
IDENTITY AND EXCLUSION IN THE POST-WAR ERA: ZIMBABWE'S WOMEN FORMER FREEDOM FIGHTERS

FREDERICK SADOWBA AND
GWINYAYI ALBERT DZINESA

Abstract

This study examines how demobilisation and reintegration processes affected the roles and status of women ex-combatants after the liberation war in Zimbabwe. The success of post-war demobilisation and reintegration depends on the formulation and implementation of programmes that recognise the contributions of women and treat them as a differentiated mass with specific aspirations. In disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) processes after most wars, the roles of women in the conflicts and their post-war needs are ignored or not adequately addressed. Their critical roles and contributions in the conflict and its resolution are rarely recognised. The vital contribution that women fighters made in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle between 1962 and 1979 has gone largely unsung. Through extensive interviews with female ex-combatants, this article argues that the absence of a gender-sensitive demobilisation and reintegration policy resulted in the marginalisation and exclusion of women ex-combatants in the military, social, political and professional spheres. What then, it asks, are the lessons that can be learnt from Zimbabwe's experience of demobilisation and reintegration?

Introduction

Women combatants played vital roles in Zimbabwe's armed liberation struggle between 1962 and 1979. This article examines how the demobilisation and reintegration programme impacted their political, economic and social roles and status. In the first of five parts it offers a conceptual framework for the assessment of the gender dimensions of demobilisation and reintegration. Then follows an historical background about female combatants' participation in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle until the 1979 Lancaster House constitutional talks. The third part looks at how women former combatants fared in the integration process after independence in 1980. Fourth, the article analyses how demobilisation and reintegration affected the status of women ex-combatants. It examines the work of the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans' Association (ZNLWA) in advancing the interests of its women members and how patriarchal gender relations affected the demobilisation and reintegration process. Finally it asks what lessons can be drawn from Zimbabwe's experience with demobilisation and reintegration to apply in similar programmes involving female fighters elsewhere.

Demobilisation is described in this paper as 'The process by which armed forces either downsize or completely disband, as part of a broader transformation from war to peace' (United Nations 1999:15). It is a short-term process that typically involves the assembly,

quartering and disarmament of the combatants, administration, socio-economic profiling and pre-discharge orientation. The discharged combatants may receive some form of compensation to encourage their transition to civilian life. Reintegration refers to 'Assistance measures provided to former combatants that would increase the potential for their families' economic and social reintegration into civil society' (United Nations 1999:15). It has economic, social, political and psychological implications. It is a lengthy process through which ex-combatants and their dependants resettle in communities, take a role in the decision-making process, engage in sustainable civilian employment and livelihoods (Kingma 2000:28), re-adjust attitudes and expectations and deal with their war-related mental trauma (Kingma:183). The society should be adaptable and accommodating to facilitate the process.

In order to facilitate equal gender relations and positively contribute to peacebuilding, gender-aware DDR programmes should be devised and implemented (Farr 2000:4-9). This is in resonance with Point 13 of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security that encourages planners of DDR processes to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants. Actors in peace negotiations and agreements should recognise the special needs of women and girls and explicitly involve them in the peace talks and planning of the DDR process (Farr 2003:26). The implementation of gender-sensitive demobilisation and reintegration determines the effectiveness of the process. The consideration of gender differences buttresses women combatants' position in the post-conflict framework. It is, however, critical to consider the country-specific gender ideologies when implementing gender-conscious DDR (Farr 2003).

This article draws mainly on desk research and interviews. Earlier research and publications on the subject were reviewed. Individual interviews were conducted with former combatants from both ZANLA and ZIPRA during the first half of 2004.¹

Women Combatants in Zimbabwe's Liberation War

The liberation war of the 1960s and 1970s pitted ZANLA and ZIPRA, the military wings of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU), against the Rhodesian security forces. ZAPU, led by Joshua Nkomo, was established in 1961 as successor to the banned National Democratic Party. ZANU splintered off from ZAPU in 1963 under the leadership of the late Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole. ZANU established ZANLA in 1964 and ZAPU established ZIPRA in 1965.

