



Bridging the gender gap through local peace committees in Zimbabwe

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Darlington Tshuma
Student Registration Number: **21855191**

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Supervisor: Dr Sylvia Kaye

date: 8/9/22

Co-Supervisor: Prof. Geoff Harris

date: 8/9/22

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Dedication

I dedicate this piece of work to two wonderful people (Bent and Birthe Kristensen) who in so many ways contributed to the person I am today. I'll forever be indebted to you. I also dedicate this work to all peacebuilding practitioners across the world who are working tirelessly to end violent conflicts, advance democracy, and safeguard human rights, even in the most unlikely places. I say to you, a prosperous, peaceful, and secure future for all is possible in our lifetime!

Abstract

Peacebuilding research, specifically in post-conflict societies and those transitioning from authoritarian rule to democracy and from violence to peace, demonstrates a growing demand to enhance our understanding about the efficacy of peace infrastructures, particularly informal peace infrastructures as potential tools for sustained and inclusive peacebuilding. In the same vein, the growth and popularity in recent decades of peace infrastructures as peacebuilding tools suggests the need for further investigation especially in societies where transition(s) is reluctant - a case in point is Zimbabwe. Further, the use of peace infrastructures to facilitate inclusive peacebuilding has gained prominence in the light of growing evidence of the correlation between societal stability and socioeconomic development on the one hand, and inclusive peacebuilding on the other. This is a participatory and exploratory action study that investigated the possibilities of using a community peace infrastructure to facilitate inclusive peacebuilding in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe to overcome gender disparities in local peacebuilding processes. The study's objectives were twofold, namely: firstly, to identify and understand conditions that promote successful conflict intervention at grassroots level, and secondly, to find out the extent to which these interventions can help to positively transform conflicts. To this end, the principal researcher in this study collaborated with an action team to establish an informal peace infrastructure (local peace committee) where the envisioned change could potentially happen.

This study draws together empirical qualitative data on an informal peace infrastructure created as part of this research intended to facilitate inclusive peacebuilding in four communities that fall under wards 7, 8, 16 and 28 in Bulawayo (refer to Table 7.1). Zimbabwe's protracted social and political conflicts and its long history of human rights violations remain as sources of polarisation and political violence. Consequently, a significant component of the country's contemporary history is about violence, its memory, and impunity. What has been variously described as a culture of violence can in fact be traced to incomplete transitions and complex historical processes starting with the precolonial episode where political cultures and practices were influenced and permeated by primordial ideologies of heredity, patriarchy and kinship. Similarly, colonial subjugation and occupation in the 19th century imposed an undemocratic system based on white supremacy, patriarchy and violent authoritarianism such that equal and even higher levels of violence had to be employed to resist colonial occupation and subjugation in the middle of the 20th century.

Emerging from these multiple episodes of violent conflicts and authoritarianism; it is unsurprising that command politics and violent suppression of dissent became preferred "governance tools" for a triumphant ZANU-PF that won the country's first democratic election in February 1980.

The study uses Lederach's Conflict Transformation theory as a lens for analysis. As a theoretical tool, Conflict Transformation is rooted in a transformative paradigm that places emphasis on constructive relationship building and the need to transform oppressive and undemocratic systems into democratic and inclusive systems as a basis for sustained peacebuilding. By emphasising local agency through transformative bottom-up peacebuilding

processes, Conflict Transformation aims to facilitate constructive change by anchoring peacebuilding within a society's unique socio-political environment. Findings from this study show that while informal peace infrastructures face numerous challenges such as resource constraints and sometimes barriers to accessing key policy and decision makers and political players, they fill a vital peacebuilding void left by the state which is not only incapacitated to lead peacebuilding initiatives but also lacks the legitimacy to fulfil its peacebuilding roles.

Research findings in this study indicate that informal peace infrastructures can be useful platforms to facilitate inclusive peacebuilding, for example by increasing minority groups' representation and women's involvement in peace processes at the community level. The study aimed to increase understanding of the gendered nature of peacebuilding in the country and the ways in which women, but also men exercise agency through a focus on their own voices and lived experiences. Similarly, this study also revealed that socioeconomic challenges, politics and entrenched patriarchal interests present stumbling blocks to women's effective participation in peacebuilding processes. At the same time, while dominant discourse depicts and projects peacebuilding as a 'masculine' and 'manly terrain', this study found that men who are involved in informal peace processes at the community are sometimes perceived as weak and feminine, a label that the men in this study continue to resist and push back against. Finally, this inquiry hopes to make small but important contributions to the peacebuilding discourse by illuminating how informal peace infrastructures may serve as a basis for improving peacebuilding practice in the country.

Key words: Peace infrastructures, local peace committees, peacebuilding, gender, conflict, *gukurahundi*, Zimbabwe.

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Acronyms

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
AU	African Union
AUTJP	African Union Transitional Justice Policy
AVP	Alternatives to Violence Project
BSAC	British South African Company
CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DUT	Durban University of Technology
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GNU	Government of National Unity
GPA	Global Political Agreement
HDR	Human Development Report
I4P	Infrastructures for Peace
IPA	Interpretative phenomenological analysis
IEP	Institute for Economics and Peace
LPC	Local Peace Committees
LRF	Legal Resources Foundation
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDCA	Movement for Democratic Change Alliance
MDCT	Movement for Democratic Change Tsvangirai
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCA	National Constitutional Assembly
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NPRC	National Peace and Reconciliation Commission
ONHRI	Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PF	Patriotic Front
PF-ZAPU	Patriotic Front Zimbabwe African People's Union

PPCs	Provincial Peace Committees
PVO	Private Volunteer Organisation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAPC	South African Community Party
UCDP	Uppsala Conflict Data Programme
UN	United Nations
UNCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commission for Refugees
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
US	United States
USD	United States Dollar
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organisation
WAG	Women's Action Group
WOZA	Women of Zimbabwe Arise
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army
ZNA	Zimbabwe National Army
ZPP	Zimbabwe Peace Project
ZPSP	Zimbabwe Peace and Security Programme
ZRP	Zimbabwe Republic Police

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Nation-building, like state-building, is a work of art and many African leaders have proven to be good state-building artists but poor nation-builders. In countries with a kaleidoscope of cultural, ethnic, racial, religious and other salient social identities, nation-building is a big challenge (Masunungure 2011:3).

1.1 Background and Overview

This chapter lays the foundation of the thesis by providing a background to the study. The background constitutes a snapshot of conflict and violence¹ in Zimbabwe by exploring the intersection between politics, gender and peacebuilding. This chapter, and the thesis more broadly, explores in detail shortcomings in Zimbabwe's state and nation building project since 1980. It achieves this by showing how the strategic use of violence by the state and the 'masculinisation of peacebuilding' (Jaji 2020: 2) has produced systemic inequities that are partly responsible for peacebuilding and transitional justice challenges in the country. For instance, longitudinal data from the *Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project*² (ACLED) shows that while violence against civilians averaged 30% of total political violence on the African continent, in Zimbabwe, it accounted for 75% between 1997-2015 (ACLED 2015). According to ACLED, most violent acts are committed by political militia groups associated with the ruling party with the support of the state security cluster. Furthermore, the state's insistence on top-down and state-driven approaches to nation building and its reluctance to transfer peacebuilding power to local communities has compounded an already existent problem. By unravelling the complex roles of gendered peace and conflict at community and national level, this thesis shines light on historical power relations between men and women and how these have in the past, and continue in the present, to impact peacebuilding and transitional justice processes in the country.

Mashiri and Mawire (2013) and Chitando (2019) note that unequal power dynamics unfairly subject women to threats of violence and actual violence which prevents them from effectively

¹ Zimbabwe's violence is characterized by several distinct features. For purposes of this thesis, I use violence holistically to refer to all forms of violence: physical violence, structural violence and cultural violence. See Chapters 2 and 4 of this thesis for a comprehensive discussion.

² See <https://acleddata.com/2015/06/23/violence-in-zimbabwe/>

participating in peacebuilding processes and politics specifically. Using Demographic Health Survey data, Mukamana, Machakanja and Adjei (2020) note a steady increase of about 3.4% in intimate partner violence in Zimbabwe between 2010 and 2015. In another study, Zengenene and Susanti (2019) argue that while violence is pervasive in Zimbabwe, a rise in intimate partner and domestic violence coincides with periods of intense socio-economic hardships. Similarly, widespread political and gender-based violence is associated with periods of intense electioneering and political campaigns (Dendere 2021). Dendere's assertion is complimented by ACLED data which shows a growing trend of politically motivated violence in moments of political volatility.

A study by Mashire and Mawire (2013) found that during elections, women are targeted through victimisation and their rights violated for political choices made by male relatives, friends and spouses. Equally, women endure beatings, torture, sexual assault, rape and violent destruction of their property including burning down of homes as punishment for associating with politically exposed men (Chitando 2019; Human Rights NGO Forum 2008; Human Rights Watch 2008; Amnesty International 2009). Further compounding the peacebuilding predicament in Zimbabwe is the fact that the government is yet to formulate a comprehensive gender policy to provide the basis for gendered analyses of violent conflict, human rights violations, and peace (Tshuma 2019). An example of such a policy is the recently adopted African Union Transitional Justice Policy which expressly addresses gender dynamics of peace and conflict, human rights abuses and past human rights violations (Transitional Justice Policy 2019).

Cultural impediments, religious and traditional beliefs and in some instances legal hurdles often born out of gender-blind and insensitive legal provisions are largely responsible for women's subordination and marginalisation in society (Chitando 2019; Mayonganise 2017; Mashiri and Mawire 2013). For instance, the existence of a dual legal system in Zimbabwe means that while women have a right to vote and to stand for public office, customary law withholds women's rights to own land or inherit property. Customary law, which is informed by traditional, customary, and religious belief systems, clashes with modern law and this has proven to be a major impediment to women's socio-economic empowerment. In Zimbabwe, women constitute majority of the country's smallholder farmer base and agricultural workforce (Gaidzanwa 1994, Bhatasara 2011, 2020). In this light, discussions about socioeconomic empowerment, gender and political participation, transitional justice and peacebuilding must consider the complex confluence of four central and interrelated factors: religion, culture and

tradition, and the country's political history (see Chapters 3 and 4). The impact of these factors on women's participation in politics, peacebuilding and transitional justice processes in general is complex and multidimensional. It affects women's health, wealth and ability to meaningfully participate in the socio-development of both their communities and country.

Considering the complex process of state and nation-building in Zimbabwe, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) concludes that nationalists (who were largely male) in post-independent Zimbabwe failed in their attempts to build a nation as a people compared to a nation as a state. Similarly, opportunities for collective problem solving through negotiation, compromise and dialogue have been diminished by the state's overreliance on force, violence, and intimidation to deal with dissenting voices and opposing views. Zimbabwe's political history is embedded in patriarchy, and fear and threats of violence continue to marginalise some social groups, especially youth, women and girls. This state-of-affairs demonstrates the intransigence of old power systems built on patriarchy and gerontocracy. Paffenholz (2018) notes that resistance to women's inclusion in peace processes ranges from questioning their independence as well as their legitimacy as conflict mediators, negotiators, and peacebuilding actors. They are also subjected to harassment and threats.

Narrowing public participation in peace and democratic processes often results in flawed and fragile processes that fail to build durable peace and self-sustaining democracy. Understanding these gaps is crucial in designing appropriate interventions to overcome problems associated with marginalisation and exclusion. This is a participatory action research inquiry that assesses the efficacy of peace infrastructures to promote and facilitate inclusive peacebuilding in Zimbabwe. It seeks to understand and assess how informal peace infrastructures can help overcome and bridge gender disparities in peacebuilding processes in the country.

In providing analyses of Zimbabwe's multiple crises, I remain aware that these crises are complex and multidimensional, so an exhaustive discussion is beyond the limits of this study. For this reason, no further analysis is attempted beyond what already exists in literature (see for example, Raftopoulos and Phimister 2003; Raftopoulos and Mlambo 2008; Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Chambati 2013; Raftopoulos 2019; Magaisa 2019; Mkandawire 2020). I, however, explore some factors in as far as they have a bearing on the nation building, national healing and reconciliation process in Zimbabwe and the broader peace process since 1980.

To begin with, it is important to acknowledge that periods of massive social and political unrest in Africa have been linked to the brutal legacies of slavery, colonialism and apartheid, tribalism

and ethnic politics, undemocratic systems defined by rigid one party-state systems, inequalities and the spectacular failure of neoliberalism (Mtukwa 2015; Mkandawire 2020; Adetula, Bereketeab, and Obi 2021). Analysts and scholars alike decry how some post-independence regimes in Africa not only retained these undemocratic practices but refined and perfected them for the sole intention of suppressing freedoms and thwarting any legitimate opposition to their regimes.

Without exception, Zimbabwe's history is littered with recurring cycles of violent conflict and human rights abuses often on a large scale. Notable examples include social and political conditions under colonial rule that culminated in a violent triumph over white minority rule in 1980, the Gukurahundi³ genocide (1982-1987), a chaotic and violent land redistribution programme (1999-2005), the politically motivated Murambatsvina campaign⁴ (May-June 2005) and large population displacements associated with electoral violence⁵ in 2000, 2002 and 2008 as well as multiple cases of human rights abuses since independence in 1980. The bouts of coordinated violence that preceded and succeeded elections in 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2008 deserve special mention because of the severity of the violence unleashed on opposition supporters, human rights defenders and activists, and mass population displacements particularly in rural areas.

