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Social policy reform under the Government of National Unity in Zimbabwe, 2009-13

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Abstract

The formation of a Government of National Unity (GNU) in Zimbabwe in 2009 has generally been assessed as a façade, with ZANU-PF retaining real power to serve its own ends. Whilst this may have been true of the key challenges facing Zimbabwe – ensuring democratic political competition and the rule of law, and (less clearly) economic stabilisation and growth – it was not true in all areas of public policy. With respect to social protection, the partial change of government resulted in significant reform. In the mid-2000s, social protection in Zimbabwe was for the most part limited to donor-funded and distributed emergency food aid. Under the GNU, ministers from the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) presided over more programmatic responses involving the state and donors working together, including on the country's first sustained experiments with cash transfers as well as innovative food aid programmes. The shift in policy was not due so much to clear policy preferences on the part of the MDC as to the transformed relations between MDC-controlled government ministries and donors and international agencies. The MDC opened the policy reform door to donors and agencies that were enthusiastic about cash transfer and reformed food aid programmes. The shift to cash transfers was also made possible by dollarisation and market liberalisation. Whereas Zimbabwe had been very anomalous in terms of its pro-poor policies in 2009, by 2013 its policies were far closer to those of its neighbours, although they remained constrained by poor public finances.

Introduction

Competitive multi-party elections became the norm across most of Southern Africa (excepting Swaziland) in the 1990s, but in only 20 percent of elections have they resulted in changes of government: Zambia in 1991 (when the opposition Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) led by Frederick Chiluba ousted long-time incumbent president Kenneth Kaunda and his United National Independent Party), and again in 2011 (when Michael Sata and the Patriotic Front finally ousted the MMD); Malawi in 1994 (when the long-term incumbent president, Hastings Kamuzu Banda and his Malawi Congress Party were ousted by Bakili Muluzi and the United Democratic Front) and again in 2014 when Peter Mutharika defeated Joyce Banda; Lesotho in 2012, when Tom Thabane formed a coalition government to oust Pakalitha Mosisili; the first inclusive elections in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa, won by the Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), the South-West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) and the African National Congress (ANC) respectively; and the 2008 and 2013 elections in Zimbabwe, which resulted in the establishment and then dissolution of a coalition government that included the former opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).[1] None of the ANC, SWAPO, Frelimo in Mozambique, the Botswana Democratic Party or the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola have yet lost a national election. Across Southern Africa, incumbent presidents and parties tend to retain power for long periods.

Zimbabwe achieved independence in 1979, held its founding democratic election in 1980, and held further presidential or parliamentary elections in 1985, 1990, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2002, 2005, 2008 and 2013. For this entire time ZANU-PF has been in government. Until 2008 it had not officially lost an election, although there were widespread doubts about whether it really won the 2000 parliamentary elections. In 2008, it lost the parliamentary elections and incumbent president Robert Mugabe was re-elected as president only when the MDC's candidate Morgan Tsvangirai withdrew in the second round in the face of massive violence against the MDC. In 2009, ZANU-PF and the two MDC factions formed a Government of National Unity (GNU).

Bratton writes that "the so-called inclusive government of 2009-2013 was inclusive in name only", and describes power-sharing as a "façade":

> 'A narrow coalition of civilian and military leaders with roots in the country's liberation struggle continued to turn the instruments of the state toward controlling elections and looting the country's wealth. Far from sharing power with a democratic opposition, ZANU-PF elites sacrificed

[1] In Malawi, in 2012, there was a change of government which did not result from an election defeat: The death of the incumbent president led to vice-president Joyce Banda becoming president, despite Banda no longer being a member of her predecessor's party.

> democracy, state building, and economic development for their own political survival' (2014: 29).

ZANU-PF consolidated its powers of coercion and patronage, enabling it to inflict a "crushing defeat" on the MDC in elections in June 2013. ZANU-PF had "out-foxed, out-organized, and out-muscled a well-meaning but inexperienced popular opposition movement" (*ibid*: 1). Bratton acknowledges that the GNU did stabilize the economy and improved public finances (although ZANU-PF retained sole control of diamond revenues). Overall, however, the MDC "failed to develop a coherent policy agenda". Its inexperienced staffers "faced an entrenched and reluctant civil service whose officers – from permanent secretaries to gate guards – did their best to hamstring the newcomers" (*ibid*: 132). Bratton provides one example of reform – the distribution of agricultural inputs to small farmers as part of a drought mitigation scheme in 2009 – that was "hijacked" by ZANU-PF's local structures (*ibid*: 133). Both business and civil society were disappointed by the MDC's caution and inaction on important issues.

Bratton's assessment may be true overall, but it is not true with respect to social protection policy. Bratton himself does not consider any aspect of social policy – public education and health as well as social protection – which fell under ministries controlled by one or other MDC faction. In this paper we examine the transformation of social protection policy between 2009 and 2013. In 2008, Zimbabwe's social protection system reflected 28 years of ZANU-PF government. It lagged not only very far behind the more developed systems of South Africa and Namibia, but also behind all of the other Anglophone countries in Southern Africa. Whilst Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland had by 2005 followed the lead of South Africa and Namibia in establishing social assistance pension programmes, and Zambia and Malawi were experimenting with pilot programmes, Zimbabwe made no programmatic provision for its poor or otherwise vulnerable citizens. More than in any Anglophone country, ZANU-PF governments in Zimbabwe up to 2009 emphasised (perhaps more rhetorically than in reality) an agrarian route to poverty reduction – through land reform – and downplayed poverty-reducing cash transfers. The MDC, in contrast, presented itself as a 'social democratic' party, with support concentrated in urban constituencies that might be expected to favour an expansion of the welfare state. Between 2009 and 2013 MDC Ministers headed most of the relevant government departments (including Labour and Social Services, Education, Health and Finance). The MDC also had much closer links than ZANU-PF to the international aid donors who, in the 2000s, had become enthusiastic champions of cash transfers. Working closely with donors and international agencies (including the World Food Programme, UNICEF and the World Bank), MDC ministers presided over a series of important programmatic reforms: public works programmes began to replace emergency food aid and a new Harmonised Social Cash Transfer programme was introduced for 'labour-constrained' households in which there were no adults fit to work. For the first time, strategic documents clearly acknowledged that cash transfers would form an important part of public policy to mitigate poverty and promote development. The design of the programmes and strategy reflected the important roles played by donors and international agencies.

The comparative literature on welfare-state-building emphasises the importance of competitive partisan politics. Huber and Stephens argue that "partisan politics was the *single most important factor* that shaped the development of welfare states through time" (2001: 1, emphasis added). Welfare-state building in the advanced capitalist countries was largely determined by whether a country's post-1945 politics was dominated by a social democratic party, a Christian democratic party, or parties in the "secular entre and right" (*ibid*; see also Esping-Andersen, 1985, 1990). The precise design of democratic institutions also mattered. In some countries, institutions provided incentives to parties to become more programmatic and less particularistic, which shaped the kind of welfare state that was built (e.g. Lynch, 2006). In the USA, institutional design generally impeded welfare-state building (Amenta, 1998; Katznelson, 2013). The role of democracy in the global South is less clear, in part because competitive democracy was established (or re-established) relatively recently in many countries. In many cases, however, there is evidence that electoral competition fuelled policy reform, including in Brazil, India and Korea (Seekings, 2012). The literature on the importance of democracy or elections for welfare policy reform in Africa is very limited, although some studies of health and education outcomes suggest that democracy sometimes matters (e.g. Carbone, 2012; Stasavage, 2005). Munemo (2012) argues that governments in Southern Africa (including Zimbabwe) between the 1980s and early 2000s shifted between patronage-based and programmatic food aid systems according to their vulnerability to electoral competition. Resorting to patronage systems was a reflection of government or partisan weakness. Reviews of the politics of welfare policy reforms have been unable to go beyond speculation that elections might matter (Niño-Zarazúa *et al*., 2012; Seekings, 2013). This paper thus entails a foray into largely uncharted territory in understanding social policy reform in contemporary Africa.

