Chapter 11

Natural Phenomena and Youth Conflicts: The Influence of Climate Change

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ABSTRACT

The study conducted exploratively from an analytical desk review perspective sought to establish climate change-induced conflicts on the youths in Zimbabwe and how they may be addressed. This is against a background where most studies around climate change often fail to focus on its effects on the youth and how it drives the latter to engage in conflicts. Data was drawn from both archival material and policy documents. The study was guided by a concept of human security, which looks at climate change as a threat to the youth, resulting in conflicts. The study established what it calls climate conflicts. It also noted that climate change does not lead to conflicts. Rather it is the result of climate change complimented by other factors that the risk of climate-induced conflicts by youths may arise. It also concluded that all the climate change effects cascade to youths’ opportunities for jobs and development.

INTRODUCTION

Youths in Zimbabwe are involved in various activities, some of which are development-oriented while others are into crime, due to a stagnant economy. Because the youth constituency in Zimbabwe constitutes the majority of the population with over 60% (Dodo & Dodo, 2014; Zimstats, 2015), their visibility and challenges become prominent. Contrary to the traditional belief that youth challenges and conflicts...
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emanate largely from social, political, and economic spheres, the study seeks to explore the influence of other natural phenomena on the lives of the youth. Particularly, conflicts involving youths in Zimbabwe are at the centre of the study. In particular, the focus of the study is on climate change as a natural phenomenon playing a role in youth conflicts in Zimbabwe. It is also against the background that the majority of the youth in Zimbabwe are in the rural areas where climate change effects are felt most (Dodo & Dodo, 2018). The study is to some extent also motivated by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 of December 2015 which focuses on Youth, Peace, and Security. The Resolution explores how conflicts impact the lives of young people.

The study that was conducted exploratively from an analytical desk review perspective drew its data from both archival material and policy documents that fell within the reasonable period of study. Precisely, while the study referred to other regional cases, it narrowed down to the Zimbabwean context. However, the study and its findings could be generally applied to any other developing economy situation.

BACKGROUND

Zimbabwe is situated in central southern Africa. Most of its land area is on a plateau between 1200m and 1600m above sea level, giving it a moderately calm subtropical climate with seasonal rainfall (GoZ, 2014). Almost 20% of Zimbabwe’s land area lies below 900m. Its climate is seriously influenced by the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone which drives the rainfall pattern (Brazier, 2015). It is landlocked, bordered by Zambia to the northwest, Mozambique to the east, Botswana to the southwest and South Africa to the south.

Zimbabwe’s economic performance fell drastically between year 2000 and 2008 and 2013 and 2017 due to economic maladministration, poor governance and the withdrawal of international support (AfDB, 2011). Resultantly, poverty increased noticeably leading to an enlarged reliance on natural resource utilization despite the growing effects of climate change. It is widely recognised that Zimbabwe is one of the most susceptible countries in Africa because of its prevalent poverty, poor governance systems and limited coping capacity (Madzwamuse, 2010). Other equally prone southern African states include Namibia, South Africa and Botswana. The economy and most youths in Zimbabwe are susceptible to climate change owing to their profound dependence on rain-fed agriculture. Apparently, agriculture accounts for roughly 15-18% of Zimbabwe’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and nearly 60% of the raw materials needed by the manufacturing sector and 40% of total export earnings (GoZ, 2010; Zimstats, 2015).
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