Owing to recurring and protracted episodes of violent conflict in the country, the victim and perpetrator line is often blurred such that a victim in one violent conflict episode can easily become a perpetrator in another. For instance, some Black Nationalist leaders whose rights were violated by Ian Smith's racist regime later became perpetrators of some of the country's most heinous post-independence crimes, human rights abuses and violations (see Hove 2013;

³ Gukurahundi (*rains that wash the chaff before the early spring rains*) is a Shona name given to the mindless bloodletting that occurred in Matabeleland and parts of Midlands provinces between 1982 and 1987. In 2010 an international nongovernmental organization Genocide Watch classified the massacres as a genocide eliciting fresh debates as to whether the indiscriminate killings amounted to genocide or not. The government in Zimbabwe and key actors in the genocide have consistently refused to take responsibility for wrongdoing choosing instead to distribute blame by accusing families and communities affected by the violence of supporting dissident activities.

⁴ In May and June of 2005, the government of Zimbabwe without warning engaged in a forceful, insensitive and violent campaign to rid cities across the country of 'filth' which government officials associated with criminality, dirt and disease. Government action was criticised as an attack on the urban poor who had shown a preference for the opposition in parliamentary elections held earlier in March.

⁵ Electoral violence here refers to coercive force directed at electoral actors that occurs in the context of electoral competition. The violence can occur prior to, during and after elections targeting a range of actors including but not limited to candidates, activists, poll workers, election observers, journalists, or the electorate itself (Birch & Muchlinski 2017:386).

Mwonzora and Helliker 2020). In Zimbabwe, the use of violence to secure, maintain and exercise political power has caused protracted social conflict and tensions and political instability that has greatly undermined social cohesion and peaceful coexistence. I argue elsewhere (see Tshuma 2019) that the recurring conflicts are symptomatic of failed and incomplete peace processes that should have been carefully thought-out and implemented in 1980 when the country gained political independence from Britain. Similarly, Mkandawire (2020) attributes the country's current crises to multiple compounded transitions that feed into each other in very complex ways. He argues that these complex and incomplete transitions entrenched authoritarian rule by both Mugabe and ZANU-PF.

Paffenholz (2010: 45) correctly states that peacebuilding is a process aimed at achieving peace whereby structures and institutions are developed based on justice, equity and cooperation. Put differently, peacebuilding is not about imposition of solutions in a top-down fashion, but rather the creation of opportunities that allow people and communities to reimagine themselves and chart their own destiny to peaceful coexistence and a democratic existence. In this light, a social and political reengineering project in Zimbabwe needs holistic peacebuilding strategies that percolate through all strata of society, in the process repairing and rebuilding damaged and broken social and political relationships.

In Zimbabwe, civil society, broadly defined to include the media, faith and community-based organisations, research think tanks and academia, remain critical actors in filling peacebuilding voids left by the absence of the state. In the past, faith and community-based organisations have carried out extensive peacebuilding work (Ncube 2014; Aeby 2016; Chitando 2019), and it is for this reason that this study leans heavily towards community-based interventions for sustainable peacebuilding. However, it is also important to note that the 'local' is complex and is sometimes imbued with unequal power dynamics that may reproduce the same inequalities that are detrimental and counter-productive to peacebuilding. While appreciative of local agency in peacebuilding, an emerging body of scholarly work is critical of narratives that romanticize the 'local' as a "happy and harmonious" place where power is held and distributed equally between men and women (see Paffenholz 2018; 2020, Hudson 2021 and Kochanski 2020). As will be demonstrated in Chapter 2 and 3, the 'local' is problematic since it mirrors the real world/society where power and access to resources and opportunity is often skewed in favor of one gender or group over the other.

This study created an informal peace infrastructure as a potential tool to facilitate inclusive peacebuilding in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. According to Tsuma, Pentori and Mashiko (2014: 45), peace infrastructures are structures formed at the level of a district, municipality, town or village to encourage and facilitate joint inclusive peacemaking and peacebuilding. In creating a peace infrastructure as part of this study, the aim was to establish a mechanism that would allow for peace-democratisation by making peacebuilding more inclusive and accommodative of voices that are often missing or ignored in mainstream peacebuilding. In most cases, peace infrastructures are designed for societies lacking the capacities, mechanisms, and structures to deal adequately with on-going and potentially violent conflicts as well as other forms of injustice, discrimination and marginalisation.

In peacebuilding literature, the assumption is that peace infrastructures help to build conflict resilience by strengthening communities' capacities to address potential causes of simmering and actual social and political tension. They have previously been used in South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana while similar processes are currently unfolding in Zimbabwe (Verzat 2014; Mhandara 2020). For example, in Kenya, the Wajir Peace Development Committee was created by a group of women concerned about ongoing clan clashes in the eastern parts of the country. In Malawi, a Public Affairs Committee was established to deal with challenges around electoral disputations. Important to note is that the success of any peace infrastructure depends on the context and the extent of inclusivity of the peace infrastructure (see Chapters 3 and 9 for a detailed discussion of peace infrastructures).

More importantly, the decision to establish a peace infrastructure as part of this study was motivated by concerns about the sustainability of the intervention on completion of this research. Genuine peace and positive relationship building cannot be built overnight and certainly could not be built within the duration of this research. It therefore became increasingly prudent during this study to think of an 'exit strategy' ahead of time.

In establishing an informal peace infrastructure that functioned at a community level, I worked with an action team of committed peace advocates who volunteered their time and resources to help build peace in the communities where they live and work. The AVP Network in Bulawayo provided training to members of the action team. I identified the team through interactions with the focus groups and through recommendations from civil society groups I had prior contact with. All action team members were volunteers affected by the situation but with a strong desire to bring about transformative change in their communities. The diversity

of the action team helped me to understand the complexity of the problem and I had to constantly lean on the team for support and guidance in the planning, designing and execution of the intervention. After many deliberations, both formally and informally, the team resolved that a peace infrastructure was needed to continue the important work of championing inclusive peacebuilding at community level. For me, a society-based approach to building peace was important not least because it created a sense of ownership and legitimacy of the intervention but because it could create an infrastructure that would remain in place long after the actual research had ended. Building peace from below is a powerful way of shifting our understanding of peace as the mere absence of war and violence (negative peace) to peace in the service of justice, equality and fairness (positive peace) to borrow a phrase used by one of the participants.

Similarly, creating a type of peace whose only aim is to stop violent clashes, conflict and war risks perpetuating other forms of violence, for example gendered forms of direct violence (gender-based violence), structural violence (patriarchy), and cultural violence (militarism and authoritarianism). As the experience of Ghana, Kenya, Haiti and South Africa has shown, peace infrastructures are highly adaptable and flexible peacebuilding tools that can evolve to tackle other community problems for which they were not initially designed. In South Africa, Local Peace Committees (LPCs) created to guide the transition to democracy in the early 1990s have since evolved to address problems of inequality, racism and poverty. In Chapter 9, I describe how we went about creating our own peace infrastructure, detailing both the highs and lows of this process.

1.2 Gendered Peace and Conflict in Zimbabwe

Years of extensive conflict and peace research have brought us to the logical conclusion that peacebuilding processes and practices require systematic and reflective analysis for them to be impactful and effective. In Zimbabwe, discussions on gender and peacebuilding are still nascent, and when they do occur, they are usually driven by civil society who either lack a critical understanding of gender and its relationship to peacebuilding, or simply engage in what can be described as an ‘add-on’ approach to sustain scarce donor funding. Chinghanhu (2015) notes that although there are over a hundred non-government organisations (NGOs) involved in peace work in Zimbabwe, some exist for the sole purpose of employment creation particularly on the back of a stagnating economy with very few formal job opportunities.

He goes further to note that most of the entities in operation today were formed following the violent plebiscite in June 2008 (presidential run-off election) when international donors and global peacebuilding organisations poured huge sums of money into peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery programmes in the country. In part because of the challenges raised here, some organisations working on peacebuilding lack the requisite training, qualifications and understanding of the peacebuilding enterprise as shown by their programming departments. For instance, Jaji (2020) notes that while more women than men attend peacebuilding meetings and gatherings in Zimbabwe, men tend to control and dominate discussions. Similarly, studies from elsewhere on the continent show that while women largely organise community peacebuilding meetings, they hardly participate in the conversations because peacebuilding is considered a ‘male terrain’ (Jaji 2020; Manyonganise 2017; Chitando 2019). This is indicative of programming deficiencies by organisations working on peacebuilding and peace support programmes more generally.

It is also a widely shared view that successful peacebuilding requires a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of gender norms, gender identities, and gendered experiences of conflict, peace and peacebuilding (see Hamber 2016). However, a focus on gender must not imply an exclusive focus on women and girls but must also seek to understand the experiences of boys and men alongside that of women and girls. This is because conflict and violence and peace affect people differently based on different identity markers. The intersection of these identity markers can subsequently affect an individual’s agency and power. Other markers like sexual orientation, social positioning and status may further augment already existing vulnerabilities.

In this light, understanding how gender impacts both conflict and peacebuilding is an important aspect of this research project. For example, the experience of Myanmar has shown that expectations placed on men and boys often drive them to perpetuate violence either publicly or privately (International Alert 2017). The same report states that such behaviour tends to increase men’s own vulnerability to violence and exclusion. This is important to understand particularly because of evidence which points to evidence of masculinity being mobilised or manipulated into violent action by political elites in countries like Somalia (LPI Report 2018 on Somalia).

Writing on political conflicts in Zimbabwe, Makahamadze (2019: 143) and Chitando (2019) note that political elites manipulate young men and women into violent action by unleashing them on opposition strongholds. This is done to terrorise and threaten the electorate into voting

for a particular party and candidate (Mwonzora and Helliker 2020). This practice is particularly common in high-stakes electoral contests. In this regard, conflict and peacebuilding analyses and interventions that overlook these dimensions are incomplete and could miss vital entry points for peace or completely misunderstand the full impact of their interventions.

1.3 Research Problem

Despite growing evidence of a direct correlation between gender equality and a nation's political stability and socioeconomic development, women in Zimbabwe and around the world remain acutely under-represented in conflict prevention, conflict-resolution, and post-conflict peacebuilding (Jaji 2020; United States [US] Strategy on Women, Peace and Security [WPS] 2019; UN Women 2015; Cheldelin and Mutisi 2016). The voices and concerns of women affected by violence during conflict who ironically also carry much of the burden for healing and rebuilding their communities in peace and conflict time, are routinely absent from, or simply overlooked, during processes for negotiating peace. As a result, women's roles in peacebuilding have consistently been either unacknowledged or simply presented as tangential to secure peacebuilding as masculine. For instance, in the mediation process (2008/9) that culminated in a government of national unity (GNU) in Zimbabwe, women were entirely absent as signatories to the GNU itself, and only constituted about 16% of negotiating parties (Hendricks 2015). I conducted an analysis of at least 40 prominent peacebuilding NGOs⁶ in the country (based on information available on each NGO's website) and found that at least 30 are led by men. Based on this data, approximately 75% of peacebuilding NGOs in Zimbabwe are led by men. This is not reflective of efforts to mainstream gender in peace processes to increase women's involvement and participation in peacebuilding processes. Zimbabwe is a signatory to UNSCR 1325 and other progressive regional and international statutes that aim to empower women and promote their involvement and participation in public life.

Furthermore, persistent inequality and marginalisation that prevents youth and women from realising their full potential and influence as peace negotiators, mediators, and decision makers means that their understanding and lived experiences of peacebuilding is still not adequately accounted for (Mueller-Hirth 2019). The United Nations (UN) (2018) reports that between

⁶ I used data from Peace Direct and supplemented it with own research of prominent Peacebuilding NGOs in the country. See website <https://www.peacedirect.org/where-we-work/zimbabwe/>

1992 and 2011 women made up just 2% of mediators, 4% of witnesses and signatories, and 9% of negotiators in formal post-conflict peace talks. Similarly, men's victimhood in violent conflict and their participation in grassroots peacebuilding is missing because these processes are often dismissed as feminine and very little research has gone into understanding men's experiences and vulnerabilities working on peace initiatives at community and grassroots level (Hamber 2016). Yennings (2016) examines the link between gender and peace in Liberia and concludes that gender inclusive peace processes are twice more likely to be sustainable compared to gender exclusive ones. Several factors may explain this, including, but not limited to, conflict parties committing to peace and to owning peace agreements. On the other hand, exclusive and elite peace processes negotiated and implemented by a select few have often proved to be too fragile and may partly explain why some societies remain very fragile and highly susceptible to conflict relapse. When one uses indicators like the Fragile State Index⁷ (FSI) it becomes more evident than ever that in the absence of innovative, concrete and organic peacebuilding interventions, Zimbabwe faces real and serious problems today and in the near future.

Studies also suggest that when gender is meaningfully mainstreamed into peace negotiations, settlements and peacebuilding processes, the likelihood that the resulting peace plans will last more than two years increases by 20% and the likelihood that it will last more than 15 years increases by 35% (US Strategy on WPS 2019). Considering that more than half of all peace agreements fail within five years, the inclusion of gender analyses in conflict resolution and peacebuilding arguably saves lives and limits the devastating economic costs of conflict, violence and war (US Strategy on WPS 2019). However, as pointed out by Paffenholz et al (2016), gender mainstreaming is not about addressing women's participation in terms of quantity (for instance, how many women are represented), but rather the quality of the inclusion, which is measured by how women can or are influencing peace processes from a policy and practical perspective.

⁷ The Fragile State Index is an annual assessment of 178 countries based on a measurement of the social, economic and political pressures that each country faces. While there is no generally agreed upon definition of what a 'fragile state' or 'fragility' is, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development recently proposed a working model for analyzing countries' risks across five clusters of fragility indicators: violence, justice, institution, economic foundation, and resilience.

The first step, therefore, in gender mainstreaming for peacebuilding requires that peacebuilding efforts empower women and girls, men and boys with the tools and capabilities they need to engage meaningfully in conflict and crisis situations and encourage their meaningful participation in efforts to promote a stable and lasting peace. Peace committees are increasingly being relied on as gender mainstreaming tools to increase women's visibility and contribution to peace processes. Peace committees provide women with opportunities to contribute to both formal and informal peace processes through training in mediation, dialogue, and negotiation. As peacebuilding tools, informal peace committees are based on difference and diversity which in turn challenge assumptions of sameness by affirming difference and diversity. They are also tools to disrupt addictive liberal approaches to peacebuilding (Hudson 2021:142).