We show below that the participation of the MDC in government was consequential, but the reason for this may be surprising. Policies changed after 2009 not so much because the MDC was a more programmatic, 'social democratic' party than ZANU-PF (although this was true), but rather because it had much better relations with foreign donors and opened the door to a closer partnership between donors and the state. Donors were generally enthusiastic about cash transfers, and their enthusiasm shaped public policy, which was funded almost entirely by donor aid. Elections enabled Zimbabwean voters to limit the power of the incumbent ZANU-PF, and *indirectly* to change public policy. One of the key characteristics of 'welfare regimes' in Africa[2] is the very blurred boundary between state and non-state provision. Under the GNU, Zimbabwe became much more like other East and Southern African countries in this respect.

Economic Crisis, Poverty and the Withering of the Zimbabwean Welfare State

The formation of the GNU in Zimbabwe in 2009 marked the culmination of a series of events stretching back at least to 1997, when the ZANU-PF government awarded generous pensions and other privileges to 'veterans' of the liberation war and identified a large minority of large farms for compulsory expropriation. Economic crisis and discontent with ZANU-PF resulted in the formation of the MDC in 1999, and the defeat of the government in a referendum on constitutional reform in early 2000. Losing support with parliamentary elections looming, ZANU-PF sanctioned land occupations, mostly led by 'war veterans'. The MDC officially won 57 of the 120 seats, including all urban seats and almost all seats in Matebeleland. Many observers criticised the elections as neither free nor fair, but ZANU-PF retained power. ZANU-PF continued to deploy violent intimidation and (allegedly) vote-rigging, with Mugabe defeating MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai in a presidential election in March 2002 and ZANU-PF performing strongly in parliamentary elections in March 2005, leading to the MDC's boycott of elections to the newly established Senate in November 2005. External diplomacy was required to schedule presidential and parliamentary elections in March 2008. The MDC – which had split into two factions (MDC-T led by Tsvangirai and MDC-M led by Arthur Mutambara) – won a total of 110 seats in the expanded National Assembly (with MDC-T winning 100 and MDC-M 10), to 99 for ZANU-PF (and one pro-ZANU-PF independent). In the presidential election, and after a suspicious month-long delay, Tsvangirai officially won 48 percent of the vote to Mugabe's 43 percent (and a small share to an independent candidate, Simba Makoni, backed by

[2] This is especially true in the Middle East also, and to a lesser extent elsewhere (Cammett & Maclean, 2014).

MDC-M), necessitating a second round. In the face of massive and violent intimidation, Tsvangirai withdrew, allowing Mugabe to be re-elected unopposed.

The elections left Mugabe as president, but without legitimacy and facing (for the first time) a hostile majority in the National Assembly. Negotiations, mediated by South African President Thabo Mbeki, led to the MDC factions and ZANU-PF signing, in September 2008, a 'Global Political Agreement' (GPA) that committed them to power-sharing. It proved difficult to reach agreement on the details, however, and the new 'inclusive government' was not sworn-in until February 2009. ZANU-PF was allocated 14 ministries (including Defence, Justice, Home Affairs and Mining). MDC-T was allocated 13 ministries (including Finance and most portfolios involving service delivery) and MDC-M three (including Education). Both at the time and later, ZANU-PF was seen as having taken key portfolios leaving the MDC factions the portfolios responsible for service delivery without funding (Tofa, 2013: 93-4; Raftopoulos, 2013a: 89). MDC-T minister Gorden Moyo later said that only five of the MDC's ministries were significant: "It's only the Finance, Health, Labour, Energy and Water ministries that we had and the rest were like departments".[3] The MDC was unable to convert their electoral success into more substantial state power in the face of the "structural erosion and political exhaustion of its support base, particularly in urban areas", the weakness of international pressures on the Mugabe/ZANU-PF regime, and especially the regime's use of violence (Raftopoulos, 2010; see also Bratton, 2014).

By early 2009, the Zimbabwean economy was in deep collapse (Bourne, 2011). The economy had shrunk in nine out of the preceding ten years. Formerly ranked as a 'middle income country' (by the World Bank), Zimbabwe's real GDP halved between 1998 and 2008. By 2009 GDP per capita had fallen below Mozambique's.[4] Agricultural production shrank at an average rate of 10 percent p.a. over the decade, reported the United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP).

> 'While the large-scale commercial farming sector was destroyed, communal farmers – who produce most of the national maize supply for consumption – have struggled as a result of various economic problems, limited availability of and access to inputs, and recurrent low rainfall. …

[3] Quoted in Obey Manayiti, 'Former MDC-T ministers were in government to make up numbers', *NewsDay* 15th March 15 2014; https://www.newsday.co.zw/2014/03/15/former-mdc-t-ministers-government-make-numbers/;

[4] Data from World Bank's World Development Indicators, variables NY.GDP.MKTP.KD and NY.GDP.PCAP.KD.

> Once an exporter of agricultural products, including maize, Zimbabwe became a food-deficit country that relied on imports' (WFP, 2012a: 2-5).

Unemployment was estimated at 80 percent, despite mass emigration. The government's huge budget deficit (reaching almost 100 percent of GDP in 2007) pushed inflation to almost unmeasurable levels. Hyperinflation and price controls exacerbated the collapse of agricultural production, and there were recurrent shortages of even basic foods. Zimbabwe's score on the Human Development Index fell from more than 0.5 around 1985 to 0.345 in 2008, and its ranking fell from 35th place in 1989, to 71st in 2002, to 151st (out of 177 countries) in 2009.[5] Life expectancy fell by one-quarter, teachers, doctors and nurses were paid irregularly, and cholera broke out in late 2008. Stabilising the economy and restoring economic growth were pre-requisites for any substantial social policy reforms. Given that a ZANU-PF government could not borrow internationally, it had little choice but to cede some power to the MDC (Matyszak, 2010).

Hunger and malnutrition became ever more widespread, especially in rural areas. Between 1995 and 2003, the proportion of the population living below the Food Poverty Line – i.e. who could not meet their basic food needs – rose from 29 percent to 58 percent (Zimbabwe, 2012: 10). Conditions worsened in the mid-2000s. As many as 7 million people – or more than one half of the population – received food aid during 2008, mostly during the peak hunger period of November through March. Hunger affected not only 'labour-constrained' households – those comprising only the elderly, the inform or disabled, or children, often as a consequence of AIDS – but also households with able-bodied adults who were unable to support themselves through either subsistence agriculture or wage labour.

