



REPORT OF THE

**PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE, HOME AFFAIRS AND SECURITY
SERVICES ON THE BENCHMARK VISIT TO NAMIBIA ON THE WELFARE OF
VETERANS OF THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE (18 – 24 SEPTEMBER 2022)**

FOURTH SESSION - NINTH PARLIAMENT

OCTOBER 2022

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S.C. 42 2022

ORDERED IN TERMS OF STANDING ORDER No. 18:

- i. At the commencement of every session, there shall be as many committees to be designated according to government portfolios as the Standing Rules and Orders Committee may deem fit.
- ii. It shall be the function of such committees to examine expenditure administration and policy of government departments and other matters falling under their jurisdictions as Parliament may, by resolution determine
- iii. The members of such committees shall be appointed by the Standing Rules and Orders Committee, from one or both Houses of Parliament, and such appointments shall take into account the expressed interests or expertise of the Members and Senators and the political and gender composition of Parliament.
- iv. Each select committee shall be known by the portfolio determined for it by the Standing Rules and Orders Committee.

SPEAKER'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Speaker announced that all the Committees of the First Session would continue to operate as previously constituted until such time that new Committee were appointed by the Committee on Standing Rules and Orders. On Thursday 7 October 2021, the Hon Speaker, announced that Committees would resume sittings on Monday, 11 October, 2021. The following are Members of the Portfolio Committee on Defence, Home Affairs and Security Services:

Hon Chamisa S, Hon Chidakwa J, Hon Chidziva H, Hon Chimbaira G, Hon Chipato A, Hon Chinotimba J, Hon Chiyangwa P, Hon Brig. Gen. (Rtd) Gwanetsa K.K, Hon January S, Hon Machingauta C, Hon Mahlangu S, Hon Masenda N.T, Hon Brig. Gen. (Rtd) Mayihlome L, Hon Mguni S.K, Hon Moyo L, Hon Muchimwe P.T, Hon Col (Rtd) Dr. Murire J, Hon Nguluvhe A, Hon Rungani A, Hon Sewera J, Hon Sikhala J, Hon Tsvangirai V

Hon Brig. Gen. (Rtd) Mayihlome L was appointed the Chairperson

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES S.O 21

Subject to these Standing Orders a Portfolio Committee shall:

- i.** Consider and deal with all Bills and Statutory Instruments or other matters which are referred to it by or under a resolution of the House or by the Speaker;
- ii.** Consider or deal with an appropriation or money bill or any aspect of an appropriation or money bill referred to it by these Standing Orders or by or under resolution of this House;
- iii.** Monitor, investigate, inquire into and make recommendations relating to any aspect of the legislative programme, budget, rationalization, policy formulation or any other matter it may consider relevant of the government department falling within the category of affairs assigned to it, and may for that purpose consult and liaise with such a department;
- iv.** Consider or deal with all international treaties, conventions and agreements relevant to it, which are from time to time negotiated, entered into or agreed upon.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Portfolio Committee on Defense, Home Affairs and Security Services conducted a benchmarking visit to Namibia from the 18th to the 24th of September 2022. The purpose of the benchmarking visit was largely to understand the laws and institutions in place to address the welfare of veterans of the liberation struggle in Namibia. Furthermore, the benchmark visit sought to appreciate the challenges, benefits and empowerment programs in place for veterans of the liberation struggle in Namibia as well as learn best practices that can be adopted for the Zimbabwean situation. The Zimbabwean delegation comprised of the following:

1. Hon Levi Mayihlome, Chairperson
2. Hon Lindani Moyo
3. Hon Annah Rungani
4. Hon Jonah Sewera
5. Hon Sicelesile Mahlangu
6. Hon Joseph Chinotimba
7. Hon Sonny Mguni
8. Hon Albert Nguluvhe
9. Mr. Pensel Marunga, Committee Clerk
10. Ms. Angeline Gutu, Committee Researcher

2.0 Methodology

2.1 The delegation engaged the following stakeholders; Hon Professor Loide Kasingo, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Namibia; Hon Leevi Katoma, Chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security, Hon Members of the Standing Committee Defense and Security of the National Assembly of Namibia; Hon Hilma Nicanor, Deputy Minister of Defense and Veterans Affairs of Namibia and her officials; the Namibia National Liberation Veterans Association War Veterans as well as the former People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) that was the former military wing of the South West People's Organisation (SWAPO). The Committee also had an opportunity to visit the museum of Independence and the National Shrine which

depict the history of the liberation struggle of Namibia. Furthermore, the Committee met officials serving at the Zimbabwean Embassy in Namibia.