While factors that preclude women's meaningful participation vary from one society to the other, legal, structural, and sociocultural barriers often present the greatest stumbling blocks. This is because these barriers interact with deeply entrenched social norms and cultural beliefs to undermine women's influence and representation in political processes and peacebuilding initiatives. For Zimbabwe (and any society) to be successful in its peacebuilding efforts, it is critical that researchers understand local barriers before setting out interventions to overcome them. The design of peace efforts must go hand-in-glove with research, and implementers must seek the continuous input of the populations they are working with through participatory approaches.

The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (United Nations 2000) is the first UN instrument to demonstrate the relationship between gender, peace and security. It provides important entry level points to address women's micro and macro needs as they relate to peace and security. Cheldelin and Mutisi (2016) have written a comprehensive text on the subject from an African perspective. In this inquiry, I argue that peacebuilding efforts are more likely to be effective if they incorporate a comprehensive analysis of conflict dynamics which identifies the dual impact of gender norms on conflict and of conflict on social gender norms.

This inquiry analyses peacebuilding from a gender perspective and assesses the efficacy of peace infrastructures to facilitate inclusive peacebuilding through bridging gender gaps in peacebuilding in Zimbabwe. This entails narrowing the gap between middle range and formal peacebuilding activities on the one hand, and informal often grassroots activities on the other. This is particularly important given that middle range and formal peacebuilding interventions

are largely associated with men (masculinity) while informal and grassroots peace processes are associated with women (femininity).

1.4 Objectives of the Study

This exploratory research study, qualitative in nature, intended to investigate the possibilities of bridging gender gaps in peacebuilding through establishing an informal community peace infrastructure. The inquiry's objectives were twofold: first, to identify and understand conditions that promote successful conflict intervention at grassroots level; and second, to determine the extent to which informal peace infrastructures can help bridge gender gaps and facilitate inclusive peacebuilding in the country. As part of the research, this study created an informal peace committee in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe and evaluated it against the following:

- i. The peace infrastructure's ability to facilitate inclusive community peacebuilding.
- ii. The extent to which community peace infrastructures can diffuse community tensions through early conflict detection.
- iii. The extent to which community peace infrastructures address local needs and concerns.

In this light, this inquiry sought to answer the following research questions:

- i. What does peace mean to you?
- ii. What are your needs for sustainable peace? role can peace infrastructures play in facilitating inclusive peace processes?
- iii. What peace initiatives have you encountered where you live?
- iv. What are the challenges you are facing as a peacebuilder in your community?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several ways. Firstly, despite the enormous roles that local and informal peace infrastructures play in communities and countries experiencing violent conflict, peace infrastructures, and particularly informal peace infrastructures remain unrecognised and poorly understood in policy and development discourses (Issifu 2016). What this implies therefore is that the role of informal peace infrastructures in sustaining peacebuilding initiatives and bridging gender gaps remains unassessed and therefore poorly articulated in both peacebuilding policy and practice. This inquiry intends to add to this limited body of publicised

and publicly available evidence about the efficacy of local peace infrastructures in peacebuilding. For example, understanding how horizontal (between and among people and people) and vertical (between people and those with authority) relationships influence peacebuilding is important for providing a basis for reflective approaches in peacebuilding practice and policy intervention in Zimbabwe.

Secondly, my inquiry places Zimbabwe's multifaceted crisis within the broader context of an incomplete transition hampered by multiple failed and incomplete peacebuilding processes since 1980. This inquiry hopes to make small but relevant contributions to the peacebuilding discourse by illuminating how peace infrastructures may serve as a basis for improving peacebuilding interventions in Zimbabwe by rethinking the possible impact of local (informal) peace infrastructures and supporting their expansion to operate extensively as a tool for sustainable peacebuilding. According to Chivasa (2019) and Chitando (2019), society-based peace processes largely fronted by grassroots and community-based formations have facilitated successful peace interventions, yet they remain overlooked in mainstream peacebuilding processes.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study uses Lederach's (1997) Conflict Transformation as both an analytic and theoretical framework. The decision to adopt Conflict Transformation was motivated by the following reasons: first, Conflict Transformation theory – unlike Conflict Management and Conflict Resolution theories – places greater emphasis on positive relationship building by seeking to restore broken relationships and cultivate a sense of 'community-ness' by encouraging social cohesion and promoting open dialogue, negotiation and compromise as pathways to resolving conflicts and diffusing potential ones. As will be explained in greater depth in Chapters 2 and 3, bottom-up peace processes strive to get to the root cause of a problem by pioneering systematic changes in the way society holds and conducts itself, helping to build stronger relationships based on truth, justice, fairness, and equity. Furthermore, Conflict Transformation borrows heavily from the critical school (see Chapters 3 and 7) with its orientation towards emancipatory politics and participatory knowledge building through shared experience and co-creation of solutions to challenges faced by individuals and communities.

By its very nature, transformation embraces change in social structures through co-creation and co-production which helps to eliminate power imbalances between researcher[s] and

communities (common in most traditional social science research). Thus, participatory processes help democratise knowledge building through transformative practices. Collectively, these processes help promote and encourage local ownership of peace interventions. Similarly, positive, and constructive relationship building is of utmost importance in Zimbabwe today not least because of social and political mistrust that permeates every aspect of life owing to extended periods of social and political conflict, economic uncertainty and violence and human rights violations. This study is a small attempt to rebuild relationships broken by mistrust and a weak social contract through constructive dialoguing. For a detailed and comprehensive discussion on the political and human rights situation in Zimbabwe since the start of the millennium, see the following reports: Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (2009), Human Rights Watch (2010; 2020) and Amnesty International (2010; 2019). p

1.7 Research Design and Methodology

This study was conducted in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe over a period from February 2018 to September 2021. It is qualitative in nature and framed within a participatory action research (PAR) paradigm. The exploratory aspect of the inquiry enabled me to gather data that I and the action team used in designing our action intervention. Action research is a form of scientific inquiry that investigates a problem, then seeks ways to overcome and address problem[s] identified as part of the research process. It is a form of inquiry that aims to shift what research looks, sounds and feels like with an inquiry that is both humanising and empowering. It puts emphasis in doing research ‘with’ people instead of ‘on’ or ‘to’ people. It is largely a participant-centred methodology whereby a researcher or a team of researchers work collaboratively with participants (co-researchers) in a cyclical research process involving planning, execution (action) and reflection. Action research thus puts emphasis on practice and problem solving within the broader scope of justice and equality (Kaye and Harris 2017).

This inquiry sought to assess the efficacy of peace infrastructures to facilitate inclusive peacebuilding in Zimbabwe. Three motivations inspired a decision to create an informal peace infrastructure as opposed to a formal one: first, a growing unease with top-down, usually state-imposed peacebuilding mechanisms that often preclude broader participation, secondly, discomfort with the liberal orientation of majority of donor funded peacebuilding interventions in the country and lastly, concerns with increasing professionalization of the field of peacebuilding dominated by specialists and experts who promote liberal values that may in fact

be counter-productive to building long-term peace especially in highly unequal and politically complex countries like Zimbabwe. The action component was fulfilled through collaborative and cyclical processes of planning, designing and implementation of an intervention to address the problem of exclusion and marginalisation. We evaluated our intervention against a set of criteria as described in section 1.4 above.

This study utilised purposive and snowballing sampling techniques and participants were recruited through Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and personal contacts. Purposive sampling was used to identify participants who, by virtue of their knowledge and experience, could provide nuanced and insightful perspectives of peacebuilding in their communities. The study sample size consisted of a total of 46 respondents. The study relied on four group discussions comprising 38 participants drawn from four wards in the city of Bulawayo, as well as eight in-depth interviews with experts, activists, and representatives of civil society in Bulawayo. For a detailed analysis of the sociodemographic data of participants, see Chapter 8 of this thesis.

Qualitative data was collected over a period of 24 months using a variety of methods including interviews, observation and focus group discussions. Eight in-depth interviews and four group discussions were conducted with participants from wards 7, 8, 16 and 28 in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Data collection ended when I felt I had reached a point of data saturation where no new information was being discovered. Data were thematically analysed and critical findings presented in a validation workshop in March 2021. Although the intention was to conduct at least two in-person validation workshops in Bulawayo, COVID-19 related interruptions and challenges prevented this from happening such that the validation workshop had to be conducted online in March 2021 and was limited to members of the action team only.

This study is informed by a thorough analysis of primary materials from peacebuilding programs and an extensive review of available policy and scholarly studies on peacebuilding and a systematic review of media articles on Zimbabwe. Interview data was collected through in-depth interviews with experts, academics, civil society leaders, activities, and peace practitioners. I also used group discussions to supplement data sources. Analysis of interview data was informed by a constructivist grounded theory approach, using qualitative data analysis to manage data and create codes. Open coding allowed the development and refinement of a cross-sectional coding index which produced multiple codes such as justice, peacebuilding, reparations, politics. Additional themes such as resilience, empathy, gender, motherhood,

responsibility were generated. Data analysis also involved an on-going process of continuous reflection by asking analytic questions which occasionally involved writing memos throughout the research period.

The kinds of questions asked to generate these themes included, ‘what does peace mean to you’, ‘who builds peace and where’, ‘what are your needs for sustainable peace’, and ‘what peace initiatives have you encountered where you live?’ These questions generated thick qualitative data which was broken into different themes as previously noted. Data analysis also involved looking for connections between conceptual categories emerging from the data by carefully examining whether any of the concepts relate to the literature section. To draw meaningful conclusions from the data, I made inferences and reconstructed meanings from the data by exploring the attributes of the different data sets. Relationships between data categories were also drawn. Quotations considered key to addressing the research questions were incorporated in the analysis although I remained mindful of Patton’s advice that one should ‘strive for balance between description and interpretation’ Patton (2002 cited in Zhang and Wildemuth 2009).

Our intervention involved creating a peace infrastructure to serve as a platform to encourage and facilitate inclusive peacebuilding through strengthening communities’ capacities to address potential causes of tension and help develop locally owned and inclusive mechanisms to withstand shocks. For purposes of this study, a peace infrastructure is a locally constituted practice that is informal, participatory, and holistic in nature intended to address a range of issues affecting communities through dialogue and experience sharing. Allport et al (1954) contact theory holds that negative views and attitudes about the ‘other’ can be reduced when contact is created. The action team was drawn from wards 7, 8, 16 and 28 where the study is situated. Members had varying experience in peace processes, including peace activism and advocacy, media peacebuilding and mediation facilitation and conflict transformation. While we worked collectively as a team, each member was assigned roles and responsibilities through a self-selection process. These roles are detailed in Chapter 9. Initially made up of ten members, comprising six females and four males, two members dropped out during the research and their roles and responsibilities were subsequently merged with those who remained on the team. A detailed discussion of how we went about setting up an informal peace structure is described in detail in Chapter 9.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

Whether one is a social scientist and or a natural scientist, it is impossible for anyone to claim to have produced a perfect research study. This challenge is even greater in the social sciences where our value systems and aspirations as researchers often raise questions about the credibility of our findings and researcher bias. My research, like many in the social sciences, is limited in some profound ways. However, this must not be interpreted to imply that findings emerging from this research are invalid and thus of no consequence. In this section, I seek to highlight potential limitations in the overall design and execution of this inquiry and explain how I sought to overcome some of the limitations outlined here.

By nature, exploratory and qualitative inquiries are not concerned about sample size, in part because such inquiries do not intend to make inferences or generalisations. Similarly, as the principal researcher in this inquiry, I was less concerned about results being generalisable as this was not a consideration from inception of my research. Rather, my focus was to gain in-depth understanding of the communities I worked with to generate rich data that would help inform the design of the intervention. Still, since this is an academic piece of work, I had the responsibility to make sure that my research satisfied both the quality and rigour required of any scientific inquiry while simultaneously achieving actionable objectives outlined in the introductory chapter.

For action research studies, quality and rigour are assessed differently by asking how the researcher ensures that research brings about envisioned change and desired outcome[s] whilst preserving the academic rigour that satisfies the awarding of an academic qualification, and in my case a PhD qualification. For this reason, the research process was as important as the outcome. To achieve this, I utilised a participatory methodology to encourage non-hierarchical relationships between the researcher and the researched. A participatory methodology helped in my attempts to incorporate participants in this study as co-researchers.

While the action team was not involved in formulating and planning the research design and methodology, I consistently sought the input and contribution of the action team throughout the duration of the study. For instance, the action team helped to refine research questions and was also involved in the data analysis stage and in the implementation and evaluation of action research intervention. On my part, employing a participatory methodology was an attempt to overcome ‘research extractivism’ – a situation wherein stories are extracted from local

populations by well-meaning researchers like myself who then analyse and disseminate research findings to others, often audiences that are far removed from the local context. While my choice of research design may not have fundamentally transformed asymmetric power relations, I believe that it was a necessary step towards shifting power and redistributing it among a variety of marginalised groups, thereby affording marginalised groups the power to communicate their own priorities and stories.

Credibility is an important aspect of any research, and it is crucial that action research studies satisfy this requirement. Credibility in research refers to arguments and processes necessary for having someone trust research results. However, action research studies must be judged in terms of the workability of solutions arrived at. Workability in this context entails whether (or not) a solution can be identified as a solution to the initial problem or whether revision of the interpretation or redesign of the action is required (Greenwood and Levine 2007). This judgement must be made collectively by knowledgeable participants about the outcomes of a collective social action. It would therefore be unwise and methodologically fatal to judge action research studies by the criteria used in positivist science (Reason and Bradbury 2001). In my attempt to ensure that this research work was credible and trustworthy, I prolonged my involvement in this study which involved six months of data collection and analysis and a further 12 months of implementing and evaluating the intervention. While Robson (2002) argues that prolonged engagement raises questions of researcher bias, I found prolonged engagement to be empowering in the sense that it allowed me a deeper connection with the communities I worked with and an opportunity to transform the power relationships in the direction of greater democracy and inclusivity.