Women fighters played important roles in both liberation armies. In the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), training 'in the use of weapons and on carrying out guerrilla warfare' was initially the preserve of male comrades as women were considered to be 'physically weaker' (Mugabe 1983:77). Drawing lessons from the guerrilla struggles in China in the 1930s and 1940s and Mozambique in the 1960s and 1970s, the ZANLA leadership realised that this was a serious oversight:

We had neglected our women. We had relied on our conservative tradition and allowed it to narrow our concept of the struggle as that carried out by men to the exclusion of women. But we had got a re-awakening and thus began vigorously training our girls in the art of war. We turned out first a few, then a few hundreds, then several hundreds until we had several thousands. Has this been in vain? Who today can deny this was a correct decision? (Mugabe 1983:77).

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Operations, Logistics and Supplies, Training, Personnel, Production, Construction and Education. They engaged in an assortment of tasks: nursing and educating cadres, carrying out political education programmes in the operational areas and liberated zones, carrying war material to the front and even fighting (Mugabe 1983:78). The Zimbabwe People's

Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) also recruited women for guerrilla training. Its women combatants mostly engaged in support roles outside the country, including medical care and transportation (Kriger 2003:122). While men and women underwent similar military training, it was mostly the men who were deployed to the battlefield:

I was among the first group to undergo military training at Chimoio in 1977. I was then deployed to fight in Takawira in the Buhera district. In the past society looked down upon women. However, in the liberation war women and men were treated in the same manner and played similar roles. Women were deployed into the battlefield and engaged in the actual fighting. Some female guerillas carried weapons from the rear into the battlefield. Some would be relieved at the border areas, but some actually crossed the border and delivered these weapons into the battlefield. In the event that they were attacked or ambushed by the Rhodesian forces, these women would use weapons in their possession to fight back (John-Masoka interview 2004).

There was no difference with men. We all did the same type of work, even though women were more on the administration part well after undergoing training of the same nature as men (Bamu interview 2004).

Female combatants carried materials, which included ammunition, from the rear. There were no different duties from male comrades. Why? Because we were both operating in various sectors and provinces here in Zimbabwe (Masenguridza interview 2004).

The role I played after my military training was to train other cadres and most of us were deployed in various departments... reconnaissance, artillery department, engineering department, nurses, catering. We carried ammunition from Zambia to Zambezi, giving [it to] male comrades (Mguni interview 2004).

I was part of a group of 19 young boys and girls that were chosen to undergo training as medical assistants. After six months of training we were dispatched to go to different camps. Some of us were deployed to the battlefield. In every platoon or section we had a section medical officer or section medical assistant who would attend to the war-injured or offer first-aid services. I was dispatched to work at Parirenyatwa, the main headquarters hospital. I was very young then – 15 or 16 years old (Dongo interview 2004).

Notwithstanding the restricted deployment of female fighters, ZANLA probably deployed more women fighters than ZIPRA. Ruth, a female ex-ZIPRA combatant, said:

In Zambia...it was very, very rare for women to come in and operate...They were mainly used for political "spreading"...as commissars as well as instructors for military training. They were very good. They mainly did not want to send female combatants to the front... They usually sent men. That is why in Zambia the females were more protected. They were more advantaged than...females in Mozambique (Lyons 2004:123).

Gertrude Moyo recounted: 'We ZAPU women did not go to the front, but we were defending the camps... refugee camps like Mkushi. If an enemy came, they defended and actually shot and killed the enemy' (Zimbabwe Women Writers 2000:41).