In the 1990s, the ZANU-PF government had produced plans to mitigate poverty – including the 1995 Poverty Alleviation Action Plan (PAAP) – and there was even talk of a National Social Protection Strategy as late as 2000. In 2004 it produced a National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children. But public policy revolved around discretionary, non-programmatic interventions to achieve partisan political ends. ZANU-PF presided over massive land reform and directed considerable resources to supposed war veterans. When drought recurred from 2002, the ZANU-PF government initially spent heavily on drought-relief food aid. As conditions worsened, it slowly ceded control over food aid to donors. By 2009, huge numbers of poor Zimbabweans were dependent on donor-provided food aid or remittances sent by kin living abroad.

[5] http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/ZWE.pdf.

War veterans were integral to land reform, and benefitted in other ways also. At independence, about one-third of the former guerrillas were incorporated into the new army, whilst the majority were demobilised and paid a small salary for two years. Veterans later formed an association and demanded land and welfare benefits. Mugabe first conceded discretionary payments for 'disability'. The scope of 'disability' slowly widened, from physical disability to any supposed post-traumatic stress. The Veterans Association leadership reportedly rubber-stamped applications without any medical examinations. Senior politicians – including Mercedes-driving senior ministers – received massive disability awards. "Millions of dollars were siphoned off into the hands of the ruling elite" (Alexander, 2009: 190). In the face of intense protests by the Veterans Association, Mugabe conceded in 1997 a lump-sum payment and monthly pensions to *all* veterans, as well as health care and education benefits and the promise of land. Continued protests led to pensions being repeatedly increased. The protests and their success led to veterans becoming a coherent and powerful force, thereafter serving rather than defying the ZANU-PF leadership (Krieger, 2005; Alexander & McGregor, 2006). The cost of meeting these unbudgeted commitments to veterans imposed severe strains on public finances, triggered the collapse of the currency and contributed significantly to Zimbabwe's economic decline (Alexander, 2009: 191).

Land reform combined with drought in the early 2000s to generate a deepening agricultural crisis. Droughts had affected Zimbabwe regularly since independence, and a clear pattern had become visible in the state responses. "Mugabe's adoption of drought relief programs reflected his own political strength or weakness, shifting as his standing changed", writes Munemo of the period up to 2004 (2012: 88; also Munro, 2003). During the period of ZANU-PF hegemony from the mid-1980s to the late 1990s, the government had responded to drought with food-for-work and school feeding programmes, which earned praise internationally. In the changed political conditions of the early 2000s, the state shifted to the discretionary distribution of food aid, which could be more easily controlled by war veterans for partisan purposes. The deepening economic crisis soon meant, however, that the state could not cope with the need for food, and the government was forced to turn to the WFP in 2002. In 2004, for political effect, Mugabe expelled the WFP (and other foreign food aid organisations), on the (mistaken) grounds that the drought had broken and the harvest was sufficient to meet the country's needs. This allowed Mugabe to reward supporters and punish opponents in the run-up to the March 2005 elections (*ibid*: 87, 118-9).

After winning the 2005 elections, ZANU-PF had to allow the WFP to return and resume its food aid distribution. In 2006, WFP distributed 183,000 metric tons of food to 4.4 million beneficiaries. In 2007, it delivered slightly less food (147,000 tons) but to more than 5.5 million beneficiaries. In 2008, a massive 217,000 tons were distributed to nearly 7 million people (WFP, 2012a: 6). The supposed enemies of Zimbabwe – i.e. the USA, UK and EU – were getting basic foodstuffs to between 30 and 50 percent of the population, via the United Nations and NGOs (Bourne, 2011: 212). In effect, foreign donors and local NGOs became a surrogate state during the 2000s (Munemo, 2009: 100). The WFP later reported that the ZANU-PF government tolerated WFP interventions only "when the magnitude of the national food shortages far exceeded government's capacity" to provide emergency food aid. When food shortages diminished, the ZANU-PF government downplayed the need, and portrayed its land reforms and other policies as successful. "At times during 2006-2008 period, food aid would even be condemned in public meetings, especially by top politicians citing that it perpetuated and created a dependency syndrome" (WFP, 2012a: 16). Although the state was unable to provide food aid, it sought to use its distribution for political purposes. In rural areas, war veterans sought to ensure that the NGOs responsible for administering WFP food aid registered only ZANU-PF-approved beneficiaries.[6]

Whilst large sums were spent on drought relief by the state, at least until the early 2000s, and by donors thereafter, very little was spent on general social assistance programmes. The parsimonious core of social assistance was Public Assistance, administered by the Department of Social Welfare, which dated from pre-independence relief for poor people along the lines of colonial "poor laws" (Kaseke, 1988). The 1988 Social Welfare Assistance Act limited Public Assistance to people who were destitute, unable to work for a living, either elderly (over 65 years of age) or disabled or chronically ill, and without kin who could look after them. Many – perhaps half – of public assistance recipients were elderly people of foreign origins who had no kin in Zimbabwe who could support them. Cash benefits were very parsimonious. In 1999, adults received cash allowances of up to Z$100 per month, which corresponded to one-third or less of the poverty line (although beneficiaries also received free medical treatment and dependent children were exempted from school and exam fees, and urban beneficiaries might have their rent and utility bills paid). Much of the cash grant was sometimes spent on travelling to collect it. In the mid-1990s, allowances were paid to between 15,000 and 70,000 people, at a total cost of about 0.0001% of GDP, i.e. a small fraction of

[6] One of the authors (Chinyoka) was a team leader in Manicaland from 2005 to 2008, employed by the Irish NGO GOAL International to register food aid beneficiaries. In some areas beneficiary registration had to be repeated three times in order to circumvent ZANU-PF manipulation.

what was spent on drought relief programmes was spent on a tiny proportion of the poor population (Munro, 2003). The adoption of a National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in 2004 suggested that social assistance programmes might be extended in response to the AIDS crisis. But the state's role was largely one of supposed co-ordination, whilst local NGOs spent foreign donor funds through a multi-donor fund (the 'Programme of Support') managed by UNICEF. As was the case with drought relief, donors had assumed many of the functions of the welfare state by 2008.

By the time the MDC joined ZANU-PF in government in early 2009, the state had largely handed over both its drought relief activities and its meagre efforts to support destitute people (including orphans) to donors and NGOs. The state not only ceased to fund drought relief or any other poverty relief, but it also lost the capacity to do so. The Department of Social Services was "extremely understaffed and underfinanced", with "a 39 percent vacancy rate in the most critical front-line staff in charge of coordinating humanitarian assistance at the district level" (according to the WFP). "The decline in government capacity" had "also crippled the delivery of other critical social protection mechanisms", including Public Assistance, health and school fee waivers, and public works programmes (WFP, 2012a: 5). Because of ZANU-PF's politics – and its policies which were directly responsible for the economic crisis – donors were unwilling to fund the government's general operating budget, unlike in other poor Southern African countries. ZANU-PF was suspicious of foreign and local NGOs, and sought to control them.

Under ZANU-PF, Zimbabwe became an example of what Gough *et al*. (2004) called "insecurity regimes", i.e. cases where predatory governments actively undermined the welfare of their citizens. As late as the 1990s, "insecurity regimes" were widespread in Africa, but in the 2000s the combination of democratisation and the changing priorities of donors and international agencies resulted in the expansion of public education, health care and cash transfer programmes across much of Africa (Garcia & Moore, 2012). In the early and mid-2000s, Zimbabwe was an exception to the general picture of policy reform or at least experimentation with pilot programmes. In several other countries in the region political elites were ambivalent about cash transfer to poor people (see Kabandula & Seekings, 2016, on Zambia, and Kalebe-Nyamongo & Marquette, 2014, and Hamer, 2016, on Malawi), but Zimbabwe was the most extreme.