Lastly, unlike traditional forms of research, action research is intentionally value-laden and does not try to be neutral. This awareness helped me to accept and acknowledge that my value systems and experiences influenced my perception and interpretation of social phenomena. I found this approach to be liberating because it is premised on the belief that people have a deep understanding of their everyday realities, and are knowledgeable about what needs to be done to overcome their challenges. In this light, my role as the principal researcher in this study was not to impose solutions, but to create opportunities for people to find solutions to their own problems.

1.9 Thesis Structure and Layout

This thesis consists of 10 chapters. Chapter 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the study. The background constitutes a snapshot of the history of conflict and violence in Zimbabwe and the complex intersection of politics, gender, and peacebuilding in the country. This part of the thesis shines light on the complexity of peacebuilding in Zimbabwe by demonstrating how a combination of patriarchy, physical violence and threats of violence continues to marginalise and sideline some social groups, especially women and youth, from effectively participating in the political life of their communities and country. It also motivates how peace infrastructures can address some of these problems. The chapter also describes the research problem, study objectives and lays out the theoretical framework. Research design and methodology and study limitations are also explained in this chapter.

Chapter 2 discusses the conceptual and definitional issues relating to the study. The chapter provides a grounding for the broader study by examining the applicability of the concepts of peace, conflict, and violence their applicability within the context of Zimbabwe. The chapter further examines the aspect of peacebuilding more broadly by interrogating its relationship with other concepts such as peacekeeping and peacemaking. It provides a detailed history of peacebuilding and how it has evolved overtime to a point where state security is no longer synonymous with personal security. This shift has been necessitated by groundbreaking reports by the United Nations and its agencies. It also engages the concepts of liberal peacebuilding and situates the study within the emerging concept of a ‘local turn in peacebuilding’ by appraising the utility of peace infrastructures for building self-sustaining peace that restores community relations and promotes social cohesion.

Chapter 3 presents a theoretical framework upon which this inquiry is grounded and presents conceptual tools to situate the study within a broader peacebuilding context in Zimbabwe. With its grounding in a post-liberal peace paradigm and transformative justice, Conflict Transformation emphasizes the importance of relationship building and the elimination of all forms of injustice, repression, and oppression in order to create just and equitable societies.

Chapter 4 provides an extensive discussion of Zimbabwe – including its history of violent conflict and attempts at nation building since 1980. It concludes by highlighting the need for inclusive peace processes that address the gender dynamics of conflict and peacebuilding.

Chapter 5 discusses civil society and peacebuilding in Africa more broadly and Zimbabwe in particular. It provides an analysis of how civil society has provided spaces for women to influence and engage in peace processes in the face of shrinking political spaces. The chapter pays particular attention to the period leading to Zimbabwe's Government of National Unity (GNU) between 2009 and 2013, and demonstrates how women and women's organisations intelligently used networks in civil society to influence the process even though the process remained fundamentally a political and male affair with little to no involvement of civil society, the broader population, women, youth and subordinate men.

Chapter 6 locates gender and peacebuilding in Africa across three historical epochs: the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial episodes. It highlights the impact of colonial conquest and associated 'Christianisation' of African communities and how these processes transformed precolonial gender roles from relatively stable and complimentary roles to rigid relationships whose intended outcome was the further marginalisation and subordination of one gender by the other. The chapter discusses national, regional, and international instruments formulated to encourage and promote the participation of women in peace processes (peace keeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding) as mediators, conflict negotiators and signatories to peace agreements.

Chapter 7 describes the research design and methodology. The chapter provides a brief history of action research and explains the philosophical grounding and relevance of action research for this study. This illumination in turn informs researcher's choice for data collection methods and analysis. The chapter concludes by offering a discussion on ethical considerations as well as dealing with quality control concerns in action research.

Chapter 8 unpacks research findings gathered through in-depth interviews and group discussions. The data is broken down into themes that reflect key issues that emerged during the data collection phase. It also examines connections with past studies through linkages with literature review.

Chapter 9 describes how action team members were identified and selected, the planning of an action intervention, its implementation and evaluation. The chapter also offers my reflections on the research process and tells the story of the research process which is basically my own story of discovery and learning as a researcher conducting and evaluating an action research study for the first time.

Chapter 10 summarises arguments raised in the thesis by elucidating the implications of the study's analysis for researchers and policy makers. It concludes by making suggestions to improve the effectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives and offers concrete recommendations to rebalance the value of local thematic knowledge and to break conceptual boundaries between action researchers and the communities where we conduct our work.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL AND DEFINITIONAL ISSUES

One may object that frequent use of the word ‘peace’ gives an unrealistic image of the world *today*. Expressions like violence, strife, exploitation or at least conflict, revolution and war should gain much higher frequency to mirror semantically a basically non-harmonious world.

(Galtung 1969: 1, *emphasis mine*)

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the theories of peace, violence and conflict and the concepts of peace-making, peacekeeping and peacebuilding as they relate to this study. The theories and concepts described in this chapter foreground this study by providing an analytical lens aimed at explaining and understanding the intention and purpose of this study. It is important to note that while the quest to define these concepts is as old as the human race itself, efforts to define these concepts more systematically and within rational and humanist approaches based on knowledge and deeply defined methodologies for research and analysis is a contemporary invention. Also, while appearing to be different, the concepts are so mutually reinforcing that it is almost impossible to grasp one without understanding the other. Galtung and Lederach are among the most influential and leading contemporary scholars in peace and conflict research to attempt an empirical and methodological analysis of these concepts.

Because of the increasing complexity and in some instances ambiguity of the concepts outlined above, they are sometimes not clear cut and not so easy to define. For example, the concepts of violence and peace have dramatically expanded and evolved since Galtung’s first seminal text over half a century ago. As will become evident in subsequent sections in this chapter, the concepts of peacebuilding and the definition of violence continue to evolve as societies undergo fundamental structural transformations. In this chapter, key terms and concepts are explored in relation to peacebuilding more broadly and in the context of my study specifically.

2.2 Peace

Among the 17 global sustainable development goals (SDGs) that came into effect in September 2015, SDG 16 expressly refers to peace. SDG 16 aims to promote peaceful and inclusive

societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (UN 2015). It forms part of the broader global effort to promote stable, just and peaceful societies.

One of the earliest scholars to provide an empirical study to the concept of peace is Galtung. His pioneering work on peace and violence influenced and shaped the discipline of peace studies worldwide. Defining peace therefore becomes an important part of the scientific strategy advanced by this study. In his seminal publication Violence, Peace and Peace Research Galtung (1969) appreciates that peace does not lend itself to easy interpretation. Put differently, while no one can claim monopoly over peace, the term ‘peace’ also serves as a means of obtaining verbal consensus among protagonists in part because it is virtually impossible for anyone to be all-out against peace (Galtung 1969). Galtung argues that the use of the term ‘peace’ may in itself be peace productive. The argument here is that peace produces a common basis and a communitarian feeling that may lay the ground for deeper ties and engagements to cease all forms of violence and secure peace.

Galtung argues that the best way to characterise peace is to contrast it with violence, its anti-thesis (Cremin and Guilherme 2016). Galtung attempts to make a distinction between what he refers to as “negative peace” on one hand and “positive peace” on the other. He sees negative peace as constituting the absence of violence and war while positive peace is the integration of human society (Galtung 1964: 20). In a way, positive peace is ideational implying that it is a representation of a society we collectively aspire to. It incorporates broader issues of justice, order and quality of relationships. The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) (2019: 4) defines positive peace as “attitudes, institutions and structures which create and sustain peaceful societies”. It is built on sustainable investments in economic development and institutions as well as societal attitudes that foster peace. For Galtung, positive peace occurs when attitudes make violence less attractive, and institutions are more responsive to societal needs with structures that underpin non-violent resolution of grievances (Institute for Economics and Peace [IEP] 2019: 66).

McCandless and Karbo (2011: 16) add to the peace discourse by arguing that the question of peace must be seen and conceptualised not only in the negative sense of minimising or resolving conflict, but in the positive sense of material conditions which provide for the mass of the population certain minimum conditions of security, economic welfare, political efficacy and psychic well-being. While Galtung’s original conceptualisation of peace has been refined

by scholars such as Cremin (2012; 2016) and Lawson (2007), peace scholars and practitioners alike appreciate that Galtung's theorising during this period was influenced by developments following WWII where peace was largely equated to the mere absence of war. He was also largely influenced by the pacifism of Gandhi who was concerned with understanding non-violent alternatives to violence in pursuit of truth ('Satyagraha' in Hindi), which is a universal human value (IEP 2019).

In the aftermath of WWII, shifting global developments led to a reconsideration of Galtung's conceptualisation of peace. For example, Assefa (1993) does not use the phrase 'positive peace' but sees peace as constituting the transformation of destructive conflictual interactions into cooperative and constructive relationships and reconciliation. Despite differences in interpretations of positive peace, Assefa (1993) borrows heavily from principles that underpin Galtung's concept of positive peace. Makwerere (2017) notes that integrating societal and human aspects further broaden our understanding of peace from both a theoretical and practical standpoint, thus improving our understanding and application of the concept in both conflictual and peaceful contexts.

As mentioned previously, peace does not lend itself to easy interpretation. It may mean different things to different people depending on one's circumstances and disposition. Peace can also be defined and interpreted from various philosophical standpoints, for example from a religious, security and developmental perspective. These contradictions are aptly captured in the following interpretations advanced by Lawson (2007) and Jameson (2000). Lawson (2007: 8) quotes Martin Luther arguing that: "peace is not the absence of tension but the presence of justice". Jameson (2000: 56) sees peace as "the elimination of inherent and multiple political and socio-economic threats".

According to Lawson, Martin Luther views peace from a social justice perspective whereas Jameson sees peace from a largely political perspective. However, both are bound by a common understanding that peace is both desirable and aspirational. Like Galtung, Lawson (2007) makes a distinction between positive and negative peace. He however goes further to explain the conditions under which each is attained. For example, he notes that negative peace is maintained through coercive and repressive means whereas positive peace emanates from democratic and voluntary persuasion (Lawson 2007: 60). Cremin *et al.* (2012 cited in Cremin and Guilherme 2016) see positive peace as "encouraging conditions in which causes of violence, both direct and indirect are removed". This requires the development of democratic relationships and structures that enable conflict to be dealt with in a constructive and just

manner. The dismantling of structures that impede full development constitute Featherstone's (2000) concept of peace with justice.

2.2.1 Deconstructing Peace: A Critique of Hegemony

Deconstructing peace is an important aspect of this study, given the tendency in mainstream literature to emphasise the absence of war and violence as constituting the presence of peace. For example, the Oxford English Dictionary (2001) provides as its first definition of peace: "freedom from or cessation of war and hostilities". This definition depicts a condition in which nations and communities are not at war with one another. While plausible, this view is problematic for many reasons, chief among being that it seeks to impose a hegemonic understanding of peace which I argue commits both structural and cultural violence because it may in fact be at odds with how some societies view and experience peace.

When applied to most non-Western societies, the concept of peace tends to take on additional nuances. For example, the Hebrew and Arabic words for peace *shalom* and *salaam* both derive from the root *shalev* whose meaning is 'whole' and 'undivided'. Hindi and Sanskrit have several words for peace. *Avirodha* is taken from the word *virodha* which essentially means 'war'. This definition is consistent with a Western worldview which sees peace as the mere absence of war. However, other Sanskrit words for peace, for example *shanti* and *chaina* reflect respectively a feeling of spiritual and inner peace and a mental state of peace. In the Chinese language and culture peace is written as a combination of two characters, one meaning harmony and the other equality and balance. Taken together the symbols mean harmony in balance. In Ndebele/Zulu social and cultural cosmology *ukuthula* usually denotes micro feelings experienced at a personal level where persons feel a sense of inner peace and a state of wholeness. Ishide in Francis (2013) notes that in non-Western communities, peace derives from an individual's conformity to social customs and norms. This contrasts with Western notions of peace where the term is *sine qua non* with prosperity.

What is instructive from this discussion is that whereas most Western definitions of peace tend to emphasise the absence of violence, non-Western definitions tend to be positive in the sense that peace means the presence of certain characteristics rather than their mere absence. Taking these cultural and contextual nuances into consideration, it becomes evident that it is possible to adopt more comprehensive understandings of the concept of peace rather than confine ourselves to definitions that do not capture the lived experiences of those individuals we research and work with.

2.3 Violence

Violence is predominantly and primarily understood in its physical and direct manifestation. This is in part because its visual representations tend to galvanise people into action (Jaji 2019). Yet, as Galtung (1969; 1990) warns, other forms of violence are equally harmful and destructive. In his work, Galtung draws our attention to three distinct forms of violence – physical, structural and cultural violence. These concepts are explained in greater depth in subsequent sections.

Galtung remains an influential figure and a celebrated scholar who, in many ways, sharpened and refined our understanding of violence and its relationship to peace. Galtung (1969) defines violence as the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is. When the potential is higher than the actual and avoidable, then violence is present. When the actual is unavoidable then violence is not present even if the actual is at a very low level (Galtung 1964; 1969). To provide a context for Galtung's argument, let us consider the following example: when resources are monopolised by a group or class and used for purposes that do not benefit everyone equitably, then the actual level falls below the potential level signifying the existence of (structural) violence in the social and political system.

I offer the above illustration to reject a narrow and uncritical definitions of violence in favour of a more practical and extended definition of violence which incorporates the different and numerous dimensions of violence. The illustration above is consistent with Galtung (1969: 168) who reminds us that violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realisations are below their potential realisation.