3.0 Committee Findings

3.1 The Legal Framework Governing the Welfare of War Veterans in Namibia

Veterans of the Liberation Struggle of Namibia are recognized under the Veterans Act of 2008 which was later amended in 2013. The Ministry of Veterans Affairs was established in October 2006. In 2020, the Veterans Affairs portfolio was placed under the Ministry of Defense. The law lays out that not all persons who participated in the war of liberation in Namibia are regarded as veterans of the liberation struggle. Section 27 of the Act defines a Veteran as someone who was a member of the liberation forces, provided he or she was above the age of 18 when the country gained independence in 1990. Anyone who was below the age of 18 at the time of independence is not considered a veteran. The Act further cites historical events that one should be associated with in order to be regarded as a veteran. For example, the Cassinga Massacre of 1978, which is similar to Nyadzonja in Mozambique; those who were captured at Chetequera (Vietnam Base); political prisoners and detainees of the period 1959 to March 1990; those persons who were detained or accused during the Pretoria Trial among others.

It is important to note that persons who participated in the war, but gave up before the war ended are not considered veterans. However, such persons will receive a token of appreciation, provided they did not work with the enemy before the country won independence. They should also be closely associated with the key events leading to Namibia gaining independence.

3.2 In the Zimbabwean case, veterans of the liberation struggle fall within four distinct categories as enshrined in sections 23 and 84 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe (Amendment Number 20) of 2013. Section 2 and 3 of The Veterans of the Liberation Struggle Act (Chapter 17:12) enlists the four categories as follows:

- a. a liberation war fighter (war veteran)
- b. an ex-political prisoner, detainee or restrictee

- c. a person who assisted the fighters in the war of liberation, that is, (i) a war collaborator or (ii) a non-combatant cadre.

It is worth noting that legislation in the two countries recognise and provide for dependents of veterans of the liberation struggle as follows: the spouse, widow or widower and children of registered veterans including step children. However, the Namibian legislation extends assistance to dependents with disability who are or were wholly dependent on registered veterans.

In terms of the welfare of veterans of the liberation struggle, both countries' legal frameworks provide for the establishment of a veterans board and fund responsible for implementing social and economic programs designed to benefit freedom fighters and their dependents. The Acts administering the welfare of veterans in the two countries are similar in scope in many respects with differences arising mainly on the implementation aspect.

4.0 Government's Response to Concerns of War Veterans.

4.1 Ministry of Defense and Veterans Affairs

- 4.2 In Namibia, the Ministry of Defense and Veterans Affairs is responsible for the welfare of war veterans and their dependents. Its mandate is to provide social and economic support to veterans to enable them to engage in sustainable initiatives and improve their livelihood. It is also the Ministry's responsibility to keep the values of the national liberation struggle alive. Some of the activities conducted by the Ministry include the following:

4.3 Registration of War Veterans

By the time of the benchmark visit, the Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs of Namibia had registered a total of 30 050 veterans and forty percent of them were women. There is a Veterans Board that does the vetting of the veterans. This process is critical in that it determines the kind of benefit that one would be entitled to.

In Zimbabwe, more than 160 000 war veterans, war collaborators, ex-political prisoners and detainees were vetted between March and August 2022 in line with the new Veterans of the Liberation Struggle Act. This number adds on to about 50 000 war veterans who

benefitted from the first round of compensation in 1997. The vetting exercise included veterans within and those in the diaspora.

4.4 Financial Assistance

The Ministry offers financial assistance to war veterans in three ways: a once-off gratuity, the monthly financial assistance and the Improvement of Welfare Grant. Firstly, the once off gratuity is payable to every veteran regardless of their employment status. This is categorized based on the time period that one spent in the armed struggle. For veterans that served between 1959 and 1987, they receive a gratuity of N\$50 000 (US\$2889) while those who served between the period 1988 to 1989 receive a gratuity of N\$20 000 (USD\$1343). The second financial assistance is a monthly pension benefit of N\$2 200 (US\$147) This is only paid to veterans who are unemployed or whose annual income is below N\$36 000 (US\$2417). The benefit can be inherited by a surviving spouse and children below 18 years. However, in the event that the spouse remarries, the pension will cease. The third financial benefit, is a grant paid to Ex-PLAN combatants, particularly those who were trained militarily and deployed in a military related environment as well as political prisoners from Robben Island and Kai/Ganaxab. This grant is given in addition to other financial benefits.

In the Zimbabwean context and following the enactment of the new all-encompassing legislation on the welfare of veterans, registered veterans are entitled to a once-off gratuity prescribed by the Minister in addition to various other economic and social benefits. A basic pension premised on an indexation framework that ensures that the monthly pension increases automatically whenever the salaries and allowances of members of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces are adjusted shall be implemented so that it applies to all eligible categories of veterans of the liberation struggle.