Yet despite much of the party rhetoric implying egalitarianism and the parallel recruitment and training of women alongside men, their deployment in leadership positions was not egalitarian. During the war the ZANU (PF) leader, Robert Mugabe, noted: 'Our women have scored numerous victories alongside the men. They have demonstrated beyond all doubt that they are as capable as men and deserve equal treatment both in regard to training and appointments' (Mugabe 1983:78). Notwithstanding this recognition, women remained under-represented in key organs during the war. Sheba Tavariswa, who was Deputy Secretary of Education and Culture on the Central Committee, was the only woman to be appointed to ZANLA's High Command. Joyce Mujuru, currently Minister of Rural Resources and Infrastructural Development, said:

I was lucky to be one of the few who were chosen as leaders at that time. I was one of the few women who got trained to either do the Commissariat work, the political training, or the military training...When selections for women representatives on the Central Committee or Politburo were being carried out, I was the only one to be chosen to be the Politburo member. And when Mrs Mugabe came to join us, she then became the second one (Lyons 2004:123).

The fact that few women engaged in combat probably explains their poor representation in the higher military ranks and their incapacity to mobilise effectively for post-war recognition of their wartime roles.

While women combatants were discouraged from falling pregnant, several women had babies. This was not always a matter of choice, however. Male commanders reportedly abused their authority to demand and expect sexual favours from female fighters. ZANU established Osibisa Camp for woman combatants and their children in a rearward base in Mozambique.

Osibisa Camp was a creation of ill-disciplined men. There was a rule that it was not allowed to have babies. There was a rule again not to kill babies. Osibisa Camp was created due to the acts of the so-called commanders. Commanders would have several girls. The situation at the camp was unbearable. There were no structures such as barracks. For example, beds were made of grass. There was no constant supply of food. There was no special food for children. Women combatants with babies went through hell at the camp (Dongo interview 2004).

Prudence Uriri observed that some relationships were consensual. 'You know, when times were very hard, sometimes it was not really a forced relationship, but there was a condition which forced you, as an individual, to get into such a relationship because of the material benefit' (Zimbabwe Women Writers 2000:74). Another woman ex-fighter explained how women traded sex for social advancement: 'Having a relationship with a *chef* meant you

had access to food, clothes and other luxuries that were not available to many other girls at the camps' (Lyons 2004:271). That these arrangements were generally strategic and transient is attested by the fact that some women combatants who bore children during the war found it difficult to become reintegrated in peacetime, as will become clear.

Post-conflict Integration and Women Ex-combatants

The Lancaster House Agreement that ended Zimbabwe's liberation war did not provide a legal framework for the integration of the warring parties or a formal demobilisation and reintegration programme. It left intact and legitimised three rival armies: the Rhodesian security forces, ZANLA and ZIPRA. Yet while women had fought in the war they were almost invisible in the peace negotiations. They were relegated to the periphery and male decision-making took centre stage. Women were under-represented in both the Patriotic Front (PF) and Rhodesian delegations. The PF delegation consisted of 21 men and one woman, a Miss F. Siziba. The United Kingdom delegation also had 21 men and one woman, a Mrs A.J. Phillips. The Rhodesian delegation had 22 men (Lyons 2004:104). Professor Walter Kamba, who was legal advisor to ZANU at Lancaster House, commented:

There was no woman in our (PF) negotiating delegation... even in the Rhodesian delegation. Maybe it was because of male chauvinism. I do not think that anybody ever raised it... Our secretaries were women. At the decision-making level it was a different proposition. She (Miss Siziba) was one of the senior secretaries in the ZAPU delegation. During the discussions, questions that arose were, for example, those of citizenship for women Zimbabweans married to foreigners or foreign women married to Zimbabweans. These issues were debated throughout the nights. In terms of our socialist approach and equality between men and women, the males would also become citizens. This was, however, politicking. Later, the whole provision was changed (Interview 2004).