Although Galtung has been criticised by scholars like Eide (1972) for offering an abstract definition of violence, his conceptualisation of violence helps us locate violence within certain parameters therefore enriching our understanding of both its drivers and causes. One of the easily discernible elements from Galtung's (1969) conceptualisation of violence is that violence can be both covert and overt, direct and indirect. Galtung (1969: 170-171) illustrates this by demonstrating how violence can be committed under both situations, for example physical violence such as murder, and structural violence, such as racial discrimination.

Institutionalised violence is a form of structural violence that can be anything from various shades of discrimination to deliberate deprivation. This could be because of a person's race,

gender, class, ethnic or tribal extraction or any other identity factor. This form of violence produces unequal life chances between and among people. A compelling example of this is that of societies struggling with high levels of inequalities where life opportunities are twice as high among the upper class as in the lower classes. In such situations, violence is exercised and reproduced even if there are no concrete actors to point to directly. With specific reference to Zimbabwe, Zengenene and Susanti (2019:85) argue that violence against women and girls is largely an expression of gender discrimination, stigmatisation, oppression, structural inequality, subordination and patriarchy promoted by a political culture that has become hardened with an ingrained and broad normalisation of violence against women and girls.

The examples given here constitute an important building block for this study because it helps provide a nuanced understanding of how these various dimensions of violence interact in very complex ways to marginalise and exclude certain groups from effectively taking part in issues that concern them. For example, unequal power distribution marginalises the voices of women and minority groups in decision making platforms and political participation more broadly. In his earlier work on peace and violence, Galtung (1969) identified two forms of violence: direct (physical) and structural violence, both of which are recognisable in Zimbabwe's body polity today. As has been alluded to previously, Galtung sees overt violence as direct form violence which can include causing bodily harm to someone, acts of genocide, and sexual violence in conflict situations.

Covert violence on the other hand refers to indirect forms of violence, for example psychological harm arising from discrimination. Although the two are mutually reinforcing, the only difference is that direct violence is physical and usually visible while indirect violence is often hidden and embedded in societal structures. Structural violence can emerge from policies and governance systems that are not responsive to the needs of the people resulting in a particular group benefitting at the expense of other groups (Galtung 1969). In his later work, Galtung added a third and important dimension to his theorising about violence – cultural violence.

It is interesting that in Galtung's conceptualisation of peace, the first dimension is a 'violence' dimension consistent with the notion of negative peace in literature (see Galtung 1969). The violence dimension is measured along a continuum from low to high levels of violence, with lower levels of violence reflecting higher levels of peace. Although this begs the question of how to define violence, it is not a problem for the definition of peace advanced earlier. The

definition proffered earlier implies that whatever way we choose to define violence, peace results from low levels of violence.

However, this narrow definition is problematic for various reasons. For example, while no one disagrees that war and killing are examples of violence the debate is over where to draw the line between violence and other forms of behaviour. For clarity, let us consider these compelling examples: is telling a child “no” an example of violence? Is disciplining a child violence? How about physical discipline? No one disagrees that wantonly beating or killing a child is violence. But where along this spectrum of behaviours does one cross over into violence? Our answers to this question influence the choice of possible indicators of violence.

In its 2002 ground-breaking report on Violence and Health, the World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation.’ (WHO 2002) The WHO considers violent death as a major health problem and identifies violence as the leading cause of death worldwide for people 15 to 44 years old. The WHO collects data on violent deaths from more than 100 countries around the world.

Peace literature, colloquial definitions and basic intuition agree that the mere reduction of violence does not constitute peace. Similarly, cease-fires and cold wars do not describe genuinely peaceful conditions. The phrase ‘cold-peace’ has recently entered the journalistic lexicon to describe situations in which violence is reduced but there is no genuine peace. The argument here is that reduction of violence is a necessary, but not enough, condition for peace. Other ‘positive’ conditions must be present before a situation can be considered genuinely peaceful. This brings us to the second dimension of peace whose definition constitutes a ‘harmony’ dimension. This refers to the degree that individuals, families, groups, communities, or nations are engaged in mutually harmonious relationships. This implies that those in a peaceful relationship exhibit positive relationships. It is consistent with the notion of ‘positive peace’ in the literature. It is measured along a spectrum from lesser to greater engagement in harmonious relationships.

Galtung (1969) identified a positive dimension of peace with ‘cooperation,’ ‘integration,’ and ‘social justice,’ with higher levels of these factors indicating higher levels of peace. An interesting metaphorical parallel to this two-dimensional concept of peace is the two-dimensional definition of health given by the WHO constitution of 1948: “A state of complete

physical, social and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” WHO and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) gather data on quality of life as an indicator of this positive dimension of health. Just as health is defined as more than the absence of disease, peace has a positive dimension that reflects more than the mere absence of violence. The core concept in this positive dimension of peace points to the quality of the relationships among those individuals or groups in a peaceful relationship. Literature on peace speaks of the elimination of ‘structural violence’ as an aspect of a positive dimension of peace. Structural violence is described as those social, economic, and political conditions embedded in the social structure that systematically contribute to the violence, inequality, injustice, or lack of access to social services that contribute to the deaths, poor health, or repression of individuals or groups of individuals within a society.

Establishing social institutions that reduce structural violence has, therefore, been identified with the concept of positive peace. This captures to some extent the notion of positive peace in the harmony dimension proposed here: reducing structural violence implies positive relationships within and between social groups. But the concept of structural violence needs to be further clarified in the context of the definition of peace proposed here. There are two confounding issues. First, to the extent that peace is viewed as the elimination of factors that can be subsumed under the term violence, the elimination of structural violence simply reflects the first ‘negative’ dimension of peace. If one accepts an expanded definition of violence that includes all suggested aspects of structural violence, peace then merely involves the reduction of this type of violence along with other forms of violence.

WHO’s definition of violence given above covers many of the proposed aspects of structural violence. How, then, does structural violence relate to the second, positive dimension of peace? Second, to the extent that eliminating structural violence means creating positive conditions and institutions that lead to peace, these conditions and institutions are better viewed as prerequisites to peace (for example independent variables of peace) rather than characteristics of peace itself. It is important to distinguish between the concept of peace and other correlated concepts that are necessary preconditions of peace.

Structural violence is a key concept in the peace literature and supports the notion of the second dimension of peace as proposed here. It is necessary, however, to untangle from it those aspects that point to the violence dimension of peace and those aspects that indicate preconditions and correlates of peace. The definition of peace proposed here indicates that well-balanced

measures of peace must include indicators of both violence and harmonious relationships. Both dimensions are essential components of understanding both peace and violence.

2.3.1 Cultural Violence

Galtung defines cultural violence as “Those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence ... that can be used to justify or legitimise direct or structural violence” (Galtung 1990: 291). Cultural violence is important to understand because, like structural violence, it is hidden and can easily be normalised and justified by cultural gatekeepers who often are oblivious to the harm they are inflicting on others. Harris (2019) notes that cultural violence legitimises both direct and structural violence by making cultural violence feel right or at least not wrong. Examples range from harmful cultural practices such as genital mutilation to forced child marriages popular in some parts of the world. Compounding the challenge with cultural violence is that it cannot be easily pinned down to either covert or overt violence because it comfortably straddles the two. In some instances, cultural violence assumes what Gramsci calls “cultural hegemony” to denote a situation where the state and the elite use cultural institutions to promote specific values and ideologies that assert their hegemony over others.

Cultural violence can also be a form of ‘soft power’ that complements the role of repressive state apparatus like schools, language and the media. Evoking gendered “ways of being” that often proscribe and prescribe normative behaviours expected of a particular gender/sex could amount to cultural violence. For boys and men this can involve evoking macho and masculine expectations that often lead to male invulnerability and risky sexual behaviours that put men’s health at risk.

However, Galtung (1990) is quick to warn that these processes do not occur in linear and independent forms but rather in complex and sometimes mutually reinforcing ways. For example, he notes that there are instances where cultural violence normalises direct and or structural violence. The subjugation of women in patriarchal societies and or discrimination against people of colour in apartheid South Africa provide good examples of the interrelated and interdependent complex nature of these three forms of violence. More importantly violence against the ‘other’ usually involves one or more of the three elements of direct, structural and cultural violence.

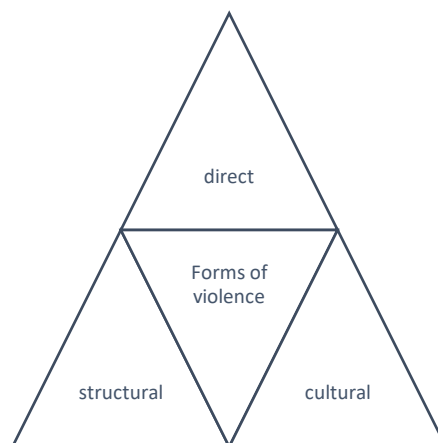
A gradual entrenchment of abusive practices often neatly couched and justified by culture can lead to the subjugation of one gender by another. For example, in patriarchal societies women

usually have less access to resources such as land and quality education whose combined effect is to entrench gender inequality and poverty. Galtung (1996) warns that while the visible effects of direct violence are known and can be quantified in the number of deaths, wounded, displaced, and the material damage, the invisible effects of cultural and structural violence may be even more vicious and, in some instances, resistant to change. For example, in times of conflict, women often find it difficult to protect their resources and in peace time find it difficult to make claims for compensation and reparations further amplifying their suffering and vulnerability.

It is important to understand the dimensions of structural and cultural violence as this understanding informs the basis and background of an inquiry especially the role of gender in the nation-building project in Zimbabwe. Violence is a daily experience in most people's lives and more specifically for societies trapped in conflict and cyclical violence. Studies by Kelly (2017) and the United Nations and World Bank (2018) demonstrate an increase in gender violence particularly in contexts experiencing an escalation in civil unrest and conflict. Working towards addressing these challenges is an important consideration in peacebuilding and in this study. Recently the African Union adopted a Transitional Justice Policy (2019) to provide an analysis of the gendered dimension of conflict. This policy is expected to improve our understanding of the gendered impacts of peace and violent conflict.

Galtung conceptualises violence through a prism: what he calls the Triangle of Violence (*Figure 6.1*). This tool offers a comprehensive appreciation of violence in its varied forms and manifestations.

Figure 2.1: Galtung's Triangle of Violence



Source: Galtung (1990)

As intimated earlier, the Triangle of Violence by Galtung distinguishes three aspects of violence: direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence. The first two concepts were presented in 1969 and the latter in 1990. Direct violence involves the intentional act of aggression with a subject, a visible action and an object. Structural violence on the other hand is indirect, latent and derives from social structures that organise human beings and societies for example repression in political form and exploitation in economic form (Galtung 1969). Cultural violence is a system of norms and underlying behaviours which legitimatise both structural and direct violence (Galtung 1990).

2.3.2 Evolutionary Nature of Violence

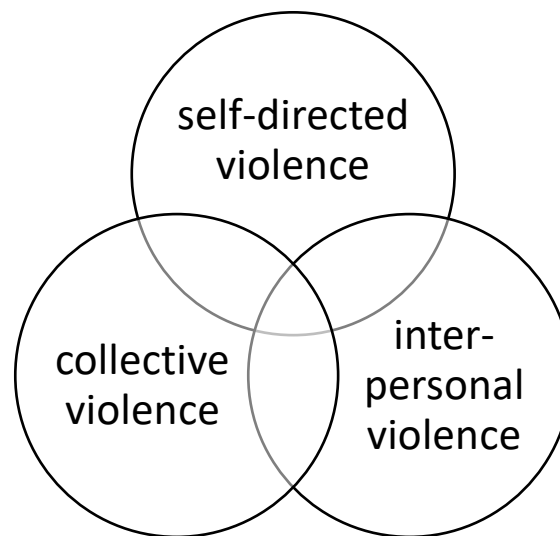
Violence has traditionally been narrowly defined to include only aspects that involve inflicting bodily harm on another being. This is true with most justice systems on the continent whose understanding of violence has not evolved to appreciate the multidimensional aspects of violence. Such interpretations of violence often fail to take into consideration the multi-layered and multidimensional aspects of violence.

The WHO provides a more precise and holistic definition of violence as:

Constituting the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation (WHO 2002:4).

Although not universally accepted, the definition by WHO touches on aspects of Galtung's conceptualisation of violence as explained previously. For example, we immediately see that the effects of violence relating to injury and death are more inclined towards direct violence while deprivation, psychological harm and mal development are linked to structural and cultural violence. The report goes further to identify three sub-types of violence in which violence may occur at different times. These sub-types can further be subdivided into micro and macro levels which cover both the public and private nature of violence. The WHO (2002) typology of violence consists of the following types of violence as illustrated in *Figure 6.2*.

Figure 2.2: WHO typology of violence



Source: WHO (2002)

The first category of violence is self-inflicted violence. This can constitute among others self-abuse through drug and alcohol abuse as well as suicide or para-suicide (attempted suicide). The second category of inter-personal violence relates to violence committed in smaller group dynamics, for example one person inflicting harm on another. This type of violence usually occurs at a family level and workplaces or even within religious and cultural groupings. Because the groups are numerically small, they do not qualify to be a community.

The third category constitutes what is known in peace research as collective violence. This a broader and sometimes complex category. This category deserves special mention because of its importance and relevance to this study. Collective violence often occurs at macroscale and is quite prevalent in many communities in Africa (WHO 2002: 5) although by no means solely restricted to the continent. It can further be divided into social, political and economic categories. Social forms of violence are many and may include cultural and religious practices that expose people to certain vulnerabilities, for instance under-age marriages, forced marriages, female genital mutilation and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence.

Political violence is equally problematic in many African communities. Political violence can manifest in the political marginalisation of minority groups, intimidation and state-sanctioned abduction of opposition members and harassment of female candidates running for public office (Tshuma 2018b; Kibble 2013).