4.5 Housing Program

The Namibian Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs has a housing scheme, which is aimed at providing decent accommodation to homeless, disabled or elderly veterans who do not own standard houses. A committee was established to ascertain the eligibility of an applicant to receive the housing benefit based on the degree of need of shelter. The house

is offered to the veteran after receiving a certificate of nomination. The veteran has to stay in the house for a period of 15 years and thereafter he or she can choose to dispose of that house. Several veterans had benefited from the program and there were others who are still on the waiting list.

Zimbabwe's legislation on the welfare of veterans requires that twenty percent of gazetted land for economic development as well as for residential purposes be set aside for veterans. Through the twenty percent policy, veterans will have access to residential stands. Unlike in Namibia, development of the property is left to the individual beneficiary. More so, access to the benefit is open to all veterans regardless of one's employment or socioeconomic status.

Indeed, the Namibian housing scheme is worth considering as it ensures that those veterans who are vulnerable and impoverished are attended to first. This actually augers well with the 'no one should be left behind' mantra echoed alongside the Zimbabwe's development agenda for an upper middle class economy by 2030.

4.6 Health and Psycho-social Support Services

There are psycho-social support services offered to veterans. The services also include spiritual counselling where the Ministry looks for faith based organisations to assist the veterans. On medical services, the Government assists veterans to get medical services at Government institutions and where necessary, the veteran will be referred to a private health facility at Government's expense.

In the Zimbabwean context, the medical benefit is accessible to veterans and their dependents at government hospitals. Where it calls for treatment to be accessed in private medical institutions, beneficiaries can be referred to such institutions at the recommendation of the implementing ministry.

It is in the area of specific psycho-social support that needs more attention in both countries. While in Namibia they have a better decentralized support system than in Zimbabwe, there were concerns that some veterans were still suffering from the trauma of the liberation struggle. They suggested that centres for specific psychosocial support be increased and specialists or experts be hired to offer such services that include counselling.

Notwithstanding the crucial role played by existing organized community and health systems and foster groups, specific activities and centres designed and established for veterans traumatized by war were suggested to be more helpful.

4.7 Education Grants

In Namibia, war veterans are assisted to get education and skills training for as long as they are alive. The educational facility extends to any discipline and is not bound by time. Dependents of war veterans also benefit from this educational facility but it is restricted up to the first degree.

In the Zimbabwean context, veterans and their children are entitled to education benefits at government schools. In the event of attending private institutions, educational benefits that are equal in amount to the fees payable at state institutions are paid for them. Children undertaking university or college studies abroad benefit from the same educational grant.

4.8 Empowerment Projects

Individual veterans in Namibia are assisted financially to venture into economic activities of their choice. The Ministry gives a grant of up to N\$200 000 (US\$13 431), and the money used to be paid directly to the service providers. Some of the projects ventured into by veterans were in farming, transport and other commercial activities. The Ministry has funded more than 10 000 projects. However, the veterans complained that they were getting old and did not have the energy to run some of these projects. At the same time only a few projects were successful. The Ministry acknowledged that the veterans were facing a number of challenges in making their projects viable due to factors such as health, age and lack of skills to manage the projects. A decision was then made by Government to convert the grant into cash of N\$170 000 (US\$11 416). Thus, the veterans now have an option to access the grant in cash and currently work is underway to process applications made by the veterans.

Zimbabwe's Part III of the Veterans of the Liberation Struggle Act (Chapter 17:12) provides for schemes and a fund for the veterans of the liberation struggle. In addition to schemes already highlighted, the Act, like in Namibia establishes a fund accessible to veterans whose main objective is to provide financial resources to empower veterans and

their dependents. Through the Fund, Government is committed to ensuring the operationalisation of the empowerment programs through a holding company, the Veterans Investment Corporation. Subsidiaries of the holding company will hold and manage assets in tourism, agriculture, mining and health. A banking institution for Veterans is part and parcel of the empowerment scheme. Furthermore, the empowerment drive is also being delivered through the implementation of the twenty percent quota policy which entitles veterans of the liberation struggle to twenty percent of all economic projects undertaken by government.

4.9 Land Resettlement

The Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs of Namibia assists landless veterans to get land under the country's resettlement program. The acquisition of land is critical as it enables the veterans to carry out economic activities such as animal husbandry. The veterans are given an option to choose an area where they would like to be resettled, either in the communal or commercial area.

