



NPRC BRIEFING

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About this Briefing

This Briefing was presented to the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) on the 17th of October, 2019 drawing from the engagements done by NTJWG in the second quarter and the views it obtained from stakeholders who care about the national peace and reconciliation process in Zimbabwe. The brief was compiled through a network of stakeholder organizations across the country.

Stakeholders, through various platforms have been doing media and environmental scanning, taking note of all matters relevant to transitional justice in Zimbabwe. In this Briefing, the NTJWG looked at the outreach program, establishment of peace committees; NPRC's reporting obligations, civil society interventions, inclusion of survivors, among other key developments in the establishment of the NPRC.

This brief constitutes a summary of the issues presented to the NPRC, the responses given by the NPRC and an update of its activities given by the NPRC.

Outstanding Reports

NTJWG welcomed the appointment of the Media and Communications Officer for the Commission and hopes this will go a long way towards making the work of the Commission more visible and ensure greater compliance with reporting obligations. The NTJWG highlighted the issue of the NPRC Annual Report which remains outstanding. Officially the NPRC became operational on 5 January 2018, following the promulgation of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission Act (10:32). According to section 323 of the Constitution, the NPRC should present its annual report to Parliament describing fully its operations and activities not later than the end of March in the year following the year in which the report relates. This means that the 2018 Annual Report for the NPRC became due by the last day of March 2019. This is both a Constitutional and a statutory obligation. Section 16 (7) of the NPRC Act obliges the NPRC to further make public, the Annual Report and any other reports expected to have been presented to Parliament, within thirty days. Beyond the law, this is a good practice as it will quell accusations against the NPRC carried in the media to enable it to inform the people of Zimbabwe of the work it is undertaking.

The NPRC Commissioner agreed that the Commission needs to be more visible and indicated its intention to have a media blitz to inform the public of its work. The NPRC also highlighted its plans to train journalists and editors on reporting on peace issues.

The NPRC's Interventions in Support of Survivors and Victims

The NPRC is mandated by section 252 to deal with past conflicts to ensure post-conflict-justice, healing, and reconciliation. Since its establishment, several conflicts have happened in Zimbabwe, created many victims. These include the 1 August 2018 shootings, January 2019 shutdown atrocities and the 16 August 2019 violations. These are major conflicts on the national radar to warrant the attention of the NPRC. NTJWG encouraged the commission to establish a mechanism for tracking these upcoming conflicts and finding a way to interventions in line with its mandate. The survivors and victims of these conflicts have high expectations for redress. The NPRC Strategy highlights a victims-centric approach to healing and reconciliation and



commits to providing support and opportunities for the empowerment of the affected individuals and communities. Recently, in the Standard on 30 June 2019, the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (2019) published a list of 28 victims who are owed over USD100 000 in damages by the government of Zimbabwe. Such victims still hope to find support from the NPRC. Many survivors and victims are having to depend on the benevolence of non-state actors. The Briefing highlighted to the NPRC that it is important that it be seen to be supporting victims. The NPRC was encouraged to publicize any such interventions so that victims can make use of them. The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission has been generous enough to provide a Complaints Handling Mechanism via their website. This could be one option for the NPRC.

The NPRC's Secretariat

The NTJWG welcomed the new additions to the NPRC Secretariat. To get the new members up to speed, the NPRC convened an induction session in Nyanga from 7 to 10 August 2019. Continued updates on the capacity of the Commission will be welcome. According to the Commission's strategy, the priority of this pathway will be to strengthen the operational, institutional and human capacities of the NPRC. For the NPRC to achieve its mandate, there is no doubt that it will require substantial amounts of resources including time, money, human intellect. The NTJWG commends that the Executive Secretary and the other departmental staff are now in place, enabling the NPRC to roll-out its five-year strategic plan. This staff structure could as well be publicized including a dedicated page on the website to give the NPRC a visible face as the peoples' commission.

Liaison with Stakeholders

According to the NPRC Strategy (2018), the NPRC recognizes active numerous peace actors, especially at the community level. This shows existing and ongoing projects, programs and activities, which may already use the same strategies that the Commission might also employ. NTJWG has attended some of these engagements. The NTJWG acknowledged its nomination to the Victim Support Committee. However, the NTJWG highlighted that it is adequately represented by one of its stakeholders the Counselling Service Unit (CSU) with wealth of knowledge and experience in working with survivors.

Inclusion of Survivors in Provincial Peace Committees (PPCs)

The NTJWG acknowledged that the establishment of the Provincial Peace Committees is an innovative intervention that helps decentralize the work of the NPRC. It was however noted that there is not much information on how these committees are expected to function on the ground, strategies for inclusion and

ensuring that they do not end being associated with some notorious perpetrator groups. NTJWG has received some concerns about the fact that some political parties in the Midlands have infiltrated the committees and survivors seem not so comfortable to participate and the NPRC was encouraged to investigate the issue. NTJWG recommends an information briefing on the Peace Committees – what are they, how are they composed, role and structure. The issue of inclusion of survivors remains key. Placing victims and survivors at the center of this work also requires ensuring that victim's rights and views are fully respected in the implementation of the transitional justice process (Guiding Principles for TJ Policy and Practice in Zimbabwe, 2015: 20). This includes the use of victim-sensitive procedures that guarantee the victim's safety and dignity and the development of specific capacities to assist, support and protect victims and witnesses (U.N, 2010:6). The NPRC shed more light on the establishment of the PPCs indicating the intention to have a national peace committee cascading down to the PPCs then other peace committees at district, ward and village level.

NPRC Role in National Dialogue

Stakeholders have joined the call for inclusive dialogue. NTJWG noted that the NPRC had started consultations on a framework for national dialogue. The NTJWG chairperson expressed concern over the fact that it appears this noble initiative has stopped and the NPRC is now only focusing on POLAD and requested clarification of this issue. The Chairperson of the NTJWG shared with the NPRC the guiding principles, virtues and values for an effective national dialogue. Recently, stakeholder expressed concern at the exclusive nature of the POLAD and wondered if the NPRC as the co-chair agreed with this exclusion. NTJWG has over the time called for an inclusive national dialogue.

Conclusion

The NTJWG would like to congratulate the NPRC for work it has embarked on beginning July into October this year. The NTJWG hopes that the NPRC takes into consideration the Working Group's recommendations and concerns around its work. The NTJWG looks forward to continuously engage and work closely with the Commission to build public confidence. The NTJWG remains committed to supporting transitional justice in Zimbabwe and hopes that actors concerned will address the issues raised in this briefing with urgency.