The MDC and Policy Reform, 2009-2013

In 2009 the MDC was ten years old. It had a solid core of experienced MPs (many of whom had been elected first in 2000). Its constitution – adopted formally at the party's inaugural congress in 2000 – identified the MDC as a "social democratic party" whose core values included solidarity, justice and equality.[7] The constitution committed the MDC to "a mixed market economy with a strong social conscience", "a just society in which the weak and the poor are assured of a decent standard of living and equitable social services such as health and education and in which equal opportunities are available to all people", and "a fair and equitable distribution of land". After the MDC split into two factions in 2005, the larger MDC-T faction held a second national congress in March 2006. MDC-T reiterated that the party was "a social democratic movement and as such our policies will reflect our commitment to the welfare of our people and the development of our country", and promised a "full policy review".[8] Prior to the 2008 elections the MDC published a 180-page document setting out its proposed economic, social and political policies (MDC, 2008) – a shorter, 33-page version was published as the party's election manifesto. The MDC thus went to great lengths to present itself as the programmatic antithesis to the patronage-dispensing ZANU-PF.

The MDC's origins were in the labour movement (the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, ZCTU) and the civic and constitutional movement that came together in the National Constitutional Assembly) in the late 1990s (Raftopoulos, 2000; Hudleston, 2005; LeBas, 2011). Its support was strongest in urban areas. Its policies have been described as reflecting a mix of the left-orientated rhetoric aimed at urban workers and the "neo-liberal economics" favoured by landowners, multilateral and Western donors (Chung, 2010). All of these characteristics are typical of social democratic parties.

Given the political and economic crisis facing Zimbabwe, the MDC's 2008 policy document unsurprisingly focused primarily on governance and economic stabilization and reconstruction. The document did include also, however, an extended discussion of "social issues". The MDC proclaimed that "everyone has the right to a just job and to a decent living". "The challenge facing the MDC as a social democratic party will be to democratize and internalize growth through economic empowerment while enhancing the capabilities of the individuals who

[7] At its 2011 Congress, the MDC added that it was a '*pro-poor, people-centred* social democratic movement'.
[8] http://www.thezimbabwean.co/news/7881/mdc-towards-congress-2006.html.

make up the nation's workforce". The MDC promised a "social contract" between labour, employers and the state, and "tripartite consultations on all matters affecting the management of the economy, the promotion of economic growth and development, the operations of the labour market and the provision of a comprehensive social security net". This "social contract" would be overseen by a tripartite National Social and Economic Council. With regard to social security, the MDC's vision was that "the retired, the disadvantaged and the poor will live with dignity and security". The MDC promised to resuscitate pension schemes for working people and to put in place "safety nets" for "the disadvantaged and the absolute poor so as to help them meet their daily lives" as well as "women, children, the disabled and the aged". An MDC government would "give consideration to a national per capita grant to assist low-income families with their basic needs" as well as a "special grant system to help families with the cost of supporting orphans". The policy document seems to promise universal pensions, in that it proclaims that "non-contributory pension rights will be extended to all who have no rights at present, and these were to be paid and supported directly by the ministry". The MDC also referred to a national but voluntary system of contributory medical aid and a school nutrition programme (MDC, 2008: 95-104).

In election rallies, Tsvangirai focused on good political and economic governance, which would end shortages of food and other basic commodities, control inflation and restore economic growth. The revitalization of public services featured prominently.[9] ZANU-PF also promised reforms of agricultural policy, housing and education (including helping the poor with school fees), but in contrast to the MDC it emphasized the indigenisation of foreign-owned companies, and fighting sanctions and British imperialism.

Whilst the MDC's policy document was not explicit on what precisely would be done to stabilize the economy, pro-MDC donors began to plan even before the elections, forming an Analytic Multi-Donors Trust Fund (or A-MDTF) and seven Technical Review Groups (one examining Social Protection), as well as commissioning sixteen policy studies (including a Social Protection Baseline Study). The A-MDTF, led by the World Bank, helped to draft a Zimbabwe Emergency Recovery Program (ZERP), the second draft of which was completed in September 2008. ZERP emphasized economic recovery, including in agriculture

[9] See reports on the election campaign launch in Mutare (Caiphas Chimhete, 'Tsvangirai still has "it"', Zimbabwe Situation, 9 March 2008; http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/mar9a_2008.html) and rallies in Murehwa (*International Herald Tribune*, 26th March, 2008) and Harare (*Mail and Guardian*, 24th March, 2008; *Voice of Africa*, 23rd March, 2008).

and infrastructure, but it also outlined "a package of measures needed in the early period of stabilization to protect the poor unable to benefit from the resulting economic growth", including "self-targeting public works for the able-bodied poor" (paying either in food or cash) and "targeted direct transfers … for the vulnerable who cannot work" (MDTF, 2008: 13). In line with the developmental thinking that predominated within the World Bank, ZERP emphasized that "the Social Protection strategy is to make safety nets supportive of growth rather than using them as handouts that create dependency" (i*bid*: 2008: 5). In early 2009, following dollarization and the new GNU's announcement of a Short-Term Emergency Recovery Programme, major donors met in Washington DC and agreed to establish a larger MDTF to channel substantial aid to Zimbabwe in support of the GNU's programmes. Separate 'Transitional Funds' were later established for the Education, Health and Child Protection (and one was proposed for Older Persons).

MDC ministers succeeded in ending hyperinflation, stabilizing the economy, and even securing real economic growth of 10 percent by 2013.[10] Wages improved and food became more readily available. But economic recovery remained constrained by the continued political volatility and instability, agricultural production was insufficient to meet people's needs, and acute poverty persisted. There was a clear need for programmes to address immediate poverty and hunger as well as to increase agricultural production.

The key ministry in this was the Ministry of Labour and Social Services, which oversaw the separate departments of Social Services and Labour. The Minister was Paurina Mpariwa-Gwanyanya, the long-standing MDC-T MP for the Harare constituency of Mufakose. The deputy-minister was Tracy Mutinhiri, ZANU-PF MP for Marondera East, and Political Commissar of the ZANU-PF Women's League. Accused of voting for the MDC candidate in elections for the Speaker of Parliament in March 2011, and of generally being too close to the MDC, Mutinhiri was forced into hiding and her farm was attacked (ironically, given that she herself had acquired the farm through a land invasion in 2002). She was later expelled from ZANU-PF, and joined MDC-T.[11] Mpariwa was fortunate in working with an

[10] 'Zimbabwe's economy during the life of the coalition government', *NewsDay* 5th September 2013; https://www.newsday.co.zw/2013/09/05/zimbabwes-economy-life-coalition-goverment/.
[11] 'Tracy Mutinhiri and her family remained in hiding', *The Zimbabwean*, 5th April, 2011. http://www.thezimbabwean.co/news/38657/tracy-mutinhiri-and-her-family-remained-in-hiding.html. 'Transcript of Tracy Mutinhiri on Question Time', *The Zimbabwean*, 8th June 2012: http://www.thezimbabwean.co/news/zimbabwe/58737/transcript-of-tracy-mutinhiri-on.html. 'MDC embraces Mutinhiri', *The Zimbabwean*, 3rd October, 2012,

unusually cooperative ZANU-PF deputy-minister,[12] at least until March 2012, when Mutinhiri was replaced by Monica Mutsvangwa. But, like most other MDC ministers, she inherited officials appointed by ZANU-PF. The Permanent Secretary, Lancester Museka, was appointed directly by the President, Mugabe, and the Director of Social Services, Sydney Mhishi – who was primarily responsible for liaison with NGOs – was a known ZANU-PF loyalist.