In the case of Zimbabwe, a number of veterans benefited from the Land Reform program since its inception. Realising that there are some veterans who do not have land, the new legislation on the welfare of veterans provides that twenty percent of agricultural land be legally set aside for landless veterans and should be accessible upon successful application through responsible authorities. Land was the basis of the liberation struggle and hence ownership of it is deemed to have the potential of socially and economically empowering veterans and their dependents.

4.10 Funeral Benefits

The Ministry responsible for the welfare of veterans in Namibia gives funeral assistance to deceased veterans' families. The services are decentralized into the various regions of the country so that families of deceased veterans get assistance in the shortest possible period. After burial, the Ministry provides a tombstone to the graves of deceased veterans. There is a trademark on all the tombstones, so that wherever they are buried they can be easily recognized that they were veterans of the liberation struggle.

Likewise, in Zimbabwe, families of deceased veterans are entitled to funeral grants. Government, through the Ministry of Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage, is responsible for the maintenance of designated shrines where declared heroes of the liberation struggle are buried. However, erection of tombstones with a uniform trademark for all deceased veterans regardless of where they are buried, is an uncommon practice in Zimbabwe. Tombstones with a uniform trademark for veterans of the liberation struggle ensure that due respect and honour is given to them wherever they are buried. It is also significant for the preservation of history of the liberation struggle at various levels of the Zimbabwean society.

4.11 Liberation Heritage Sites and War Medals

The Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs has a responsibility to ensure that Namibia's history of the liberation struggle is preserved and kept alive for the present and future generations. This is achieved through museums which depict the liberation struggle and shrines where some of the country's war heroes and heroines were buried. Furthermore, the Namibia Government gives Liberation and Independence medals to veterans of the liberation struggle in recognition of their bravery and commitment to the liberation of Namibia. In addition, the veterans are recognized at Heroes Day celebrations where a podium is set aside specifically to honour them.

This is an area found to be lacking in the Zimbabwean case. While there is an effort by the Government to rehabilitate and restore historical sites in general, a more effort is required on maintenance and preservation of liberation struggle historical monuments, big or small, wherever they are. A national museum of the liberation struggle similar to the one in Namibia is necessary. Awarding of medals in honour of veterans for their sacrifice during the liberation struggle is long overdue while distinguished recognition (such as setting aside a podium) on important national events associated with the liberation struggle has been raised at various fora by the veterans themselves.

4.12 War Veterans Associations

There are two associations that represent the interests of war veterans in Namibia, namely the Namibia National Liberation Veterans Association (NNLVA) and the People's

Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN). The major difference between the two is that the Namibia National Liberation Veterans Association represents all veterans of the war whereas the Ex-Plan represents veterans who were involved militarily during the war. The NNLVA is run through a constitution and is affiliated to the ruling party of Namibia. The Association is also recognized by the Veterans Act and its major function is to ensure that Government is made aware of and reacts on time to the concerns and plight of war veterans. It also disseminates any relevant information from Government to its registered members. It is annually subsidized by the Government of the Republic of Namibia through the Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs for its daily operations.

Ex-PLAN combatants regard themselves as the real veterans of the liberation struggle and consider the NNLVA as having been highjacked by those not representing the values and principles of the war of liberation. They claim that they have been instrumental in lobbying the Government to put in place measures and programs to assist war veterans whilst they were still alive. They highlighted that life remains difficult for some of its members and efforts have been made to establish a Trust through which their members can draw funds to enable them to participate in the various sectors of economy.

In Zimbabwe, veterans of the liberation struggle are represented by several associations aligned to the four categories enshrined in the national Constitution. Freedom fighters are represented by the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA) and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army Veterans Association among others. The Zimbabwe Ex-Political Prisoners, Detainees and Restricttees Association (ZEPPDRA) represents those who were subjected to persecution and imprisonment for their political beliefs and activities while the Zimbabwe Liberation War Collaborators (ZILIWACO) represents those who are aided freedom fighters during the protracted struggle for independence. The War Veterans League directly identifies itself with the ruling party though it serves the same purpose as all the others. Despite their differences, all the associations seek to represent the interests of veterans of the liberation struggle and are governed by the all-encompassing Veterans of the Liberation Struggle Act that came into effect in 2020.

4.13 Challenges Faced by Veterans of the Liberation Struggle in Namibia

Most of the war veterans are fifty years and above and the majority struggle to start viable income generating projects due to health challenges and lack of knowledge or skills to run the businesses. Secondly, not all veterans of the liberation struggle had been registered and some of them were discouraged by the fact that some of those who were registered had not been able to get N\$170 000 (US\$11 416) cash payout. Thirdly, some of the war veterans were still suffering from the trauma caused by the war while psycho-social support services were not always readily available.

