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Managing Governments of National Unity: Reflections of the Zimbabwean Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee (JOMIC)

Lincoln Hlatywayo

Senior Lecturer, Zimbabwe Open University, Harare, Zimbabwe

Andrew Mukono

Lecturer, Zimbabwe Open University, Harare, Zimbabwe

Michael Mukashi

Officer, Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee, (JOMIC), Zimbabwe

Abstract:

The Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee was a Zimbabwean Trans governmental organization formed in Zimbabwe after the signing of the Global political Agreement GPA, signed in the 2009, and the body was mainly meant to monitor the implementation of the agreement and also to promote political tolerance among political players. This research study sought to establish the extent to which the body was appreciated and the inclusivity of its activities. The survey design was used. The representative sample of 30 included leaders from political parties, selected civic society organization and JOMIC board members. Data was collected using a questionnaire as the sample was relatively large. The findings indicated that, to a large extent JOMIC was appreciated by political players and the public. The activities of JOMIC were also found to be largely inclusive. Despite the critics the study generally concluded that JOMIC positively contributed to the promotion of political tolerance in Zimbabwe. However, the issue of non-prosecution powers by JOMIC was pointed out as having affected JOMIC's complete effectiveness. It was recommended that since JOMIC only existed during the life span of the GPA (2009-2013), the Government of Zimbabwe and all stakeholders must consider seriously the idea of having permanent organization like JOMIC which must include all stakeholders, such as government, political parties, civic society, religious leaders and traditional leaders. It was also established that such an organization must have structures from national right down to ward or village level. The organization should have its mandate also expanded to include issues of national healing, reconciliation and reparation. The organization should also be established by an Act of Parliament in order to give it more powers for dealing with those who violates its standing rules.

Keywords: *Political tolerance, political violence, conflict management, JOMIC, ZANU PF, MDC-T, MDC*

1. Introduction

For a long time Zimbabwean politics has been characterized by a culture of political intolerance of a very serious nature, resulting in each and every election and post-election period being characterized by rampant hate speeches, violence, and displacements. The country experienced this behaviour before, during and after the elections of 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2008. The following reports highlight instances of such behaviour in the recent past.

The June 2008 presidential election run off violence eventually led to the signing of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) on 15 September 2008 and ultimately the formation of the Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee (JOMIC). After the GPA formation, signs of intolerance remained evident through the conduct of people in general and political leaders who mainly behaved in a partisan manner.

Challenges have been experienced in the promotion of initiatives to resolve the political differences through tolerance and mutual respect. There were reports of the Finance Minister from MDC-T storming out of the Cabinet after clashing with ZANU-PF ministers over the Reserve Bank's debt restructuring plan. The ideological differences, mutual distrust, lack of transparency and disrespect caused considerable friction between parties to the GPA. The downstream effect was the continued polarity at grass roots and the attendant violence among the populace.

The Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee (JOMIC) was a committee which was constituted under Article XXII of the Global Political Agreement signed on 15 September 2008, by the three political parties namely ZANU-PF, and the two MDC formations. The functions of JOMIC were among others, to serve as catalyst in creating and promoting an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding between political parties, to promote continuing dialogue between the parties, to receive reports and complaints in respect to any issue related to the implementation, enforcement and execution of the agreement, to ensure the implementation in letter

and spirit of the agreement and finally to assess the implementation of the agreement from time to time and consider steps which might need to be taken to ensure the speedy and full implementation of the agreement in its entirety.

JOMIC was composed of four senior members from ZANU- PF and four senior members from each of the two MDC formations making a total of twelve (12). The committee was co-chaired by the members from the parties. JOMIC had full time secretariat at the national level comprising the national coordinator, the communication manager, one political liaison officer from each of the three political parties and the programs manager.

JOMIC later established provincial liaison Committees in all the ten provinces of the country. The committees were composed of four senior provincial leaders from each of the three political parties occupying the following positions, provincial chairperson, provincial chairlady, provincial youth chairperson and the provincial organizing secretary or commissar. There was also a JOMIC full time secretariat at provincial level comprising of the provincial administrator, two political liaison officers from each of the three political parties and the administrative assistant. In essence the body then worked with the aforementioned structures in a bid to deal with the cases of political violence, hatred to foster unity and mutual tolerance. It is against this background that this research was carried to answer the following questions;

- (i) To what extent was JOMIC appreciated by political players and the public?
- (ii) How inclusive were JOMIC activities?