Their lack of representation meant that women ex-fighters were unable to communicate their concerns and make a case for a gender-aware demobilisation and reintegration in the Lancaster House Agreement. On the agenda at Lancaster House were a ceasefire, transitional arrangements and independence elections. Similarly, the new government was preoccupied with nation-building and development, including resettling and rehabilitating displaced persons, rebuilding the economy and tackling poverty, disease and illiteracy in the aftermath of colonial oppression and a destructive liberation war.² Women's political aspirations and needs were sidelined. Demobilisation and reintegration programmes at this stage were not properly planned or implemented. Not much account was taken of the concerns and needs of ex-combatants, particularly the women fighters, which had long-term negative effects on development. The failure to address the needs of ex-fighters adequately and the 1997 unbudgeted compensatory payouts to riotous war veterans had a profound impact on an economy that was already in decline.

After independence in 1980 the government conducted 'Operation Merger', integrating ZANLA, ZIPRA and the Rhodesian security forces with the help of the British Military Advisory and Training Team (BMATT). The new, politically balanced Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) was initially targeted at between 30,000 and 35,000 forces (Alao 1995:104-107; Rupiya 1995:27-43). The 66,000 fighters of the liberation armies included an estimated 4,000 female guerillas at independence (Kriger 2003:122). The integration process was to embrace some of these women combatants who had opted for a military career.

Women ex-combatants faced significant obstacles to qualify for integration, such as the requirement to pass aptitude tests. One woman recounted: 'We were given an exam whereby we were questioned on commerce and accounting. If you failed you went back to the assembly place. You could take the exam again. If you pass you are lucky; if you fail, tough luck...' (Kriger 2003:128). Many female ex-combatants were demoted upon integration, another source of gender inequality. One former ZIPRA woman commander complained:

... us ladies, we were so unfortunate. Most of us were integrated as privates whereby we were getting Z\$75 (about US\$117) per month. I don't think we were treated like our male counterparts. Even though we held the same ranks, we were integrated as privates. Then we were sent for those courses. Those of us who rose, rose from private (Kriger 2003:128).

Their promotion prospects were not bright either, because educational requirements for officer posts were daunting. Fewer than 20 percent of the ex-combatants had any secondary education and nearly 50 percent were illiterate (Kriger 2003:158), partly because of the discriminatory colonial education system and partly because they enlisted at a young age. Little has changed since the liberation war: today the most senior women in the ZNA are colonels.

Their liberation war credentials, however, helped some women to advance in their chosen military careers. Captain Angeline Tongogara, who after Major Joyce O'Toole was once the highest-ranking woman in the ZNA, observed in *The Sunday Mail*: 'In the past the army used to be regarded as a man's world. With... having fought side by side with men during the liberation struggle, all differences have been buried.' By 1982, 1,500 women had enlisted in the ZNA (*The Sunday Mail* 28 March 1982).

Mainstreaming or Marginalising Women Ex-combatants?

The government set up a Demobilisation Directorate in July 1981 under the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. It was to co-ordinate the demobilisation and reintegration of Patriotic Front forces with relevant government ministries. The Zimbabwe National Army was to be reduced from 65,000 to 41,000 by 1983. It was eventually reduced to 41,519 (*The Sunday Mail* 11 August 1996). The demobilisation programme offered:

- Further education for demobilised cadres who had not finished their primary or secondary education;
- Technical training in motor mechanics, welding, agriculture, medicine, local government, customs and immigration;
- Expert guidance to ex-combatants seeking self-employment or forming cooperatives;
- A monthly demobilisation stipend equivalent to \$264 spread over two years or a one-off payment of about \$6,343.

Significant shortcomings were apparent in the demobilisation and reintegration programme, notably a lack of socio-economic profiling, skills development and workable support mechanisms. A clearly defined 'physical, mental and spiritual' rehabilitation policy was also absent, as was any recognition of gender differences. These deficiencies had adverse implications for the participation of female former combatants in the post-independence social, political and economic arenas.

Zimbabwe's demobilisation and reintegration process was not gender-sensitive. While the inadequacies of the programme resulted in suffering for most ex-combatants, some

women faced additional reintegration problems by virtue of being seen to have played 'unwomanly' roles in the war (Musemwa 1995:50).