2.4 Conflict

The word conflict originated in the Latin language and means to clash or engage in a fight (Miller 2005 cited in Musingati, Mafumbate and Khumalo 2019). The word is a significantly broad and often ubiquitous term which can only make sense when used within a certain context. For example, Hulme and Goodhand (1999) see conflict as an expression of struggle between and among persons over issues of power, claims to status, values and resources. Onuoha (2011) adds that conflict arise from mutually exclusive or opposing actions, thoughts, opinions and feelings. For Kriesberg (1993; 2006), conflict may arise from misinformation, stereotypes, prejudice, contradictory perceptions of justice, differing socio-cultural traditions, personal beliefs and ideologies. Societies are replete with cases where misinformation, stereotypes and prejudice (disinformation) have led to mass murders and high levels of political violence including xenophobic feelings towards the ‘other’.

However, Lederach (1999) warns that we must not always perceive conflict from a purely negative and antagonistic manner. He argues that conflict can serve a functional purpose in society. To Lederach (1999) conflict is a natural and inevitable existential dynamism embedded in human relationships and necessary to effect change in the manner human relationships are organised and structured. In his seminal text Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies Lederach (1997: 17) defines social conflict as:

a phenomenon of human creation lodged naturally in relationships. It is a phenomenon that transforms events, the relationship in which conflict occurs, and indeed its very creators. It is a necessary element for transformative human construction and reconstruction of social organisation and realities.

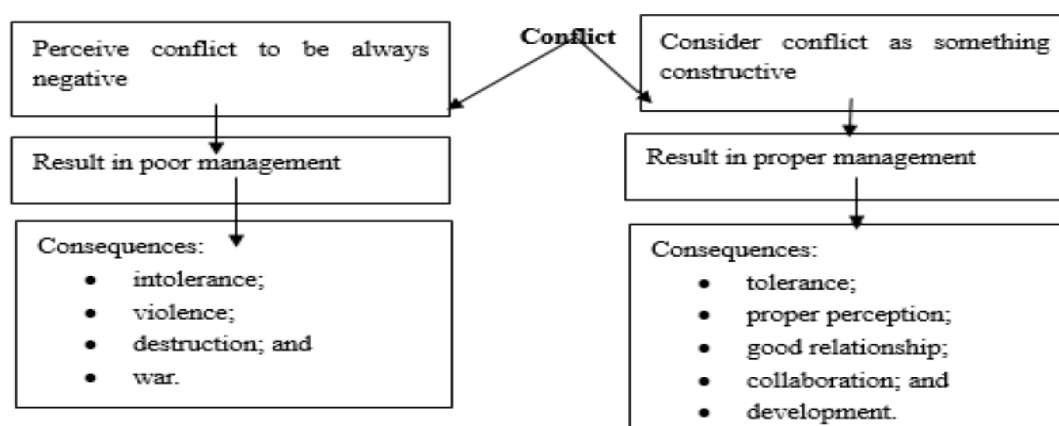
International Alert (2017) builds on Lederach’s argument and posits that conflict is a multi-dimensional social problem which is an integral feature of human existence and essential to the ongoing process of history, social change and transformation. As stated earlier, conflicts usually arise from perceived incompatibility over material and symbolic resources. Kapila (n.d.), like Lederach, warns that conflict is not entirely destructive or completely undesirable. The author argues that conflict has a positive dimension as “normal forms of social interaction which may contribute to the maintenance, development, change and overall stability of social entities.” I add that conflict becomes undesirable when societies, groups and individuals fail to manage and resolve it, thus initiating a degenerative and destructive cycle of violence and

violent behaviour as evidenced by the extensive polarisation and magnified social divisions in Zimbabwe today.

Maldonado-Torres (2008: 3) argues that a paradigm of peace privileges conflict and violence over peace. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) notes that a paradigm of war is responsible for history's ills and vices such as slavery, colonial conquest and the land disposessions that accompanied the process of colonisation. Goodhand and Hulme (1994: 14) offer a refreshing perspective when they argue that in situations where the goal is to reduce human suffering or improve the human condition, the aim is not to prevent conflict per se but to reduce the likelihood of specific conflicts becoming or continuing on the physically violent path. This confirms what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015: 122) calls "paradigms of peace". Paradigms of peace speak to issues of social and political and economic justice.

To achieve sustainable peace, Lederach argues that in the same way people construct conflict, they are also capable of deconstructing it. Put differently, the power to transform conflict rests entirely with the conflicting parties. Lederach (2003) goes on to argue that this is precisely because the greatest resource for sustaining peace in the long term is always rooted in local people's knowledge of their environment and culture. This functional-constructivist approach resonates with Conteh-Morgen's (2005: 73) constructivism, an approach that offers a useful theoretical lens in understanding the true nature of conflict and violence. Figure 6.3, adapted from the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission of Rwanda (2019), sums up the argument advanced by Lederach (1997).

Figure 2.3: Lederach's conceptualisation of conflict



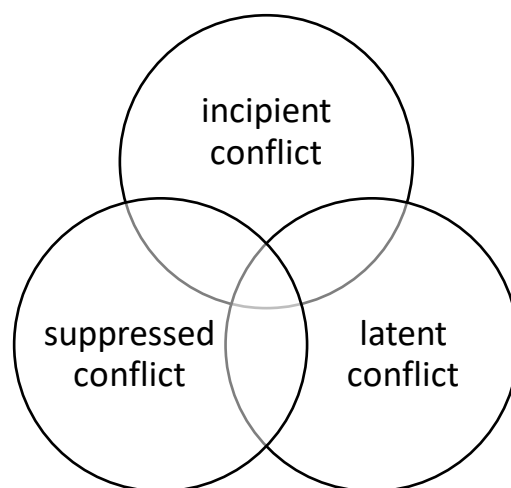
Source: Adapted from the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission of Rwanda (2019).

The illustration above provides a summary of Lederach's conceptualisation of conflict. As demonstrated on the right side of the diagram, when conflict is handled and managed well it can lead to a reconstruction of positive relationships that border on love, tolerance, respect and other positive attributes that promote collaboration and growth. However, when mishandled, conflict can result in violence, war and strife. As Lederach correctly argues, it is important for us to begin to see conflict as not something entirely negative that ought to be avoided at all costs but to see conflict as presenting opportunities to understand one another and an opportunity to repair badly damaged relationships.

2.4.1 Types of Conflict

In her work, Mitchell (1981: 51) identifies three types of conflict which are instructive to our understanding of the nature and dynamics of conflicts in Zimbabwe. These are illustrated in Fig. 2.4:

Figure 2.4: Mitchell's types of conflict



Source: Mitchell (1981)

The types are explained as follows:

- Incipient conflict can be regarded as a situation in which a conflict is not recognised by one or both parties.
- Latent conflict emerges when goal incompatibility is perceived but is not sufficiently motivating to give rise to observable conflictive behaviour.
- In suppressed conflicts, one or more parties are aware of a conflictive situation, but the costs of pursuing their goals are too high to produce conflictive behaviour.

This categorisation follows the subjectivist approach to identifying conflicts, claiming that actors must not only believe that they are in a conflict situation, they must also manifest this belief in a way discernible to others. This position is subjectivist in the sense that it relies on the actors, or subjects, involved in the conflict defining their situation as conflictive.

2.4.2 Intra and Interpersonal Violence

As noted by Galtung (1969) violence in its various manifestations occur at two main levels: the personal and interpersonal levels. This section expressly deals with the latter. This is important particularly when dealing with societies like Zimbabwe whose history is littered with episodic cycles of violence. For Benyera and Nyere (2015), Zimbabwe was colonised through violence, liberated through violence and continues to be ruled through violence. The country has a long history of violence and conflict traceable through three historical episodes namely the precolonial and colonial and postcolonial periods. Throughout these epochs all three forms of violence are easily discernable.

For example, in the majority of cases where physical violence has occurred, particularly in the body politic, attacks have often been accompanied or preceded by cultural violence which in turns legitimises physical attacks and murder of targeted individuals. This was probably most forcefully demonstrated in the Rwandan genocide of 1994 through a reckless and irresponsible media. Reyntjens (2004) and Thomson (2013) argue that Radio Rwanda and Radio-Television Libre des Milles Collines played a prominent role in perpetuating cultural violence by labelling Tutsi and Hutu moderates ‘inyezi’⁸.

Gaidzanwa has written extensively on gender relations in colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe. Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s Mugabeism? History, Politics, and Power in Zimbabwe (2015) highlights structural impediments to achieving gender equality in post-colonial Zimbabwe. The author details how hegemonic masculinities were deployed during and after the liberation struggle to keep women and subjugated men in subjugated positions and perpetual minors. According to Mashingaidze (2013), In For Better or Worse? Women and ZANLA in Zimbabwe’s Liberation Struggles, Nhongo-Simbanegavi refutes often unquestioned and

⁸ Inyezi is a derogative and dehumanising Kinyarwanda word for ‘cockroaches’. The word was used and popularized by Hutu affiliated radio programs and media in the lead up to the genocide in Rwanda to spread propaganda and hatred against Tutsi and moderate Hutu. Conservative estimates put number of dead in the 800 000 to a million range.

uncritical narratives about the liberation struggle having been 'gender sensitive' informed by the principles of fairness and justice. Similarly Mashingaidze (2013) is critical of the liberation struggle narrative that presented fighters as fair, brave and disciplined. Both Nhongo-Simbanegavi and Mashingaidze detail how young women and girls were often sexually exploited by military commanders in military camps during the liberation struggle.

Gaidzanwa (2015) argues that the war for independence not only ravaged and disrupted people's lives but also thrust women into new and invidious positions whereby they had to provision for both the civilian and fighting men, cook and clean and, in some instances, convey intelligence on troop movements. It was particularly during these moments that young girls and women were raped or beaten for not providing spying 'intelligence' to either camp. Gaidzanwa (2015) further explains the gendered and masculinist nature of the liberation war and how it imposed on 'militarised women' feminine duties that saw them take upon themselves responsibilities to cook, clean and wash for their male counterparts. Mashingaidze (2013: 1) concludes that Zimbabwe's liberation struggle perpetuated the peripheralisation and domestication of women. This constitutes what Galtung (1969; 1990) perceives to be physical and structural violence, justified in whole or in part by uncritical cultural narratives that often view women as subordinate to men.

The United Nations and World Bank (2018) define structural violence as any form of in-built violence that finds expression in inequalities whether these are embedded in societal structures or gross power imbalances that shape people's life chances. Both in colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe, women had differential access to critical resources such as education, security, health political power and resource distribution such as land and employment opportunities. For example, the land redistribution exercise in the 1980s failed women dismally (Gaidzanwa 1984; 1994; 2016; Bhatasara and Chiweshe 2017; Gudhlanga 2013). Today, women in Zimbabwe still face challenges with regards to their participation in politics and decision making. For example, Mandiyanike (2012: 1) argues that while local government elections are open for all to vote and be voted into office, the superstructure (read structure) militates against free participation by women. Limited political representation and participation by women in Zimbabwe means that they are unable to give voice to their grievances, nevermind that women make up the majority of electorate (Tshuma 2018b; Maphosa, Tshuma and Maviza 2015; Mandiyanike 2012).

However, women in Zimbabwe are not an undifferentiated class nor a homogenous group with the same needs and aspirations. Gaidzanwa (2016) and Chung (2007) show how women with powerful husbands and male relatives within ZANU-PF assumed powerful positions in both government and party after independence. For example, women like Sally Mugabe (wife to Robert Mugabe), Julia Zvogbo (wife to former Secretary General of ZANU-PF - Eddison Zvogbo) and Joyce Mujuru (wife to the late military commander Solomon Mujuru) assumed important positions in Mugabe's post-independence government much to the exclusion of women who had fought the liberation struggle on equal or even better terms. This practice has been carried over to contemporary politics. Galtung (1990: 46) concludes that structural violence has a tendency to see top dogs get much more out of the interaction in structures than under dogs. The three dimensions of violence articulated by Galtung (1960; 1990) are important in examining why and how they have persisted to date.

Gaidzanwa (2016) discusses the notions of hegemonic and subordinate masculinities to demonstrate the link between violence and power in the construction of a post-colonial political order. Mutanda (2019) argues that the security situation in Zimbabwe is always volatile particularly before, during and after elections. For example, the pre- and post-election violence that engulfed rural Zimbabwe in the period leading to the presidential run off in June 2008 rendered many rural areas inhabitable with thousands of displacements (Mutanda 2019; Mwonzora and Mandikwaza 2019). This goes to demonstrate how subordinate young men, and in some instances, young women, are mobilised by party functionaries to unleash violence on each other in pursuit of narrow political gains that leave communities deeply divided and polarised.

2.5 Peacebuilding, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping

Although there is no universally agreed-upon definition of peacebuilding, at a macro-level peacebuilding is conceptualised as a process that encompasses both peacekeeping and peacemaking while attempting to understand and transform the root causes of conflict (Hudson 2016b). At a micro-level, peacebuilding can be understood as a comprehensive concept that encompasses and generates and sustains the full array of processes, approaches and stages needed to transform conflict towards more sustainable peaceful relationships (Lederach 1997). Peacebuilding's intellectual fingerprints are traceable through intellectual giants like Galtung who first used the term in 1976 before its popularisation in policy circles in the last decade of the 20th century.

Boutros Ghali's Agenda for Peace (1992) set the stage for peacebuilding and its renewed interest both in academia and policy circles. He is credited with popularising and institutionalising the concept of peacebuilding within UN's peacekeeping and peace-making operations globally (Cravo 2017). Peacebuilding is often referred to as a process encompassing both peacekeeping and peace-making (Hudson 2016b; Ellerby 2018; Cremin and Guilherme 2016). Galtung (1990, cited in Cremin and Guilherme 2016) appreciates that peacebuilding goes beyond the notion of negative peace as the mere absence of war to the development of positive peace.

