020. This shows hope for the devolution implementation as there is consciousness of what the Government of Zimbabwe is doing in implementing devolution.

Most respondents based their belief for supporting legislation for devolution on Section 264 in the 2013 Zimbabwe constitution. In this research it was however, noted that a gap exists and there is great need for the government to realign existing Local Government legislation to comply with the



2013 Zimbabwe Constitution. The realigned legislation should allow urban and rural council to be accountable to local citizens.

One respondent had this to say;

*“It is not possible for devolution to move if we have people who cannot interpret a policy or statutory instrument. We want people who can practically implement government wishes in line with specified policies.”*

This gave the impression that the few laws or legislation on devolution even though available can only be interpreted by the elite and executives. Devolution is meant to be implemented by the communities and local authorities who might not be in a position to understand what exactly is expected of them hence, becoming bedrock for conflicts.

Another respondent concurred and had this to say; *“Basically, if I come back closer to Rural District Councils and the possibility of a devolution system, councillors are illiterate to a very large extent. They don’t understand what devolution implies and how it can be implemented”*

The implication is that if devolution has to be implemented councillors and local authorities need to be trained and also have the law interpreted to them because as custodians of devolution they are either not aware of devolution pieces of legislation or the interpretation of legislation thereof. Section 300 and 301 in the Zimbabwean, 2013 Constitution talks of how government entities should acquit and utilize treasury funds and most councils are already facing these challenges of accessing and acquitting these funds timely and appropriately resulting in serious issues of conflict. The need to train devolution implementers laws and legislations on devolution is a must if devolution has to succeed.

One respondent had this to say;

*“The Constitution is very clear on what path Zimbabwe will take in implementing Devolution, however supporting legislation to back up the local government Acts is still not there. The long-awaited Local Government Bill that has been signed has just taken too long to be finalised. No meaningful work on devolution can be done before this bill is out. Councils can be made accountable without the necessary legislation for devolution implementation. Policy will guide us on how to operate.”*

The above assertion is construed to mean that the much-desired devolution can only be fully embraced if parliament can expedite the publication and passage of the bill so that if any implementation is going to take place supportive legislation has to be promulgated on time. No laws or supporting legislation has been enacted ever since the promulgation of the 2013 Constitution where Zimbabwean citizens had fully expressed their desire for a devolved state. The onus is the Government of Zimbabwe, through its Executive and Legislative arms, to create the necessary legislation in accordance with the provisions of the 2013 Constitution so as to pave way for the implementation of devolution in Zimbabwe.

### **An Overview of the 2013 Constitution**

According to the Zimbabwean Constitution Section 264 (2), the objectives of the devolution of governmental powers and responsibilities to provincial, metropolitan councils and local authorities are to give powers of local governance to the people to enhance their participation in the exercise of the powers of the State in making decisions affecting them to ensure the equitable sharing of local and national resources. In essence the views expressed that the 2013 constitution is clear on government’s commitment to devolve powers to subnational units and there is now need for supporting local government Acts or bills to be availed so that the implementation of the devolution concept is realised. According to Philani Moyo and Cornelius Ncube (2014,) *“In accordance with the devolution constitutional vision, political power, policy making decisions, resource raising and distribution as well as administrative and governance responsibilities are meant to be devolved through three tiers of government. These include (1) the National Government (2) Provincial and Metropolitan Councils and (3) Local Authorities.”* In this case local authorities are mandated to represent and manage the affairs of their locality which is envisaged it will have ripple positive effects on peace. An avenue is therefore opened for local citizens to access their political representatives have and their aspirations realised through their representatives.