Civilian men broadly stigmatised female ex-combatants as being 'too independent, rough, ill-educated and unfeminine to be good wives' (*The Sunday Mail* 22 November 1981). Interviewees told the authors that women ex-combatants had problems with stigma and needed counselling on 'how to walk, dress, relate to their peers and the importance of acquiring education and staying with their parents'. A former Director of Social Welfare knew of one young female ex-combatant who 'shunned all her former female combatant friends so that it would appear as if she was here all along' in order to better her chances of getting married (Sanyangore interview 2004). Maj. Agrippa Gava (ret.), a former director of the liberation war veterans' association, disputed this account 'because female liberation war veterans have families like any other civilian woman, marital problems and divorces like any other civilian women'.

The situation was compounded for women fighters who returned with 'fatherless' children. One woman ex-combatant stated:

'At the time we were forced to sleep with senior party officials and bore children with them. When we came back from the war most of them refused to look after their children, saying these children were not theirs. Today some of the fathers of these children are ministers and senior government officials' (Lyons 2004:271).

Most freedom fighters used *noms de guerre* during the liberation struggle. Women fighters who had babies with rank-and-file combatants and were not given exact personal details found it difficult to identify and locate the fathers of their children. These men might have been transferred or died during the war. Identifying the fathers was easier for those who had children with the commanders. The three daughters of a woman combatant who died are still trying to find their father using his pseudonyms (Dongo interview 2004).

Single mothers were looked down upon in the African tradition; while the communities rejoiced at the return of male ex-combatants, they despised female ex-combatants, particularly those with fatherless children. It mattered little that some of the men who had fathered their children had been killed in the war or that many civilian girls also had illegitimate children (*The Sunday Mail* 29 November 1981). That some female ex-

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combatants were single mothers also 'thwarted their possibilities of being re-educated, retrained or rehabilitated after the war. In many cases where the father either perished during the war, or denied parental status, women ex-combatants faced a difficult time at independence because of the responsibility of child care' (Lyons 2004:271). Many women fighters who returned with fatherless children were disowned by their

families and lived as misfits, seeking solace in drug and alcohol abuse, because the government did not offer them specific assistance (*Financial Gazette* 1997).

At the end of the war, ingrained patriarchal gender relations that cast women in feminised roles limited to motherhood hindered the reintegration prospects for female ex-fighters. Maj. Gava noted in an interview in 2000: 'Our society is backward and not educated in as

far as war is concerned. It thinks that going to war is a preserve for men.' During the liberation struggle some women ex-combatants wore trousers instead of dresses and skirts, campaigned for women's rights and saw themselves as equals of their male comrades. They had to revert to traditional dress codes and roles after the war. The statue dedicated to the memory of freedom fighters in Heroes Acre, Harare, notably, depicts a woman in a skirt. After independence the conservative stereotyping of gender-appropriate labour resulted in the downgrading of women combatants' liberation war contribution to that of 'wives and mothers' (Farr 2000:7).

The experience of Zimbabwean women ex-combatants is not an uncommon one. Writing about Eritrea in 2002, Elise Fredrikke Barth notes that:

When male and female ex-soldiers return to civil society, they are not received in the same way. While men are perceived to have strengthened their gender role through military life and are considered even more masculine than before, female fighters are increasingly marginalised...

When a war ends, the female soldiers from the winning party of the conflict may at first receive gratitude from civil society. Gradually, however, women are pushed in the direction of a gender role considered more acceptable for women in that particular society. This is characteristic of the situation of female soldiers all over the world: conduct encouraged during the war is not encouraged in peacetime...As a result, women experience a much greater break with civil society's expectations with regard to appropriate gender behaviour than men when they join a military group. Afterwards, they are challenged in a totally different way, expected to return to roles very different from their war activities. This certainly has implications for their reintegration into society.' Pregnant fighters whom the United Nations repatriated to Zimbabwe were excluded from the demobilisation and reintegration programme altogether (Kriger 2003:91).

