Conclusion

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The conclusions to be drawn from the research presented in this volume are as many and as various as the countries where the research was conducted and the issues which the participating partners chose to investigate. There are nevertheless common lessons to be learnt that reflect the shared history and present-day challenges of the various countries that were examined.

All of the researchers recommend greater government intervention in some way, be it through the improvement of police services to combat stock theft in Lesotho, in taking the lead in providing services for street children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), or through engaging in dialogue with civil society and political opposition groups with a view to the peaceful resolution of political disputes. Engaging in dialogue requires nothing other than the political will to do so, a fact which several states in the region would do well to note. Intervention in a more material way has hitherto been held back through the weakness of states that are still recovering from war (hence the lack of attention given to youth needs in the DRC and Angola) or which simply lack the funds or the capacity to take appropriate action: witness the fact that police plans to tackle stock theft in Lesotho have had only a mixed success up to now.

Yet the SADC states find themselves at a uniquely favourable moment in history, for several reasons. First, the region is closer to absolute peace than at any time since the end of the colonial period. Angola, which once seemed to be blighted by the region's most intractable conflict, has enjoyed three years of peace. While the ongoing conflict in the east of the DRC is not to be downplayed or regarded as something that will disappear on its own accord, the war has been contained to the point where it no longer poses an immediate threat to the country as a whole.

Second, changing attitudes towards debt relief among rich country governments are bound to have positive consequences for Africa as a

whole. Within SADC, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia have met the criteria to qualify for immediate debt relief from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Fund. Moreover, the rich countries' acceptance in principle of the possibility of 100% debt write-offs bodes well for the eventual extension of such measures to other countries in the region. It is now up to civil society to monitor whether the funds that will become available through debt relief are channelled into the sort of measures that the authors of the papers in this book have identified: measures aimed at poverty reduction, physical security, development and care for society's most vulnerable members, especially children, unemployed youth and women. As our partners from Zambia have noted, "poverty endangers human security through its effect on the quality of life"; governments and parliaments, through shaping policy and allocating funds, are uniquely privileged to make a difference when it comes to reversing poverty.

Action from government does not come without pressure, especially where resources are scarce. Civil society organisations have an essential role to play in identifying problem areas and lobbying for them to be addressed. Civil society cannot, however, see its role as simply one of providing direction to the efforts of government. The research presented in this book amply demonstrates cases where direct civil society involvement has been the answer to problems that seem beyond the reach of even the best-intentioned government; witness, for example, the gains made by community-based policing in Lesotho.

When it comes to dealing with political unrest, our Tanzanian partners warn that when a negotiated settlement is sought, "the leaders at the negotiating table are often the very same ones who provoked or maintained conflicts in the first place". Here, civil society organisations have an irreplaceable role to play in taking forward the interests of human security, as opposed to those of political expediency. Our partners in Zimbabwe make this explicit: "CSOs and NGOs must also take time to appreciate that politics is not about setting up and operating social gatherings and neighbourhood talk-shops. On the contrary it is about the pursuit and competition for political power, control and influence. This is absolutely critical if conflicts of interests are to be avoided and minimised."

On a positive note, Tanzania at the same time presents the idea of 'Muafaka', an indigenous approach to problem-solving that other societies in conflict could do well to emulate. Insofar as the reconciliation and dialogue model presented by Muafaka has been applied, it has been

notably successful; it is now up to government, political players and civil society alike to ensure that its application is carried through to its logical conclusion. As the analysis presented throughout this book makes clear, responding to issues of human security is not primarily about immediate humanitarian action, but about identifying and addressing the root causes of insecurity with a view to securing longer-term benefits. This implies solutions that are devised from the grassroots upwards, with local knowledge and insight the key to policy-making and to action.

All these case studies portray the many faces of human security in the selected SADC countries. Most of these countries are still struggling with post-independence or post-conflict security and development challenges. The cases clearly demonstrate that the security of people matters. Without educated, healthy and working people, states are unlikely to maintain sustainable peace, organise democratic elections, police national boundaries, prevent social unrest, consolidate democratic practices, promote economic development, control population growth that leaves children abandoned on the street, and, above all, protect political institutions (including government itself) from bad governance and poor service delivery. From these studies, it is clear that street children in the city of Kinshasa (DRC) and uneducated youth in the city of Luanda (Angola) may become a real security concern in urban governance; that politically alienated populations may increase electoral insecurity and political activism as it was the case in Zimbabwe and Zanzibar; that poverty in Zambia can lead to political disengagement and serious democracy deficits; and finally, the South African case proves that even educated populations may fail to perceive government and SADC efforts correctly when university learning is completely disconnected from policy processes.

In brief, civil society engagement with security community in the region may provide the state with field information and knowledge of people at risk of human insecurity. One of the noble goals of democratic governance systems consists of empowering, supporting and building partnerships with credible civil society organisations, the private sector and community organisations for effective delivery of public services. These services include protection of vulnerable people and mobilising fiscal revenues that sustain government activities such as affordable public schools, healthcare, housing, water, electrification, transport, justice, police, army and voting. From this study, it appears that credible civil society organisations should form working partnerships with local government and municipalities for effective service delivery or policy

implementation, and sensitise central government authorities on critical policy and governance issues affecting the quality of political and economic life for all citizens.

NOTE

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