Peacebuilding aims to create just and peaceable societies by removing all forms of injustice and upholding the universal values of justice, respect and inclusivity (Miller 2005; Supplement to Agenda for Peace 1997). Peacebuilding, like conflict transformation, focuses on the context of a conflict, that is, the attitudes and relationships, transactions and socioeconomic circumstances of the people affected by war and violence and those building peace (McCandless and Schwoebel 2002).

The next section analyses the concept of peacebuilding by tracing its evolution over time and highlighting challenges to building peace.

2.5.1 Why Peacebuilding?

The term peacebuilding is as complex as the process of building peace itself. Not only is the concept broad and complex but it has also generated interesting debates and discussions. Peacebuilding can be viewed from various perspectives, for example in international relations, reconstruction and development, and in the peace and security realm. But to gain a richer understanding of the term, it may be useful to attempt to deconstruct it.

- I. Peace – experience from the field including my own confirms that almost everyone has their unique way of defining peace. For example, a participant in one of the FGDs defined peace as not being forced into marriage. For others, it meant not having wars, having food on the table, peaceful elections etc.
- II. Building – implies an act of reconstruction. For example, we build something because it was not there or simply because it was destroyed. Peacebuilding is therefore a broad term that encompasses a wide array of collective efforts to address personal, interpersonal, national and international conflict. It is an attempt to deal with conflict right from its roots. This detour is important as an introduction to the discussion on peacebuilding.

The word peacebuilding originated in the field of peace studies more than three decades ago through Galtung's (1976) pioneering text Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peace-

making and Peacebuilding. Galtung envisioned peacebuilding as a process of promoting sustainable peace through uprooting root causes of violent conflict and supporting indigenous capabilities for managing peace and conflict (Neufeldt *et al*, 2006; Galtung 1976). The term was later popularised by Ghali in 1992, as noted above, through a document titled Agenda for Peace.

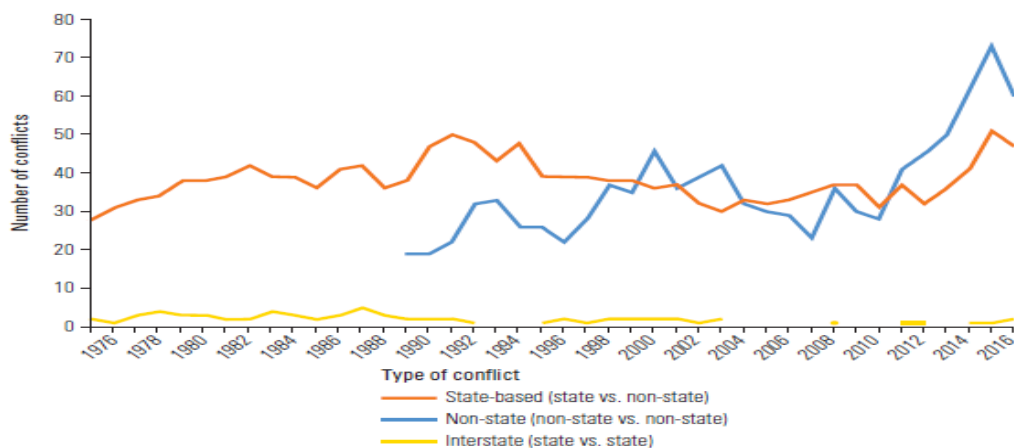
In the document, Ghali defines peacebuilding as a range of activities meant to identify and support structures which tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict (Francis 2008: 37). Ghali's conceptualisation of peacebuilding may have been influenced by political and social developments of his time, particularly the collapse of the bipolar world order. Although peacebuilding today is largely seen as being proactive, the definition offered by Ghali assumes a reactionary approach. For example, Brickmore (2005: 162) offers a comprehensive and holistic definition of peacebuilding as a process of democratisation, inclusion and management of social conflict and human needs. Similarly, for Cremin and Guilherme (2016) peacebuilding entails overcoming structural and cultural violence that support violence and conflict.

2.5.2 Understanding Peacekeeping, Peace-making and Peacebuilding

The UN was formed in the aftermath of World War II primarily as an institution for administering peacekeeping operations. Handelman (2017) notes that the intention was to establish an organisation dedicated to the prevention and stoppage of clashes between mass armies. The collapse of the bipolar world order which signalled the end of the cold war which had played such a major role in dictating global politics, necessitated a change to and modification of peacekeeping and the overall responsibility of the UN as a primary institution mandated with peacekeeping. The change in perception was also a result of the changing nature of conflict, for example growing intrastate conflict and civil wars (Handelman 2017).

Research shows that while interstate conflicts remain few and far between, the number of intrastate conflicts has increased since 2010 (United Nations and World Bank 2018; Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) 2012). The UCDP shows that in recent years the number of interstate conflicts has drastically reduced while the number of civil wars and intrastate conflicts continue to rise, as can be seen in Figure 2.5.

Figure 2.5: UCDP Conflict data map (2012)



Sources: For interstate and state-based conflicts, data from Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) and Peace Research Institute Oslo (Allansson, Melander, and Themnér 2017; Gleditsch et al. 2002); for nonstate conflicts, data from UCDP (Sundberg, Eck, and Kreutz 2012; Allansson, Melander, and Themnér 2017).

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The UCDP data shows that in 2012 alone, 32 cases of conflict were recorded globally compared to 37 in 2011 (UCDP 2012). Similarly, the HIIK Conflict Barometer identified a total of 372 conflicts globally in 2018, with two-thirds of them fitting the extremely violent category (IPSS 2019; HIIK 2019). While full combat wars decreased from 20 in 2017 to 16 in 2018, limited wars increased from 14 to 16. Of the 16 violent combat wars globally, six took place in sub-Saharan Africa (IPSS 2019). Given the precarious and fragile state of peace and security on the continent it does not come as a surprise that Africa hosts the bulk of UN peacekeeping missions that account for a significant chunk of the UN budget on peace and security (IPSS 2019).

The effects of war and violent conflict has wide-ranging implications. High intensity warfare in certain countries has increased the number of fatalities with the number of battle-related deaths rising sharply since 2014 reaching the highest number recorded in 20 years (Allansson, Melander and Themmer 2017). Conservative estimates by United Nations Office of the High Commission for Refugees (UNCHR) put the number of conflicts induced refugees at about 65.6 million globally (UNCHR 2017). The number of internally displaced persons rose fivefold between 2005/2016 (UNDP 2016; UNCHR 2017). The UNCHR (2017) estimates that about half of the number of global refugees are children, separated from their families and communities. Further, violent conflict has had differential impacts on women, men and children, which calls for different approaches to conflict prevention, management and resolution. While men make up most armed combatants during war and conflict and are more likely to die from the direct effects of violence, women and children equally face a continuum of insecurity before, during, and after conflict (Crespo Sancho 2017).

Handelman (2017) posits that the distinction between peacekeeping, peace-making and peacebuilding is often confusing and sometimes acquires different meanings in different situations. He cites the example of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict where ordinary citizens are at the centre of the struggle. Such situations require a different approach to peacebuilding. For brevity's sake, and to facilitate a better understanding of the concepts of peace making, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, I attempt to make a distinction between these terms although I am aware that such distinctions are usually hard to pin down in certain contexts. I attempt this in the hope that a theoretical distinction will facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the terms and strategies related to coping with conflict.

2.5.3 Peacekeeping

According to Lederach (1999), peacekeeping entails the deployment of armed and civilian personnel in a conflict zone to save lives and arrest fighting between belligerents. Peacekeeping is therefore one of the most popular preventive mechanisms that the UN continues to use in conflict zones. Historically the UN approach to conflict was largely informed by the belief that the greatest threats to peace and stability were violent interstate conflicts (Handelman 2017). As a result, peacekeeping was largely understood as involving separation of protagonists in a way that would prevent reversion to, and recurrence of, violence.

Despite his theoretical and conceptual contributions to peacekeeping, Galtung (1976) remains critical of it and argues that it pursues a “dissociative” approach whose goal is the promotion of distance and a “social vacuum” between antagonists with the assistance of a third party. He argues that because the approach does not seek to get to the root causes of the problem, it preserves structural violence which ultimately promotes direct violence (Galtung 1990 cited in Cravo 2017). Galtung (1976) maintains that peacekeeping resembles the notion of negative peace in the sense that expended effort is channelled towards mere aversion of conflict without dealing with its root causes.

Cremin and Guilherme (2016) argue that there is a real danger for long-term peace and its sustainability if peacekeeping takes precedence and becomes the only priority. They further argue that because a lot of interventions tend to disproportionately focus on peacekeeping there is a real risk of peacekeeping being reduced to a tool for maintaining the status quo and further entrenching structural and cultural violence which are equally devastating. In 2017 alone 16 UN peacekeeping operations were deployed with active operations in Somalia, South Sudan, Israel and Palestine. It is worth noting that although there is talk about reducing peacekeeping

missions globally, the number of police and military personnel in UN peacekeeping missions nearly tripled from 34 000 in 2000 to over 94 000 in 2017 (United Nations and World Bank 2018).

In 2016, the total cost of maintaining peacekeeping missions in the field had risen to about 8 billion USD annually and UN missions today last an average three times longer than their predecessors (UN 2015). The IEP estimated that in 2016 the economic cost of containing and dealing with the consequences of violence accounted for 12.6% of global domestic product. This translates to a massive 14.3 trillion USD or 5.40 USD per person/day (IEP 2019).

2.5.4 Peace-making

Although largely criticised for being reactive, Cravo (2017:47) sees peace-making as a comprehensive approach whose goal goes beyond the cessation of hostilities to focus on ways to transcend inconsistencies and contradictions between feuding parties. It is usually relied upon when either violence has already occurred or there is potential for the occurrence of violence between conflicting parties which are better kept apart because there is general unwillingness to engage in peace (Cremin and Guilharme 2016). Peace-making is usually undertaken by diplomats and the international community to broker peace deals by bringing conflicting parties to the negotiating table. This approach would easily fall under Track I of Lederach's middle-out conflict approach described in this chapter.

Because peace-making and conflict resolution usually reside in the "minds of conflicting parties" and is achieved as soon as an agreement is signed and ratified, Galtung (1976: 296-7) denounces it as "narrow", "elitist" and "negligent" particularly considering the structural factors that are necessary in building a self-sustaining peace. An ongoing example of a peace-making process is the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) involving different political and military actors in South Sudan.

In Zimbabwe, peace-making processes include the Lancaster House Agreement signed between the Patriotic Front (PF) and the Rhodesian Front in 1979, the Unity Accord between ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU signed in 1987, and, more recently, the GPA signed between ZANU-PF and the MDCs in September 2008. What remains particularly striking about virtually all the peace overtures in Zimbabwe is that they were high profile political endeavours almost exclusively led and negotiated by politicians and elite men with little to no input from civil

society (Kriger 2012; Aeby 2016; 2018). Ironically, many of those men were also in many ways the protagonists and instigators of the conflicts in the first place.

2.5.5 Peacebuilding

Perceived theoretical and practical shortcomings of peacekeeping and peace-making led Galtung (1979) to develop a new concept, that of peacebuilding. Since 1990 peacebuilding has gained prominence on the agendas of governments and international bodies such as the UN, European Union and the AU. Since the two Agendas, the UN's approach to peacebuilding has evolved significantly. The Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations (Brahimi Report 2000) and Kofi Annan's publication In Larger Freedom (2004) shows that the thrust of peacebuilding has clearly shifted from only focusing on state sovereignty towards human security and development through transformed relationships (Makwerere and Mandoga 2012; Tadashi 2016).

While Boutros Ghali's initial conceptualisation of peacebuilding in Agenda for Peace (1992) was criticised for being reactive, a later version of peacebuilding contained in Annan's Agenda for Development (2004) incorporated elements of sustainability and cooperation in addressing global political and socio-economic challenges (Datzberger 2017; Makwerere 2017). In Agenda for Peace Ghali proposes responsibilities and responses for the UN and the international community in dealing with contemporary conflicts. The prescription included four major areas of activities namely: preventive diplomacy, peace-making, peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding (Lederach 1997). Ghali's framework suggests that at different times in diverse contexts, a variety of sequential response mechanisms and functions are needed to promote the resolution of conflict and sustainability of peace. With peacekeeping remaining the most popular (and expensive) preventive mechanism used by the UN in conflict zones, unfortunately only meagre resources are allocated to peacebuilding.

2.5.6 Peacebuilding: Evolution and Challenges

Peacebuilding has come to be understood as a comprehensive concept that encompasses and generates and sustains the full array of processes, approaches and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable and peaceful relationships (Lederach 1997: 12). Paris and Sisk (2009) see peacebuilding as a range of activities that aim to address the roots of conflict and promote sustainable peace in the medium to long term. Both interpretations place emphasis on relationship building as a key component of successful peacebuilding. Lederach (2000)

reinforces this position by noting that peacebuilding concerns itself with transforming relationships between people.

Peacebuilding therefore becomes both a political and a social process aimed at rebuilding relationships (Mani 2002). This view is buttressed by Fukuda-Parr and McCandless (2009: 216-217) who argue that peacebuilding should comprise holistic conceptual strategies and approaches in order to be effective. Initially, peacebuilding was considered a necessary step once peace-making had established the framework for a negotiated settlement and peacekeeping had ensured that warring factions did not re-engage in armed conflict (Cornwell *et al.* 2010). The concept was later broadened in the 1990s to include (apart from rebuilding in post-conflict settings), conflict prevention and conflict management and post-conflict reconstruction efforts (Cornwell *et al.* 2010). Since then, peacebuilding has been the central pillar in international intervention strategies in post-war societies (Cornwell *et al.* 2010). Peacebuilding involves a wide range of activities and functions that both precede and follow formal peace accords.

For example, Tadashi (2016) and Iwami (2016) demonstrate Japan's shift from consolidation of peace and state-building as hallmarks of peacebuilding to a more nuanced process of peacebuilding bordering on provision of humanitarian assistance and development. Japan's new approach to peacebuilding is more pronounced in Afghanistan where it has pursued a non-military approach, choosing instead to focus on economic recovery and infrastructure development. However, Japan's approach to peacebuilding continues to retain characteristics of liberal peacebuilding which has come under intense criticism by scholars like Mac Ginty (2016) and others.