Many female combatants left the military camps without being officially demobilised, thereby forfeiting their entitlement to the two-year monthly allowances of \$264 and the chance of vocational training (ZIANA 1981). Delays in integrating female ex-combatants into the army led to their disillusionment and resulted in some of them leaving the assembly

points prematurely (Kriger 2003:91). The Commission of Inquiry into the Administration of the War Veterans' Compensation Fund, set up in 1997, attributed the general reluctance among female ex-combatants to seek recompense under the fund as a strategy to avoid opening old wounds and relive traumatic experiences suffered during the liberation struggle, and understood that this was particular to them as women.³ It appeared that female ex-combatants discharged themselves in the

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1980s in an effort to expedite their severance of ties with a traumatising military past – a choice that would carry the weight of self-reintegration under difficult socio-economic conditions characterised by patriarchal gender relations. Their plight raises the importance of initiating reintegration programmes that encompass wider societal reorientation and prepare communities to accommodate the former combatants, particularly the women. This approach was never taken in Zimbabwe.

Some women ex-combatants found government jobs, but their pay was low because they lacked qualifications. Under a civil service priority employment scheme, for instance, the Ministry of Health employed ex-combatants with no qualifications as medical assistants on the basis of their wartime medical experience. A few women did comparatively well. A female ex-combatant, Alice Masenguridza, noted: 'We met some of our expectations. Female combatants were given high positions in both government and parastatals; also some are even members of parliament' (Interview 2004).

Their representation in Cabinet and Parliament was negligible, however. Women won five of the 57 seats that ZANU (PF) secured in the first post-independence parliamentary elections in 1980, while three of PF-ZAPU's 20 seats went to women. Only three women were appointed to the Cabinet: Joyce Mujuru as Minister of Youth and, Sport and Recreation; Victoria Chitepo as Deputy Minister of Education and Culture; and Naomi Nhiwatiwa as Deputy Minister of Posts and Telecommunications (Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000:134).

After the elections the government built Heroes Acre, a burial place outside the capital, Harare, for distinguished nationalists. The designation of hero status was widely perceived to be highly selective. The dependants received government-funded welfare benefits while most of the rank-and-file fighters who gave their lives were condemned to oblivion (Werbner 1998:76). Of Zimbabwe's 70 national heroes, 58 of whom are buried at the national shrine, only three are women: Sally Mugabe, the first wife of President Mugabe, Joanna Nkomo, widow of the late PF-ZAPU leader, Dr Joshua Nkomo, and Julia Zvobgo, wife of the late former Cabinet minister Eddison Zvobgo. Very few women were declared national heroines

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upon their deaths. Notable among them was Sheba Tavariswa. The government did little to address the welfare concerns of the surviving war heroines. A woman ex-combatant lamented:

I don't feel like a heroine because I have not been given the respect from others. I have got no medals to indicate that I am a hero. I feel empty, not a hero at all. I would appreciate to be shown love and appreciation for my sacrifice, but I don't know who will do this. Maybe the government...At least the War Veterans' Association is doing a good job, but I want my payout (Lyons 2004:271).

In 1989, leading women ex-fighters, including Irene Zindi, Margaret Dongo and Nancy Saungweme, convened a meeting at which they acknowledged that by not taking the initiative they were partly to blame for their neglect and marginalisation. They suggested the establishment of a women war veterans' wing under the planned Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans' Association to articulate their grievances and campaign for a better deal (Dongo interview 2004).