The Government of Namibia spent close to N\$9 billion (USD\$604 414,980.00) for the welfare of veterans of the liberation struggle and more was required to meet all the needs and demands made by the veterans.

5.0 Committee Observations

- a) Economically empowering veterans of the liberation struggle has the potential of uplifting their standard of living and also reducing their dependence on the fiscus. Adequate budgetary support, if prioritised by Government, will enable Veterans of the Liberation Struggle to venture into income generating projects to sustain their families as well as create employment for others;
- b) Namibia's empowerment and social benefit schemes for Veterans of the Liberation Struggle look practically implementable;
- c) In Namibia, veterans of the liberation struggle are allocated houses by the State. However, allocation is based on a vetting criteria that takes into account one's economic status, disability and other befitting factors. This implies that those in dire need of accommodation because of their impoverished state of affairs, are considered first;
- d) Honoring veterans of the liberation struggle through the awarding of war or independence medals in recognition of their work and sacrifice is long overdue and must be fulfilled at all costs. Further delay prolongs the emotional suffering of the living heroes and heroines of the liberation struggle and their families;
- e) It is a noble idea to put tombstones with a liberation war hero trademark for all fallen veterans of the liberation struggle, regardless of where they are buried and this will keep alive memories of the heroic sacrifice made by the gallant sons and daughters of the liberation struggle;

- f) Several veterans of the liberation struggle in two countries, that is, Namibia and Zimbabwe, are victims of psychological trauma as a result of severe physical and emotional injuries associated with the liberation struggles in the both countries;
- g) Access to special services for veterans of the liberation struggle is more decentralized in Namibia than in Zimbabwe. A well decentralized system promotes access to resources and services to all eligible beneficiaries;
- h) It is very critical to preserve the history of the liberation struggle in a manner that can be appreciated by present and future generations of Zimbabwe. The construction of a liberation war museum chronicling that history in artistic fashion can serve that purpose;
- i) In Namibia, major historic events pertaining to the Liberation Struggle are commemorated on set public holidays. A typical example is the Cassinga Massacre which is actually a public holiday reminding Namibians of their struggle for independence from the scourge of Apartheid.

6.0 Recommendations

- i. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development should ensure that the 2023 National Budget has adequate budgetary support for the department of War Veterans in the Ministry of Defence and War Veterans Affairs to enable veterans of the liberation struggle to effectively venture into income generating projects;
- ii. The Ministry of Defence and War Veterans Affairs must expedite conferment of war or independence medals in recognition and honour of the work and sacrifice made by veterans of the liberation struggle. Furthermore, a podium should always be reserved for veterans of the liberation struggle at Heroes Day commemorations and any related events of national significance;
- iii. The Ministry of Defense and War Veterans Affairs should consider and adopt the idea of erecting tombstones with a trademark for all Veterans of the Liberation Struggle buried across the country;
- iv. The Ministry of Defence and War Veterans Affairs must ensure that there are adequate psycho-social support services available to veterans of the liberation struggle who are still affected by the trauma of the war that led to the independence of Zimbabwe;

- v. By December 2023, the Ministry of Defence should ensure that special services to meet the needs of veterans of the liberation struggle are decentralized to all the districts of the country, in order for veterans and their dependents to get assistance pertaining to health, funeral and education among other needs with ease;
- vi. By December 2023, the Ministry of Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage, through the department of National Museums and Monuments, should have mobilized resources to construct a liberation war museum meant to preserve the history of the liberation struggle for the benefit of present and future generations;
- vii. The Government is implored to consider commemorating every day of major historic event or war pertaining to the Liberation Struggle such as the Chinhoyi Battle, the Nyadzonja and Chimoyo Massacres, the Battle of Shangani River among others.

7.0 Conclusion

The Committee on Defense, Home Affairs and Security Services, would like to thank the Parliament of Namibia for hosting and facilitating the meeting of the various stakeholders in Namibia. Gratitude should also go to the Parliament of Zimbabwe for enabling the Committee to conduct this benchmarking visit. This was the first for the Committee and it would have wanted to visit one other country with a similar historical background with Zimbabwe, in order to get a fuller and richer picture on the programs and policies to assist the welfare of veterans of the liberation struggle. These gallant sons and daughters are not going to be with us forever, hence, it is important that we respect and honour them whilst they are still alive. The atmosphere of peace and freedom we enjoy today is indeed the ultimate price for their bravery and sacrifice which will forever be cherished.

The benchmark visit was indeed successful the Committee managed to identify and learn some practices that can be adopted in Zimbabwe to improve the welfare of veterans of the liberation struggle.