Much of the energy of the Ministry between 2009 and 2013 was taken up with labour issues (falling under the Department of Labour). The ministry succeeded in revising Zimbabwe's labour laws, established a tripartite board to negotiate working conditions of government employees, and returned Zimbabwe to international organisations such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO).[13] Social protection policy reforms were driven more by the donors and international agencies, organized through the Social Protection Technical Reference Group, linked to the MDTF. Donors commissioned a flurry of reports on social protection in Zimbabwe (Gandure, 2009; Wallace-Karenga & Mutiheru, 2009; Munemo, 2009; Chitambara, 2010). They combined with government officials in a National Social Protection Consultative Forum,[14] and together went on to produce three key strategy documents: A new *Food Deficit Mitigation Strategy through Public Works* (July 2010), a *National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NAP for OVC) Phase II* (September 2011) and a *National Social Transfers Policy Framework* (drafted in 2011 and finalized in September 2012).

The new *National Social Transfers Policy Framework*, drafted primarily by UNICEF, provided a very general vision or statement of intent elaborating on the general proposals sketched out in the ZERP drafted by donors in 2008. In her foreword, the Minister (Mpariwa) emphasized the imperative of harmonizing the efforts of donors, local NGOs and the state. The document itself envisaged statutory cash transfers to selected 'labour-constrained' groups, productive public works and means-tested agricultural support for able-bodied adults, and means-tested cash transfers for any other indigent people. An inter-ministerial National Steering Committee on Social Transfers would be established to supervise

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http://www.thezimbabwean.co/news/zimbabwe/61267/mdc-embraces-mutinhiri.html. All accessed 27th May 2014.

[12] In an interview, Mpariwa-Gwanyanya suggested that it was the good working relationship that had attracted Mutinhiri to the MDC-T: interview, Harare, 27th February 2015. All interviews cited in this paper were conducted by Isaac Chinyoka.

[13] Interview with Mpariwa; see also 'Mpariwa: A veteran of the struggle', *The Zimbabwean* 27th February 2013; http://www.thezimbabwean.co/2013/02/mpariwa-a-veteran-of-the/.

[14] Interview with Solomon Mutambara (Mercy Corps M&E Manager), Harare, 6th January 2015.

implementation, with actual implementation being done by the Ministry of Labour and Social Services). The document provided little detail (Zimbabwe, 2012). What it did was to register cash transfer programmes as one component in the MDC and GNU's policy package, and to insist on some overall coordination (in contrast to the practice in the past – see Kaseke, 2003). Interviewees say that the impetus to this planning arose in part from donors' response to the Zimbabwean government's requests for money: Donors would insist that the GNU provided a plan before they would fund programmes.[15]

The MDC (and hence GNU) was more enthusiastic about cash transfer programmes than ZANU-PF, but it also favoured a primarily developmental approach. The overarching priority was to promote agricultural production and job-creating economic growth, so that people could sustain themselves. Cash transfers were a short-term necessity – and perhaps a longer-tem necessity for specific groups of people – that required economic growth to be sustainable.[16] MDC leaders articulated the concerns over 'dependency' – both of poor people on 'handouts' and of Zimbabwe as a whole on donors – that were widespread among political elites across Southern Africa – and within some international agencies, notably the World Bank. Even among the very poor, livelihood support programmes – including subsidized agricultural inputs – were crucial to boost agricultural production.[17] The GNU's new *Food Deficit Mitigation Strategy through Public Works* (June 2010) proposed programmes to shift "from free handouts to more market-friendly mechanisms that rebuild people's livelihoods and promote self-reliance rather than perpetuate the culture of dependency" (WFP, 2012a: 15-16).

There was significant reform even with respect to smallholder agriculture. Donors had established a Protracted Relief Programme (PRP) in 2004 to improve food security through increased smallholder production. Amidst partial political and economic stabilization, donors established PRP II, with the immediate goal of reaching more than 2 million people through improved agricultural and livestock productivity. Livelihood support programmes provided resources to poor households in order to help them to work themselves out of poverty. The resources provided included agricultural inputs, vouchers and cash – the latter made possible again by dollarization. While emergency aid was short term, livelihood assistance was given for one or two years, after which beneficiary households were supposed

[15] Interview with Sydney Mhishi, Gweru, 4th December 2014.
[16] Interview with Tendai Biti, MDC MP and former Minister of Finance, Harare, 26th February 2015.
[17] Interview with Biti.

to "graduate" (Schubert, 2011:10). This was funded by the FAO, and reached a total of 1.87 million beneficiaries over the three years 2009/10-2011/12, compared with 1.34 million over the preceding three years.[18]

Reform was far more dramatic in two other key areas: Emergency support for poor households that were unable to feed themselves, and support for 'labour-constrained' households that were chronically unable to earn a living.

From famine relief to public works programmes and cash transfers

Across much of Africa social protection programmes evolved out of drought and famine relief activities. In Botswana – a country especially vulnerable to drought – late colonial emergency became institutionalised after independence in the country's five-year plans, with ad hoc aid being replaced by ongoing public employment programmes (Munemo, 2012; Seekings, 2016). In Zimbabwe, ZANU-PF's political weaknesses inhibited any such programmatisation within the state, although donors ran massive programmes. Under the GNU, for the first time, donors and state worked together, transforming public policy.

As of 2009, food aid provided through the WFP comprised by far the largest form of social protection in terms of either cost or the number of beneficiaries. Hitherto, most food aid was distributed without conditions, some through schools but mostly under the WFP's Vulnerable Group Feeding Programme. After 2009, "WFP and its partners shifted from large-scale, in kind food aid to a more flexible and responsive programme" (WFP, 2012a: 6). The WFP shifted food aid into productive Food (or Cash) for Work programmes, which evolved into 'Productive Asset Creation' schemes (called Food- and Cash-for-Assets programmes). The WFP also experimented with direct cash transfers through the Zimbabwe Emergency Cash Transfer.[19]

This shift was premised on partial political as well as economic stabilisation, and in turn it facilitated cooperation between state and NGOs. The WFP later reported that

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[18] 'Donor-Funded Agricultural Support Programmes: Impact Analysis of the 2004-2012 Agricultural Input Assistance Programmes in Zimbabwe'; http://www.slideserve.com/ruth-vaughan/donor-funded-agricultural-support-programmes.

[19] Interviews with Herbert Matsikwa (WFP Programme Officer) and Sherita Manyika (WFP Programme Assistant), Harare, 15th January 2015.

relations with the government improved from March 2009, with the government taking 'greater ownership' of food relief. First, whereas ZANU-PF had largely denied the existence of poverty, the MDC institutionalized the 'ZimVAC' food security assessment process in the Department of Finance, and the results were discussed and approved through the cabinet. This guided donor resource allocation. Secondly, the shift from general food aid to new, specific programmes entailed greater government ownership (WFP, 2012a: 16).