The ZNLWVA and Female Ex-combatants

The programmatic deficiencies in Zimbabwe's demobilisation and reintegration strategy caused it to fail in its fundamental goal of transforming ex-combatants into productive and self-sufficient civilians, notably women. The Unity Accord signed between ZANU (PF) and PF-ZAPU in 1987 eliminated state-sanctioned ethnic hostilities and facilitated the establishment in 1989 of the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans' Association (ZNLWVA), which transcended political, regional and ethnic affiliations. Until then war

veterans had formed regional and provincial groupings such as the Mashonaland West War Veterans' Association. The ZNLWVA gave ex-combatants a platform from which to campaign for recognition of their liberation war roles and safeguard and advance their welfare. Its aims reflect the inadequacies of the demobilisation and reintegration programme and their perceived neglect by the government. In their constitution they vow 'to influence or petition any public or private authority, organisation or person to provide assistance and special recognition to veterans and their families'.

The ZNLWVA comprises national, provincial and district executive committees, each with a secretary and deputy secretary for women's affairs. The constitution also provides for nine specialised sub-committees, including one for women's affairs whose aim it is 'to mobilise and advance the interests of all female members and ensure that special recognition is accorded to female members of the Association'. Having women war veterans' institutions within the ZNLWVA was a progressive development. It provided a space for mobilisation and discussion, which is important for women because they generally feel the ties of community more strongly than men.

However, some women ex-combatants have mixed feelings about the association's performance. Ellen Nomatter John-Masoka commended the positive contribution of the ZNLWVA, but complained that fake ex-combatants with self-serving agendas had been elected to its leadership: 'Poverty and hunger resulted in the establishment of the ZNLWVA. The association has been very helpful to war veterans. The major problem is that we now have many bogus elements in the association who are disrupting its activities' (Interview 2004).

Ex-combatant Monica Mguni said that while the formation of the ZNLWVA resulted in recognition for the war veterans 'as liberators of the country', the association had failed to secure financial support for its women members' income-generating projects, leaving them 'as poor as we were before the association was formed' (Interview 2004).

The ZNLWVA failed to act on women ex-fighters' calls for it to tackle their stigmatisation and offer support to unemployed women members (Zimbabwe Women Writers 2000:42). The association successfully pressured the government in 1997 to grant all registered war veterans gratuities, pensions and other benefits. More than 52,000 war veterans received one-off gratuities equivalent to \$5,000 and tax-free monthly pensions of about \$200 at an estimated cost to the national fiscus of over \$450 million (Mazarire & Rupiya 2000:75). These beneficiaries included registered female ex-fighters. Statutory Instruments 280 and

The association successfully pressured the government in 1997 to grant all registered war veterans gratuities, pensions and other benefits.

281 [War Veterans Act] of 1997 set out the War Veterans 'Pensions and Benefit Scheme' and define an eligible veteran as someone who 'underwent military training and participated, consistently and persistently, in the liberation struggle which occurred in Zimbabwe and in neighbouring countries between 1 January 1962 and 29 February

1980, in connection with the bringing about of Zimbabwe's independence on 18th April 1980'. The definition therefore included women who operated in the frontline and those who provided critical logistical backup from bases in the neighbouring countries such as Mozambique and Zambia.

The awards hastened the decline of a national economy which had registered average growth of 1.5 percent a year and could not cater for unbudgeted funds on such a scale

(Mazarire and Rupiya 2000:75). Nationwide protests forced the government to shelve plans to increase the awards through special taxation on incomes, fuel and electricity, among other items. In November 1997 the Zimbabwe dollar collapsed against the world's major currencies, shedding more than 73% of its value. The resulting hyperinflation resulted in a fresh wave of popular urban unrest. Skyrocketing prices of basic commodities brought hardship for war veterans and civilians alike.

Conclusion

This paper has examined how the demobilisation and reintegration programme affected the roles, lives and livelihoods of women ex-combatants in post-war Zimbabwe. It has shown how their marginalisation impacts on their reintegration and denies them recognition of their contribution and access to employment. The contribution they made in the war of liberation was downplayed in a gender-insensitive demobilisation and reintegration strategy devised after the war. Patriarchal gender relations and an indifferent wider community contributed to their ostracism. Their concerns went largely unheard in absence of both a strong female representation in government and an influential, organised women's movement, and their failure to capitalise on their liberation struggle credentials in pursuit of recognition and recompense.