2. Literature Survey

2.1. The Mandate and Functions of JOMIC

According to Chigora and Guzura (2009) the Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee (JOMIC) is a Zimbabwean multi-partisan panel that was first launched on January 30, 2009, pursuant to the 2008 Zimbabwean power sharing agreement. The panel finds its mandate on Article XXII: 22 where its goals can be summarized to include ensuring the implementation in letter and spirit of the Global Political Agreement, to assess the implementation of this Agreement from time to time and consider steps which might need to be taken to ensure the speedy and full implementation of the Agreement in its entirety, to receive complaints and reports in respect of any issue related to the implementation, enforcement and execution of the agreement, to serve as catalyst in creating and promoting an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding between the parties, and to promote continuing dialogue between parties. Its composition was made of the then MDC-M which later became known only as the MDC, ZANU- PF and MDC-T. According to the implementation mechanism article XXII section 22.1 'to ensure full and proper implementation of the letter and spirit of this Agreement, the parties hereby constitute a Joint Monitoring and Implementation (JOMIC) to be composed of four senior members from ZANU-PF and four from each of the two MDC formations. The functions of the committee included to ensure the implementation in letter and spirit of the agreement, to assess the implementation of this agreement from time to time and consider steps which might need to be taken to ensure the speedy and full implementation of this agreement in its entirety, to receive reports and complaints in respect of any issue related to the implementation, enforcement and execution of this agreement, to serve as catalyst in creating and promoting an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding between the parties and to promote continuity of dialogue between the parties. In this vein, it can be outlined that JOMIC had a multiplicity of functions needed to help the parties in government operate well and this was further stated in section 22.4 which said JOMIC shall be the principal body dealing with the issues of compliance and monitoring of this Agreement and to that end, the Parties hereby undertake to channel all complaints, grievances, concerns and issues relating to compliance with the Agreement through JOMIC and to refrain from any conduct which might undermine the spirit of co-operation necessary for the fulfillment of the Agreement. This meant that JOMIC as a committee was given the sole responsibility of ensuring that indeed parties put what they had signed for into practice by walking the talk.

3. Methodology

The study employed the survey design. The study sample was drawn from a population that included leaders from the three political parties who constituted the inclusive government namely MDC, MDC-T and ZANU-PF who were based in Harare. It also included civic society organizations in Harare that deal with peace issues as well as senior members of JOMIC. Purposive sampling was used to come up with a sample size of 30. The sample included 5 members from each of the three political parties (15), 9 leaders of civic society organizations and 6 senior JOMIC members (2 from each political party). The questionnaire was the sole instrument used to collect data.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Response Rate

Sample Category	Questionnaires distributed	Questionnaires Returned	% Response Rate
Political Parties	15	12	80%
CSOs	9	8	89%
JOMIC	6	6	100%
Total	30	26	87%

Table 1: Response rate

Political party's response rate was 80%, civic society 89% while JOMIC secretariat was 100%. Thus average response rate combined is 87%. The low response rate was recorded from political parties, who probably because of the busy schedules in government were too busy to answer the questionnaires. The civic society organizations failed to return only one questionnaire. This was precipitated by bureaucracy and unavailability of the organization's directorate

4.2. Appreciation of JOMIC by Political Players and the Public

4.2.1. Appreciation by Political Players

Respondents were asked to indicate whether JOMIC was appreciated by political players. The findings show that out of a sample of 26 respondents, 9 (35%) highlighted that JOMIC was not appreciated by political players, while 17 (65%) respondents affirmed that it was appreciated. The response findings are illustrated in the chart below:

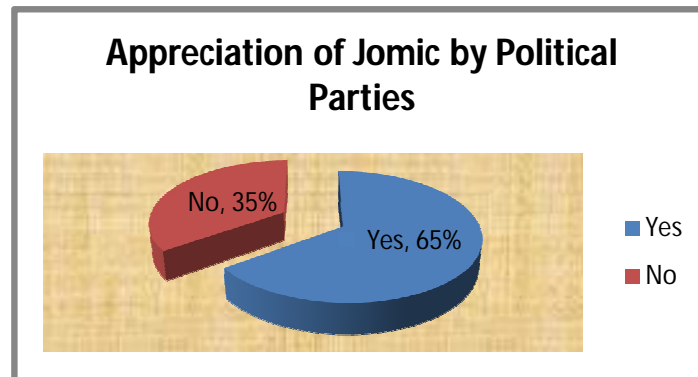


Figure 1: Appreciation of JOMIC by Political Parties

The minority who believed that JOMIC was not appreciated by political players attributed this to the behaviour and attitudes of some of these players. They viewed JOMIC as not well appreciated by the political players particularly those from ZANU PF who on a number of occasions threatened to pull out of the organization for different reasons. Other respondents from this minority view argued that JOMIC failed to be appreciated also by those parties who viewed it as a hindrance to their systematic use of organized violence against other political rivals. This therefore made them feel JOMIC was indeed a stumbling block to the pursuance of their political goals. Some respondents argued that JOMIC was only appreciated by those parties that were in the unity government and yet those who were excluded strongly felt left out, hence their failure to appreciate. However the majority view is that JOMIC was well appreciated by the political players. This is because all parties in the transitional agreement participated in all the activities of JOMIC. It was also in their attitude to prove to the citizens their political will to the maintenance of peace and tolerance. Also the fact that JOMIC reports and recommendations were discussed by Cabinet, political leaders proved beyond doubt that they appreciated the organization. In light of the above findings, one can clearly conclude that to a larger extent JOMIC was appreciated by the political players while to a lesser extent the organization was not appreciated by some political players.

4.2.2. Appreciation of JOMIC by the Public

The chart below illustrates that civic society and political parties being the representatives of the generality of Zimbabweans had a high appreciation of JOMIC and its activities as evidenced by the rating of high appreciation (43%) and average appreciation (19%).

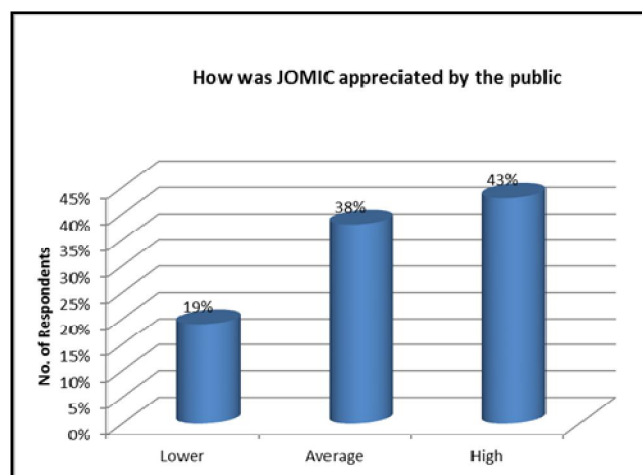


Figure 2: Level of JOMIC appreciation by the Public

7 out of 9 respondents (representing 77%) that indicated a high appreciation of JOMIC were representatives of the three political parties in JOMIC and GNU that is ZANU PF, MDC and MDC T. These gave varying reasons that included effective implementation of joint programmes from national level down to district levels. Senior party leaders at all levels participated in these programmes. There was also high stakeholder engagement which included traditional leaders, government, media etc. JOMIC was applauded for contributing towards political tolerance and peaceful environment which characterized the 2013 harmonized elections. These respondents indicated that JOMIC brought together people that had divergent political persuasions and promoted political tolerance. The JOMIC communications manager went further to emphasize that the number of complaints political parties sent to JOMIC were overwhelming as well the increase in mediation efforts by JOMIC amongst warring parties.

Those who ranked the appreciation of JOMIC by the public as low to average were mainly the Civic Society Organizations as well the two MDC formations. The reasons for their perceptions were mainly as listed below:

- JOMIC was reduced to a project of national peace rather than monitoring the implementation of the GPA as per its primary mandate, this was the view of 20% of the respondents.
- There was no total goodwill from the parties involved in JOMIC. On one hand the MDC and MDC-T respondents cited that ZANU PF lacked commitment and perceived JOMIC as a threat. On the other hand ZANU PF perceived JOMIC as irrelevant and accused the MDCs of abusing JOMIC assets hence its constant threat of pulling out of JOMIC and this was the view of 40% of the respondents.
- Although JOMIC worked with the police, the body lacked enforcement powers to foster punitive measures on perpetrators of violence.
- Most members of the public lacked information on JOMIC activities and some were ignorant of its purpose; hence they viewed it as irrelevant. Other civic organisation such as the CISOMM paid particular attention to the contentious issue of political injustice and political violence in the country long after the signing of the power sharing deal among the three political parties and that resulted in the lack of confidence in the organisation by the public in general.