The bulk of aid continued to be provided in kind. The WFP distributed a total of 342,000 tons of food aid in 2008, and a further 244,000 tons in 2009. In 2010, the volume distributed fell to 83,000 tons, to 46,000 tons in 2011 and 37,000 tons in 2012.[20] The total number of reported beneficiaries was 7 million in 2008 and 5.3 million in 2009, but only 1.8 million in 2010. Over the 32 months between May 2008 and the end of 2010, the WFP spent US$600 million on food, mostly on the Vulnerable Group Feeding Programme, as well as $2 million distributed as cash transfers (WFP, 2012a: 8, 24). Under the Vulnerable Group Feeding Programme, households received a daily ration of 400g of cereal, 60g of pulses, and 20g of oil. Rations were distributed monthly, and only in the lean season (usually November to March). After 2009, delivery became less and less politicised at the local level.[21]

The WFP and other donors were keen to shift from emergency food aid to programmes that helped poor people to rebuild agricultural livelihoods. This entailed public employment programmes, mostly providing work between April (harvest time) and November (the beginning of the agricultural season), in contrast to food aid most of which was distributed between November and March, because stored food supplies were exhausted. In 2008-09 the MDTF funded a preliminary study of the possibility of shifting to a food-for-work programme (Wallace-Karenga & Mutihero, 2009). Late in 2009, the WFP approved a Food for Work programme, to be implemented by NGOs (Plan International, World Vision and Save the Children), community-based NGOs, local authorities and the receiving communities. Implementation began in mid-2010 in selected districts with a track record of recurrent food insecurity. In 2010 and 2011, about 20,000 households in Manicaland, Mashonaland Central, Masvingo and southwestern parts of the country received cereals, pulses and vegetable oil in return for their work on communal projects which included irrigation schemes, dam and well construction, repair of

[20] Data from WFP, 'Global Food Aid Deliveries', downloaded from www.wfp.org, 28th June 2015.

[21] One of the authors (Chinyoka) worked as an Assistant Field Manager in Midlands (specifically, in Gokwe South and Gokwe North districts) from 2009 to 2011, employed by Concern Worldwide, which was the WFP implementing partner in the area.

school buildings, installation of dip tanks, dairy parlours, nutrition gardens and piggeries. In some areas, where food could be bought locally, beneficiaries received cash instead of food rations.[22] In 2011, this evolved into a 'Productive Asset Creation' programme, under which food or cash were provided to people creating or rehabilitating 'assets' such as irrigation schemes, dams, dip tanks, community gardens, roads and bridges. The WFP itself presented the new programme in the developmental terms favoured by the GNU (and World Bank):

> 'The Government of Zimbabwe, WFP and other partners have expressed concern that the continuation of food assistance without conditions will encourage a mind-set of dependency and will not address the underlying causes of household food insecurity. The Cash/Food for Asset (C/FFA) programme forms part of WFP's new strategic direction, which has transitioned from free food distributions to supporting resilience-building activities. WFP's C/FFA programme aims to empower vulnerable communities to move away from dependency on food assistance and create assets that increase their ability to handle future shocks …' (WFP, 2012b: 2).

The pilot project began in August 2011 in nine districts, and by 2013 was being implemented in 22 districts, benefitting 40,000 households directly (and, WFP argued, many more indirectly). The government itself though along similar lines, but lacked resources to implement reforms.[23] In 2009, it asked the World Bank to fund a cash-for-work programme that would pay $20 cash for 15 days of labour on a public works programme, for approximately 280,000 vulnerable households countrywide (Wallace-Karenga & Mutiheru, 2009: 11). In November 2011, rural district councils and 'communities' in two Midlands districts began to identify projects and select people for 'community productive works teams', with tools and food rations funded by the World Bank. The programme was supposed to roll out countrywide.[24] The World Bank also funded capacity-building within the Department of Social Services, through the establishment of a 'Project Implementation Support Unit'.

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[22] *The Zimbabwean,* 26th March 2012; http://www.thezimbabwean.co/news/zimbabwe/57290/food-for-work-does-it.html.

[23] Interview with Ruth Wutete (Social Protection Specialist, World Bank Zimbabwe), Harare, 11th November 2014.

[24] According to the programme's national coordinator, Moses Chourombo, *The Zimbabwean*, 26th March 2012.

The WFP also experimented with cash transfers from 2009. Cash transfers had been briefly piloted in the mid-2000s, as part of the Protracted Relief Programme (which had transferred cash to HIV/AIDS infected and affected households from 2004: see Gourlay, 2012, and below) and separately. These experiments had been very short-lived, because hyperinflation and the unavailability of food meant that cash was of limited value. When financial and economic markets stabilized in early 2009, more cash- and marketed-oriented program solutions also became possible (WFP, 2012a: 20-21). Some targeted districts were close to districts that were producing food surpluses, and where farmers and millers were beginning to build up stocks of maize. In November 2009 the WFP launched a pilot Zimbabwe Emergency Cash Transfer programme (also known as the Cash-for-Cereal programme) in selected wards in the Gokwe North, Gokwe South and Nyanga districts.[25] The wards where the pilot was implemented were selected specifically on the basis that they were adjacent to districts producing an agricultural surplus. The Emergency Cash Transfer programme covered only a small proportion (10 percent) of the poor, which placed strain on the partnership of local leaders and outside donors (although, WFP claimed, the pilot programme was not politicized). The pilot reached about 60,000 households (WFP, 2012a). The success of the pilot, which was run by Concern Worldwide and ran until March 2010, led to the WFP including a cash component for all recipients in its flagship Vulnerable Group Feeding Programme in 2010-11 (Concern Worldwide, 2011).

The shift from food aid to cash transfers was slow and, in large part, externally-driven. As the WFP itself later reported, “the piloting of cash transfers and introduction of an e-voucher system (as alternatives to direct food transfers) in Zimbabwe, was inspired to some extent by the shift in WFP’s corporate policy and strategy” noted in the WFP Strategic Plan 2008-13 (WFP, 2011; 2012a: 21). As the GNU’s own *Food Mitigation Deficit Strategy* and cash-for-work programme showed, however, the GNU was shifting broadly in line with the donors, with state and donor-run programmes run along similar lines and with similar goals, in contrast with the situation prior to 2009.

Support for ‘labour-constrained’ households

Food-for-work programmes could not help ‘labour-constrained’ households without able-bodied adult members. Historically, Public Assistance targeted such households, but the benefits were low and coverage was minimal. AIDS resulted in

[25] Isaac Chinyoka was involved in the ZECT in Gokwe North and South in 2009-10.

rising numbers of orphans – variously estimated between 1 and 1.7 million (Mushunje & Mafico, 2010; Masuka *et al*., 2012). In 2004 the ZANU-PF government had approved a National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children, under which the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) paid school fees for 'vulnerable' children. But BEAM had atrophied in the mid-2000s, and the ZANU-PF government was uninterested in other programmes. AIDS also combined with social change to leave growing numbers of elderly people without kin to support them (whilst hyperinflation destroyed any savings they might have had).