While each demobilisation and reintegration process is country-specific, the analysis of Zimbabwe's demobilisation and reintegration process offers the following lessons:

- It is vital to conduct a needs assessment and socio-economic profiling of ex-fighters before demobilisation and reintegration. This facilitates the planning of appropriate demobilisation and reintegration processes. The success of a DDR programme correlates closely with the degree to which ex-fighters are treated as a heterogeneous community with gender-specific needs. Women ex-fighters are major stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of demobilisation and reintegration programmes. Their inclusion facilitates planning and implementation of gender-sensitive reintegration processes;
- Women fighters who were victims of sexual violence require psycho-social rehabilitation and support;
- Attitudes in the society at large about gender have significant effects on the planning and successful implementation of DDR programmes. Zimbabwe's patriarchal gender relations meant that the sidelining of the specific needs of women ex-fighters was not questioned;
- The civilian society should be primed to be flexible and accommodating to the wartime experiences of female combatants. This can critically reshape civil society's perception of female ex-fighters;
- Community awareness programmes could effectively inform civil society of the imperatives supporting comprehensive and effective demobilisation and reintegration;
- The existence of war veterans' associations is not a sufficient guarantee of the effective reintegration of female ex-combatants;
- Functional gender-specific structures and effective involvement of women ex-fighters are crucial for such women to communicate their needs and problems.

FREDERICK SADOMBA is a project manager with the Centre for Defence Studies at the University of Zimbabwe. **GWINYAYI ALBERT DZINESA** is a doctoral fellow with the Centre for Africa's International Relations at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa.

Endnotes

¹ All but one of the interviews were carried out in Harare between February and June 2004. The women ex-combatants interviewed were: Noliwe Bamu, Margaret Dongo, Ellen Nomatter John-Masoka, Alice Masenguridza, and Monica Mguni. Other interviewees were: Col. Tshinga J. Dube (ret.), Zimbabwe Defence Industries managing director; Dumiso Dabengwa, the former head of ZIPRA and a former Minister of Home Affairs; Dawson D. Sanyangore, former Director of Social Welfare; and Prof. Walter Kamba, Herbert Chitepo UNESCO Chair, University of Zimbabwe. Maj. Agrippa Gava (ret.), director of the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans' Association, was interviewed on 29 February 2000.

² Report of the Zimbabwe Conference on Reconstruction and Development, Harare, 23-27 March 1981.

³ Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Administration of the War Victims Compensation Act 1998:53.

⁴ Zimbabwe did not provide a favourable political climate for uncomplicated demobilisation and reintegration. The DDR process in Zimbabwe was affected by the collapse of the ZANU-ZAPU coalition government soon after independence, the subsequent withdrawal of former ZIPRA forces, and apartheid South Africa's destabilisation strategy (Mazarire & Rupiya 2000:72). Ethnic tensions between ZAPU and ZANU spilled over from the liberation war to scupper post-war integration and demilitarisation. The passage of time did little to heal the divisions. Apartheid South Africa, the major economic, political and military force in the region, exploited these mutual hostilities to drive a wedge between the two parties. Armed clashes broke out between ZANLA and ZIPRA combatants in the assembly points. The Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) was forced to quell an uprising by armed ZIPRA guerrillas in Entumbane, Matabeleland, in November 1980, and the government disarmed the guerrillas.

Zimbabwe experienced armed dissident activity in Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands from 1981 to 1987. The government accused the ZAPU leadership of fomenting a rebellion and deployed the North Korean-trained 5 Brigade (*Gukurahundi*) to counter the 'dissident' menace, resulting in several thousand civilian lives lost. Violence and insecurity continued to rock Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands until the signing of an historic Unity Accord between ZAPU and ZANU in 1987.

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