4.3. Inclusiveness of JOMIC Activities

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which the activities of JOMIC were inclusive. Only 4 out of 26 respondents outlined that JOMIC activities were not inclusive. The majority of respondents 22 out of 26 affirmed that all JOMIC activities were inclusive. This is shown in Fig 3 below:

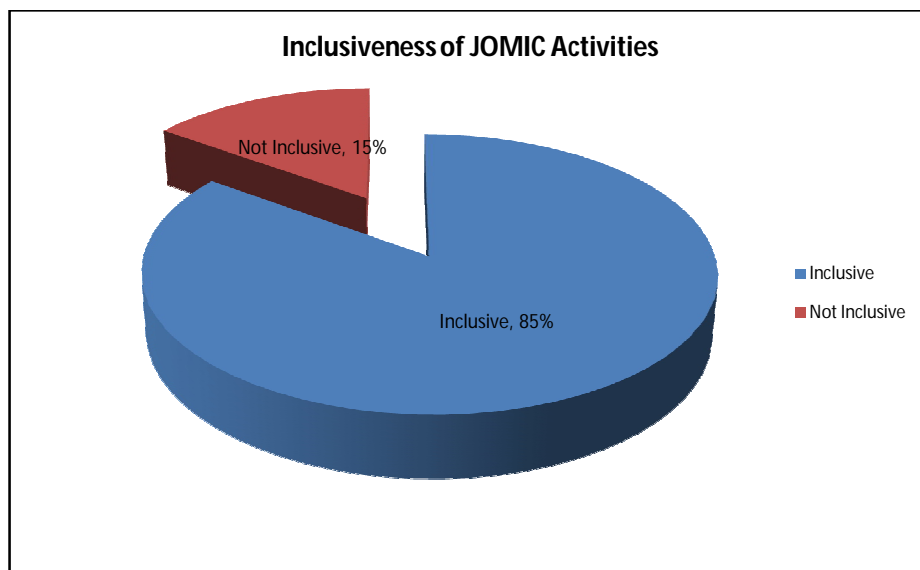


Figure 3: Inclusivity of JOMIC activities

The minority view that JOMIC activities were not inclusive stemmed mainly from those respondents whose organizations were not directly linked to JOMIC. The respondents in this view highlighted that JOMIC mainly focused on the political spectra while turning a blind eye on the societal values. These argued that the organization did not give precedence to the traditional leaders and religious leaders. In essence, if JOMIC had included them they would have understood the important message of political tolerance coupled with their personal transformation. Church leaders usually have bigger followings and as such they influence opinions in the society. Therefore their inclusion would have added much value to the organization and also to the national agenda of maintaining peace and tolerance.

The majority of the respondents perceived that to a greater extent JOMIC activities were all inclusive. This view was mainly favoured by the three parties in the Global Political Agreement. To begin with, the respondents' argument was supported by the equal numbers of personnel seconded by the parties. Also all activities and programs were done in a tripartite manner resembling equal opportunities for all. Also other respondents argue that the opportunity afforded to parties outside the GPA to bring their complaints was an

indicator that JOMIC was inclusive. The respondents whose views were that JOMIC activities were inclusive took into considerations the fact that JOMIC also created a youth desk to specifically deal with youths issues. This according to their views was very important since the youth were always used as tools for perpetrating political violence. Activities for the youth such as soccer tournaments were organized in provinces such as Bulawayo and Mashonaland Central where even those parties not in the inclusive government such as ZAPU were invited and participated. Therefore from the above, it can be noted that the majority of respondents are positive that the activities were inclusive while the minority holds the view that JOMIC was narrowed and excluded some other organs that would have increased its effectiveness.

5. Recommendations

In view of the research findings the following recommendations were made:

- Given the polarized nature of the Zimbabwean political environment, the government of Zimbabwe, political parties and civil society organizations should seriously consider the idea of having a permanent future institution in the model of JOMIC to effect political tolerance and eliminate political violence.
- The presence of JOMIC during the 2013 harmonized elections proved beyond any reasonable doubt that whenever there are platforms where members of different political parties are able to meet and engage in dialogue political tension is diffused thereby avoiding political violence. The institution should involve all stakeholders such as government, political parties, civil society, traditional leaders and the marginalized groups such as the disable, women and youths.
- If there is going to any institution like JOMIC in future it must be constituted by an Act of Parliament which will spell out binding rules and regulations for all players involved. Also this act of parliament would provide a support mechanism for the institution in enforcing its decisions as well setting out punitive measures against defaulters.
- The organization should set up structures from national level right down to ward levels. Proper systems and communication channels should be put in place. This will promote the effectiveness and efficiency of operations of the organization.
- The future organization should also set up support systems for national healing and reconciliation. This can be achieved by working with the Civic Society Organizations, religious leaders, traditional leaders and other relevant stakeholders.

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