In 2011 the GNU approved a new National Action Plan (NAP) for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs). Whereas 'NAP I' had focused on children, 'NAP II' focused on families as well as children. It provided for three kinds of programme to be funded through a multi-donor Child Protection Fund: a national cash transfer programme targeting food-poor, labour-constrained households; improved access to child protection services; and improved access to basic education for poor orphans and other vulnerable children (primarily through a renewal of BEAM). Initial financial support from UNICEF assisted 514,000 OVCs (UNICEF, 2011). In 2012, the UK's Department for International Development (DfID) gave US$15 million to fund BEAM at primary level while the GNU pledged US$16 million to do the same at secondary level (Smith, Chiroro & Musker, 2012; DfID, 2013).

The primary reform was the introduction of a Harmonised Social Cash Transfer (HSCT) programme, piloted in Goromonzi district in late 2010 and launched formally in May 2011. The HSCT programme provided benefits of between US$10 and US$25 per month, depending on household size. HSCT would replace the defunct Public Assistance scheme. Ten percent of the households in each district would be selected, which represented a massive expansion relative to Public Assistance, but meant also that many very poor households would not benefit. Eligibility depended on two criteria. First, households had to be 'labour-constrained', meaning that they had no able-bodied working-age adults or had only one such adult who was caring for many children or elderly or sick dependents. Secondly, households had to be 'food poor', meaning that they were unable to meet their most basic needs, taking only one or no meals each day and unable to purchase essential non-food items such as soap and clothing. Most eligible households included many children, but also elderly and disabled adults; most were headed by widows. The original intention was to expand from the initial district to another eight districts (and some parts of Bulawayo) as Phase I, from February 2012, and then to another nine districts (and additional urban areas) in Phase II from April 2013. This would allow the programme to reach almost 90,000 households in 2014, in two districts in each of the country's nine provinces. By 2015, it would be expanded to a total of 30 districts. But positive evaluations led to an accelerated expansion plan, with the target of 250,000 poor families in all 65 districts – i.e. 10 percent of the Zimbabwean population – by 2015. In practice, the state lacked the capacity to expand this fast. Donors worked through local state institutions in selecting beneficiaries, but by June 2013 they had reached a total of only a little over 30,000 households in only 13 districts. The programme was funded jointly by the GNU and UNICEF (through the Child Protection Fund) (Schubert, 2011, 2014; Gourlay, 2012; FAO, 2013; AIR, 2013).

The design of the HSCT programme reflected donors' priorities of targeting strictly the poor. A key figure in the design of the programme was the German development expert Berndt Schubert, who had worked on targeted cash transfer programmes for more than twenty years, including in Mozambique, Zambia and Malawi. The HSCT was very similar in design to the cash transfer programmes piloted in Zambia in the mid-2000s. In contrast to Zambia in the mid-2000s, however, the Zimbabwean government – or at least the MDC ministers in the GNU – were now willing to embrace an ambitious rollout plan. The HSCT was quite different to the 'categorical' cash transfer programmes in South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Namibia. These programmes targeted specific categories of deserving poor – the elderly, the disabled, children – using either a generous means-test (that served to exclude the rich) or no means test at all (i.e. the programmes were universal within the specific category). Zimbabwe had, until independence, had an old age pension programme, as in South Africa, but unlike the South African programme it excluded altogether elderly African people, i.e. it provided pensions only to the very small minority of non-African elderly. Rather than extend them to all Zimbabweans, the Mugabe government at independence abolished them altogether (Kaseke, 1988). Whilst Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland all followed the lead of South Africa (and Namibia) in introducing old-age pensions between 1996 and 2005, ZANU-PF governments in Zimbabwe anomalously continued to offer nothing beyond entirely inadequate Public Assistance. By 2012 many of Zimbabwe's elderly were living in poverty. The HSCT marked a major reform relative to Public Assistance, but it was meagre relative to the cash transfer programmes of countries to the south. Lacking resources, even MDC ministers showed little enthusiasm for introducing an old-age pension (despite their 2008 promise to do so). Not were most donors and international agencies as keen on pensions as they were on supporting children and working-age adults. Only one international NGO – HelpAge International – showed any interest, initiating a tiny pilot programme (for 180 very old beneficiaries) through its local organization in Zimbabwe.[26] The one thing done by the MDC was the resuscitation of the Older Persons Bill. This had been drafted in 2002, and subsequently went through five more drafts, but was never finalized nor enacted by ZANU-PF. In September 2012, the Bill was finally enacted. The new Act envisaged social assistance only for disabled or destitute elderly people, i.e. people without kin to support them. Programmes would be financed through a joint government-donor Older Persons Fund. This would entail expansion beyond the provision of the HSCT, but would have fallen far short of the MDC's 2008 promise of non-contributory old-age pensions. The Older Persons Fund had not been established before the end of the GNU in 2013.

In comparison with countries further south, Zimbabwean politicians continued to emphasise the importance of family. In South Africa, Botswana and elsewhere, public policy recognized the decline of social and economic obligations of care and support of kin to kin. In Zimbabwe, a widening range of politicians recognized the need for some state provision for children. Even some ZANU-PF leaders sought to trumpet their own reformist credentials. At the launch of NAP II, ZANU-PF's Joice Mujuru, at the time the Vice-President of Zimbabwe, referred to the Plan as an "unprecedented social protection mechanism". Tsvangirai, for the MDC, added that "we are on the road to ensuring that Zimbabwe's children, especially the most vulnerable, will benefit from these critical services". Mujuru went on to explain that the government, through "innovative ways to increase support to orphans and vulnerable children", was "reinforcing and strengthening the traditional role of families and communities in promoting and protecting the wellbeing of children". MDC leaders did not seem to differ much, if at all, from this.[27]

Conclusion: Pressures, Opportunities and Constraints on Policy Reform

Any assessment of the period of MDC participation in government, from 2009 to 2013, must weigh up the changes with the limits to those changes. Bratton (2014: 129) constructs a "balance sheet", assessing whether progress on a set of issues (taken from the 24 articles of the 2008 ZANU-PF/MDC agreement) entailed "full", "partial" or "no" implementation. Most of the issues were political or

[26] Adonis Faifi (Programs Manager, HelpAge Zimbabwe) suggests that this kept the pension issue on the agenda – interview, Harare, 27th January 2015 (see also Schubert, 2011:10).

[27] *The Guardian*, 28th September 2011; http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2011/sep/28/zimbabwe-national-child-protection-fund.

constitutional, and implementation was at best partial. The 2008 agreement did not spell out much in the way of economic and social policies. Article 3a concerned restoring economic stability and Article 16 concerned the depoliticisation of food relief programmes. In both cases, Bratton grades the implementation as ‘partial’.

In most areas of economic and social policy there was clear progress during 2009-13 compared with the period 2004-08. By 2009, the economy had collapsed, poverty had worsened, poor families survived through remittances from kin abroad and food aid brought into the country by foreign donors and the state became what Gough *et al*. (2004) would call an “insecurity” state, i.e. a state that actively undermines the welfare of its citizens. Resources were siphoned off to political elites and their allies, and there was massive displacement of people from both urban and rural areas. Between 2009 and 2013, in contrast, the economy stabilized, hunger decreased, and the state consolidated and began to expand its own programmes, working closely with donors and local NGOs on both existing programmes and innovative reforms. At the same time, progress was indeed partial. Continuing political crisis and the machinations of ZANU-PF continued to impede economic recovery and growth.