The provisions of the Zimbabwean Constitution again present an opportunity for these three tiers of government to work in sync and harmony. This however needs to be backed up by the Local Government Bill that will explain and give tier specific mandates on how this interconnected relation is going to be working. The Constitution,



though explicit in its expectations on devolution, cannot work in isolation and needs supportive legislation with clear roles and responsibilities of these three tiers of government. Philani Moyo and Cornelius Ncube, (2014) note that *“While such co-operation among the three tiers is possible, its success or failure will depend on how an Act of Parliament (which is yet to be crafted, debated and enacted) will define the mechanisms and procedures to facilitate co-ordination between central government, provincial and metropolitan councils and local authorities.”*

## CONCLUSIONS

Devolution comes with a lot of challenges which can only be dealt with effectively if capacity building is enhanced and this then can translate in a peaceful environment. Firstly, there is no shared meaning of devolution in Zimbabwe and the research showed that there are mixed views, definitions, meanings and models of devolution in Zimbabwe. There is need to agree and come up with one shared definition and model of Zimbabwe’s devolution and if this is not corrected it will become a source of conflict. There is no shared structure or model of devolution that Zimbabwe will take. Different views on what devolution will entail are characteristic of the respondents interviewed. To some respondents, government has to accept having been running its programs along kinship lines or regional lines. In this view, some groups are already viewing devolution as a route to political and regional autonomy where some regions feel this will give them the chance to separate from other regions.

Structures however exist at local level and these structures are for decentralisation of local government structure. While the WARDCOS and VIDCOS are already existing structures for local government, their functionality is very limited and some of them are not clear on what their mandate hence are at times the end up being foundations of conflict.

Thirdly, it also revealed that for there to be a strong and functional devolution strategy there is need to have supporting legislation that backs the already existing 2013 national Constitution. For the departments and organisations that will be receiving devolution funds there is need to manage these finances properly and put up a properly defined organizational structure. There are no existing systems found at local authorities to support the devolution agenda, no employee trainings or capacitation on devolution have been

done at these local authorities. Most local authority personnel in rural district councils do not have requisite academic qualifications and they are mostly unaware of devolution initiatives.

Fourthly, there is need for public awareness. The research showed mixed views on what devolution really is. With the elite showing knowledge of what devolution really was, this again makes this strategy a blue print for the elite. Devolution, even though spoken about as early as 2013 or even earlier, the community and its leadership are not totally alive and aware to what it really entails and what model the government will take. Community participation and awareness has not been done. The research also concluded that most senior government officials are aware partially on what devolution is.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Government should expedite enactment of laws and necessary legislation to support the devolution initiative and offer responsible Ministries with the much-needed guidance on how to best implement devolution. The devolution Bill needs to be finalised so as start implementing devolution as it is key for peaceful coexistence of Zimbabwean communities.

It is also recommended that there is need to fully devolve and decentralise government services. This will help decongest Central Government while bringing public goods and services closer to the people at minimal costs. Devolution entails bringing development to the people. The Zimbabwean government system is over centralised and this delays development initiatives and opens up the country for regional/tribal politics.

Central government must desist from over-intervening with sub-national levels if devolution is to succeed as well as resist the temptation to supersede local decisions. However, local position should not contradict central government laws and mandate. It should be clear that Zimbabwe remains a unitary state under which its devolution frame is founded. Both structures should be in agreement. Provincial and Metropolitan as well as local authorities should be empowered to make policies, by laws rules and regulations and also to adopt and implement laws and policies from Central Government.

There is need to train and capacitate the three tiers of government that are going to be implementing the devolution agenda especially local authorities

that will be implementing at grass root level. Dire need is also on setting up structures and systems that are robust. Local authorities need to employ economist and specialist in critical areas in their province's development so as to ensure effectiveness and efficiency of devolution in the development of rural areas. Provincial councils and local authorities should also formulate regional investment and development plans derived from the national plan.

There should be a social buy-in from the community. A major aspect of devolution as a development strategy is to recognise and involve communities in both rural and urban areas. The formulation of regional investment and development plans should be a result of broad-based stake holder consultations involving the local communities, traditional, political, civic leaders, local corporate sector, public enterprises and government agencies operating in each province from village level right through to national level.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The objective of the research was to explore the devolution discourse as a sustainable for the equitable and inclusive development of rural areas, leading to sustainable peace. It could also be important to find out the reasons for the delay in devolution implementation in Zimbabwe and also to research on the model of devolution Zimbabwe is going to take.

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