Among the reforms was the shift from food aid to food (or cash)-for-work programmes, later transformed into food (or cash)-for-assets programmes, and cash transfers (sometimes known as ‘cash-for-cereal’ programmes). The state and donors collaborated over a new Harmonised Cash Transfer Programme that had the ambition of reaching the poorest 10 percent of the population. Social protection became an integral feature of the government’s strategic documents. Growing numbers received benefits in the form of food or cash, and possibly larger numbers benefitted indirectly from the investments in infrastructure. These reforms were important, but partial. *Most* beneficiaries of state or donor programmes continued to receive benefits in the older forms: as food aid, or through subsidized school fees.

These policy reforms required and helped to drive changes in the state itself. The decline in welfare state capacity was not only stopped but reversed. In many respects, Zimbabwe came to resemble more closely some of its neighbours in Southern Africa, with a variety of programmes and nascent elite interest in reform. The GNU’s priority was developmental, with the primary emphasis within social protection being placed on public works programmes, helping poor people to help themselves during periods of insufficient agricultural production. This was, however, supplemented with a cash transfer programme targeted on very poor households that were unable to benefit from public works programmes because no one in the household was fit for work. Whereas successive Zambian and Malawian governments had dragged their heels on expanding such cash transfer programmes beyond their pilot phase, the GNU in Zimbabwe planned to roll it out countrywide within five years, by the end of 2015. Like Zambia and Malawi, Zimbabwe under the GNU declined to introduce the 'categorical' programmes for the elderly, disabled or children that existed in South Africa and other countries in the region. For all its social democratic pretensions, the MDC remained deeply skeptical about 'handouts' and supportive of an essentially agrarian strategy. The MDC might appear 'social democratic' relative to ZANU-PF, but not by comparison with more statist governments elsewhere in the region. Repeated concerns about 'dependency' on 'handouts' revealed the conservatism of much of the MDC leadership.

Why were reforms so limited? Obvious candidates include fiscal, political and bureaucratic obstructionism and incompetence. Financially, ZANU-PF operated what was in effect a parallel government, controlling the key resource of mining revenues, and withholding these from the Ministry of Finance.[28] Without stronger public finances, it is difficult to imagine how much more MDC-led ministries might have done. The MDC did, however, have de facto access to the substantial sums brought in by donors and international agencies, mostly into the Transitional Funds that were managed by donors but allocated by the relevant ministry.[29] Politically and organisationally, MDC ministers faced the challenge of working with Permanent Secretaries appointed by Mugabe. 'All PSs in all ministries are thus ZANU PF loyalists, causing no little difficulty for the MDC ministers' (Matyszak, 2010: 100). As Primorac & Chan (2010) conclude, the GNU was a coalition of very unequal parts.

Another explanation points to the character of the MDC itself. Not only was it fatally divided into two factions – a division that may have cost Tsvangirai a first round victory in the 2008 presidential election – but its lack of ministerial experience prompted some critics to claim that the MDC simply had 'no clue' (Nkomo, 2011). Social protection policy reforms were driven by donors, not by the MDC itself. Donors drafted strategy documents, formulated the detail of proposed programmes, and largely funded and drove implementation. In some respects, UNICEF (for example) operated almost as a 'shadow government'.

[28] Interviews with Biti and with Lucia Matibenga (former MDC Minister of Public Service), Harare, 24th February 2015; see also Moore, Kriger and Raftopoulos (2013).
[29] Interview with Biti; see also Biti (2015).

In the Zimbabwean case, competitive elections and an ensuing partial change of government certainly resulted in policy reform. This, however, was not primarily due to the fact that the MDC entered government with a clear set of programmatic commitments that distinguished it from ZANU-PF. Rather, it was because the MDC and donors could work together in ways that were impossible for ZANU-PF and donors. What the partial capture of state power by the former opposition party achieved in Zimbabwe was the opening of doors between donors and the state, so that they could collaborate on policy reform. Donors' own concerns informed policy-making: Their concern to wind down food aid, to shift resources to productive programmes, and to experiment with cash transfer programmes, all reflected the international policy agenda as much as conditions within Zimbabwe specifically.

In June 2013, new presidential and parliamentary elections were held. In what Bratton calls "a crushing defeat" for the MDC, Mugabe officially won 61 percent of the vote and ZANU-PF inflicted won 160 out of 210 parliamentary seats. ZANU-PF had "out-foxed, out-organized, and out-muscled a well-meaning but inexperienced popular opposition movement" (Bratton, 2014: 1). ZANU-PF mobilized effectively its own supporters and suppressed the vote for the MDC, including through manipulation of the electoral machinery. Massive irregularities inflated the ZANU-PF's victory, but it is possible that ZANU-PF would have won even a free and fair election (*ibid*: 180-6). ZANU-PF's strong organization and purposive campaigning (including intimidation) contrasted with the widespread disorganization, disunity and strategic indirection of the MDC factions (Raftopoulos, 2013b; Tendi, 2013; Zamchiya, 2013). Gallagher (2015) suggests also that voters may have become accustomed to political violence, with many "reconnecting" with ZANU-PF because of both its distribution of gifts and its assertive nationalism, especially on the issues of land, race and liberation. It was ZANU-PF that was able to deploy the "politics of provision":

> 'Being able to access resources is an important issue for Zimbabweans, partly because of their own need to survive and flourish, and partly too because of the way it embodies their expectation of government as a provider and carer – many looked for the candidate who gives caps to everyone in the community, the MP who attends funerals or takes your sick child to hospital, the government that ensures your region has its share of access to land' (2015: 46).

By contrast:

> 'The MDC parties were described as selfish, uncaring and detached, unsuccessful in government, and unable to deliver. Their values were out of reach, impractical and failed to embody the essence of Zimbabwe. Their leaders, tarnished by incompetence, corruption or venality, had lost authority. Crucially, the parties' lack of clarity about what they stood for had become a liability …' (*ibid*: 45).

Gallagher concludes that Zimbabweans chose a state that was simultaneously "bad" (characterised by "violent prebendalism and patronage") and "good" ("a welfare state that understands and embodies collective identity") (*ibid*: 47).

Clearly the MDC failed to be credited with its slow rebuilding of the country's welfare state in terms of public education, health care and social protection, or agricultural support. In Gallagher's account, it was ZANU-PF that assumed a somewhat progressive mantle, through electoral patronage, nationalist rhetoric and perhaps also land allocation. This might appear ironic, given that MDC ministers in the GNU presided over important policy reforms. But it is less ironic when one recognizes that the policy reforms were driven more by donors and international agencies than they were by the MDC itself, which – at least with respect to social protection – never backed up the progressive rhetoric of its 2008 policy document and manifesto with any apparent substantive commitment to reform.

In Bratton's analysis, the newly-re-elected ZANU-PF government "appeared to have little to offer other than an unchecked return to economic folly, elite corruption, and the bitter politics of exclusion" (Bratton, 2014: 2). This was not entirely true of social protection policy. The new ZANU-PF government has slowed down but not reversed the reforms of the GNU. The further rollout of the HSCT programme was halted, but existing beneficiaries in participating districts continued to receive benefits, courtesy of donors. The government assumed responsibility for some programmes (notably the school fee subsidy programme BEAM). The relationship between ZANU-PF ministries and donors became more difficult than with MDC-run ministries under the GNU, but did not return to their pre-2009 hostility – perhaps because of a general concern on the part of the ZANU-PF government to re-engage with the West (Raftopoulos, 2014). In terms of social protection policy, it seems that the partial change of government in 2009 had enduring effects, even if these were curtailed after 2013.

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