As intimated earlier, peacebuilding involves the transformation of relationships. It must therefore not be limited to markers of peace such as the signing of peace agreements or cessation of hostilities. It ought to go beyond peacekeeping and peace-making to the establishment of democratic and just societies that reflect societal aspirations. For Lederach, conflict transformation assumes that the consequences of a conflict can be modified so that relationships and social structures improve as a result of conflict instead of being harmed by it (Lederach 1999: 27). Lederach's emphasis is on rebuilding relationships destroyed by war, violence and mistrust by focusing on reconciliation within society and strengthening of society's peacebuilding potential.

Peacebuilding thus represents an opportunity for societal reconciliation, healing of relationships and making sure that societal gains from conflict are consolidated to build stable, democratic and peaceable societies. Peacebuilding therefore becomes relationships-based. This approach offers entry points for successful post-conflict reconstruction given that conflicts the world over are because of strained relationships. If conflicts are relationship based and their resolution lies in rebuilding broken relationships, it therefore becomes important to establish peace infrastructures that will help society transition from war to post-war while simultaneously holding society together to consolidate peacebuilding gains. By building relationships, restoring confidence and strengthening community cohesion, it becomes far easier to address other forms of grievances that people and societies may harbour against each other.

2.6 From a State-Centric to a Human-Centric Approach

During the Cold War, two parallel but separate sets of architecture were established to address socio-economic development on one hand and peace and security on the other. Within this framework, socio-economic development and basic human rights lay within the sovereign domain of the state, while peace and security were internationalised (Bales *et al.* 2012; Rudnick and Boromisza-Habashi 2017; Tschirgi 2003). It is not surprising that with this narrow interpretation of security, issues like poverty, justice and civic and political rights were considered areas for domestic jurisdiction. Large chunks of international financial resources, political and military efforts were therefore devoted to the preservation of peace and security. During this period, peace and security were narrowly conceived of as the protection of the territorial integrity and vital interests of the nation-state (Tschirgi 2003). The international peace and security architecture at the time was modelled to deal with inter-state conflicts and those arising from opposing power blocks.

At this point, the UN was also overshadowed by other security organisations such as The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact. Prior to the adoption of a revised definition of human security contained in the Human Development Report (HDR), security was conceived of in purely militaristic terms (Tschirgi 2003; United Nations and World Bank 2018; McCandless and Karbo 2011). Because of the HDR (United Nations 1994) the focus of security shifted from the protection of state borders by military means to the protection of individuals from a wider range of threats to their well-being and security (McCandless and Karbo 2011).

The elements of human security contained in the HDR relate to the safety and security of individuals and communities from chronic threats such as hunger, poverty, deprivation, disease and repression. This approach also entails protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life (United Nations 1994; McCandless and Karbo 2011). These elements have become intrinsic parts of the peacebuilding process including the protection of women and girls from sexual violence and exploitation during conflict.

After 1990, peace and development have become intricately linked (United Nations and World Bank 2018; McCandless and Karbo 2011). One of the reasons for this is that a number of violent conflicts that occurred post-Cold War usually arose from and found fertile ground primarily in contexts characterised by poor governance structures, ethnic polarisation and religious animosities as well as structural inequities (Bales *et al.* 2012; Tschirgi 2003). From a security angle, the end of the Cold War was game changing in the sense that its collapse also ended the possibility of a physical or nuclear military confrontation between the West and the former Soviet Union. It also ended several other proxy wars in Eastern Europe and parts of Africa.

2.7 Developments in Support of the new Peacebuilding Agenda

The challenges referred to above accompanied the collapse of the former Soviet Union and in turn encouraged a rethink of security (Bales *et al.* 2012; Tschirgi 2003). The shift in policy has since broadened the scope of peacebuilding to encompass overlapping agendas for peace and development in support of peacebuilding. Tschirgi (2003) identifies five important developments in support of the new peacebuilding agenda. I provide a brief but detailed discussion of each.

2.7.1 Normative Development

This aspect of peacebuilding entails comprehensive frameworks which recognise peacebuilding as an area for international concern. Unlike security as discussed in peacekeeping, here, security is broadened to human security. Examples of this aspect include global campaigns to ban anti-personal landmines, regulate small arms and light weapons. The creation of the International Criminal Court signalled a radical departure from state-centric definition of security to a human security approach entailing human rights, justice, reconciliation, human protection, good governance, and an insistence on the rule of law.

2.7.2 Policy Development

Several policy initiatives have been adopted which demonstrate the need to promote human security alongside state security. In this regard, conflict prevention, use of development assistance to address conflict, an increase in the number of peace operations for peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction have become the cornerstones and objectives of effective peacebuilding on an international level. In response to a series of high-level ethnic conflicts, civil wars and complex humanitarian emergencies, state failures and genocide, the UN and other international actors have launched a growing number of multi-dimensional peace-making and peacekeeping operations and undertaken transitional administrations in countries like Kosovo and East Timor. All these developments represent shifts in operational responses by the international community, the United Nations included.

2.7.3 Institutional Reform

This has entailed institutional reorganisation across the system. At the level of the UN, new departments and coordination mechanisms have been created, for example, the Peacebuilding Commission, in 2007. Similarly, many governments and donor agencies have established conflict prevention and peacebuilding units. The post-Cold War period was accompanied by a growth in peacebuilding institutions, both local and international. At regional and sub-regional level, organisations and institutions were restructured and their responsibilities widened to address violent conflicts. An example is SADC's Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation (the 'Organ') created in June 1996 to ensure political stability and security at a regional level.

2.7.4 New Institutional Arrangements

Faced with an ever-growing number of crises around the world, new types of institutional arrangements were created to deal with different conflicts through providing international assistance.

2.8 Why an Interest in Peacebuilding?

As mentioned previously, Ghali laid the foundation for peacebuilding. He did so by demonstrating a link between peace and development. Later, Supplement to the Agenda for Peace (1995) and Agenda for Development (1995) further explained the linkage between peace and security and development. These seminal publications were subsequently followed by a

series of high-level reports including Annan's report on Prevention of Conflict (2000) and the August 2000 Report on the Panel of the UN Peace Operations. Bales *et al.* (2012) posit that the rise in peacebuilding post-Cold War can be accounted for through a consideration of how the concepts of sovereignty and democratisation and humanitarian intervention have shifted and expanded since the collapse of the Soviet Union. For example, during the Cold War, for a peacekeeping operation to be deployed the state upon whose territory the peacekeepers operated needed to agree to the operation. However, post-Cold War peacekeeping troops have been deployed both to conflicts in which host state cooperation was complete and those in which it was absent (Bales *et al.* 2012). Bales *et al.* further argue that these changes reflect maturing thinking on what constitutes sovereignty. In recent decades exceptions to state sovereignty have been carved out and the international community's role in purely internal matters has become increasingly accepted.

Bales *et al.* (2012) further argue that democratisation is another important factor which has led to a rise in peacebuilding post-Cold War. The need to entrench democratic values and principles in many conflict zones influenced intervention behaviour by international players such as the UN. As a result, the number of democratic states increased dramatically from about 50 in 1989 to 80 in 1995 (Bales *et al.* 2012). At the same time, the international community and disputants have turned attention to building stable and durable democratic states through intervention. However, there seems to be a contradiction here in the sense that an emphasis on democratic values and principles in conflict zones seem to have been influenced by what is often conceived as a failed liberal approach.

2.8.1 Challenges to Peacebuilding

This section is an attempt to highlight challenges to building peace that is self-sustaining. Apart from the obvious difficulties of peacebuilding processes that usually require that protagonists engage in dialogic decision making and social justice initiatives (Cremin and Guilherme 2016), peacebuilding is generally a difficult and challenging enterprise (Rosenthal 2017; Galtung 1996; Curle, Freire and Galtung 1974 cited in Brickmore 2005). For example, the numerous ideal types and revisionist approaches that range from liberal to post liberal, local, communal, and emancipatory, hybrid, multicultural or social peacebuilding only serve to complicate processes of building peace.

Other technocratic challenges have to do with lack of coordination at institutional level and bureaucracy and funding constraints (Rosenthal 2017; United Nations Peacebuilding

Architecture Review 2015). A review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture carried out by the Advisory Group of Experts in 2015 found that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) relegated peacebuilding activities to the periphery preferring to see them only as important activities after conflict has ended (Rosenthal 2017). The Group recommended that the UNSC prioritises peacebuilding at all phases of the cycle of conflict.

Below I discuss emerging concepts in the field of peacebuilding, for example liberal peacebuilding and post-liberal peacebuilding. The latter is crucial to understand because it is central to this study. Localised peacebuilding has elicited great excitement and debate among peace practitioners and scholars. This is in part because it marks a departure from liberal peacebuilding and presents practitioners and scholars with opportunities to experiment with other forms of peacebuilding that are grounded in local experiences. But before delving into the intricacies of a post-liberal peace paradigm, the following questions are important for consideration. What does local peacebuilding entail? Who are the owners of the peace process? How local is local?

2.8.2 Liberal Peacebuilding

The liberal peace paradigm gained prominence with the collapse of the bipolar world order and was perceived as a solution to problems of violent conflict in most parts of the developing world. A liberal approach to peacebuilding is premised on good governance, human rights and rule of law (Cravo 2017). It is also premised on stereotypical ideas that liberal and democratic societies are inherently more peaceful than other kinds of societies and that democracy and economic development are important ingredients for creating peace (Cravo 2017; Braucler and Naucke 2017; Hamein 2014). Liberal peacebuilding is rooted in the belief that local actors in conflict or war-torn spaces have weak capacities and may be illiberal, divisive and focused on sectarian gains at the expense of a common good (Hamein 2014).

This reasoning contradicts Lederach (1997) who believes that local actors are more knowledgeable about their situation and possess the requisite skills and resources to resolve conflicts sometimes without external intervention. In the recent past the liberal peace paradigm has come under severe criticism by critical scholars⁹ for its misplaced assumptions particularly

⁹ Critical scholars are thinkers who are grounded in non-Western scholarship and challenge the Eurocentric-North American worldview such as Richmond (2011), Hudson (2015), Mac Ginty (2015), Paffenholz (2014) and Tom

in the wake of its failure to deliver ‘true peace’ in Iraq and Afghanistan. Hudson (2016b: 4-5) argues that one of liberal peace’s flaws stems from its imperial modelling which sets up dichotomies such as developed vs underdeveloped, modern vs so-called traditional’, global vs local and liberal vs illiberal. These dichotomies often create intervention challenges since one is often more preferred than the other.

Furthermore, liberal peacebuilding exudes a tendency to see ‘others’ as a problem to be solved and putting the onus on Western experts to engineer and produce peace since the non-Western ‘other’ is incapable of producing and maintaining peace. Strangely, and in spite of its obvious limitations, liberalism continues to be uncritically accepted as ‘wisdom’ in most policy circles.

Over time, the failure to promote the emergence of liberal democracies combined with outsiders’ failure to make the liberal peace a reality, necessitated a rethink and reconsideration of the approach (Hamein 2014; Paris 2010). For example, attempts at establishing liberal democracies and market economies following a liberal peacebuilding approach backfired spectacularly in Iraq and Afghanistan (Suhurke 2007; Dodge 2009). King (2016 cited in Tom 2018) argues it was in part because market and political liberalisation policies conflicted with each other. Tom (2018) argues that it is illogical to expect weak and sometimes absent institutions to support economic and political competition the same way liberal policies operate in stable democracies.

In Tunisia, democratic and market-oriented reforms reinforced authoritarianism, clientelism and corporate nepotism. To demonstrate liberal peace’s failures, statistics on recurrence of violent conflicts in societies ravaged by war show that about 50% recur in the first five years following the signing of peace agreements (Collier in Cravo 2017). Critics of the liberal peace approach argue that the failure of liberal peacebuilding presented opportunities for other forms of peacebuilding to emerge. Unlike previous approaches, new approaches placed greater emphasis on indigenous knowledge and practices (Kappler and Richmond 2011; Jestard and Bellani 2012). These criticisms saw a shift towards a local orientation in peacebuilding or what has been described as localised peacebuilding. I dedicate a section to discussing localised peacebuilding below.

(2018) among others. This pool of scholars feed the emerging discourse on context-based non-Western and non-liberal perspectives to post-conflict recovery and reconstruction in developing countries.

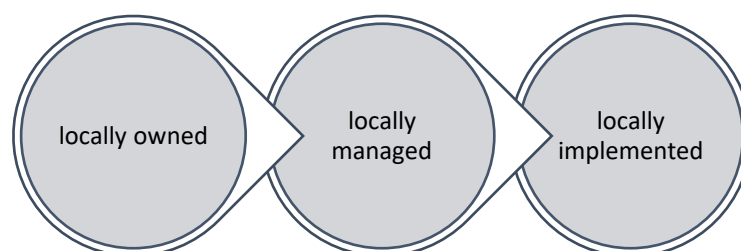
2.8.3 ‘Localised’ Peacebuilding

‘Localised’ peacebuilding implies a bottom-up process that is planned and carried out at the local level (Braucier and Naucke 2017). In other words, these are peace initiatives that are owned and led by local people in their own contexts and normally involve small-scale grassroots initiatives. Carvalho *et al.* (cited in Braucier and Naucke 2017) are critical of local ownership in peacebuilding interventions and describe ‘local ownership’ as constituting and involving locals implementing externally designed models, where challenges have already been diagnosed by external ‘experts’ through learned experiences from elsewhere. Building on the same argument, Hellmuller (2014: 5) and Kappler (2015: 881) argue that the concept of local ownership has been taken as an excuse to legitimate the withdrawal of external forces to hide the real dimensions of external interventions or simply improve local legitimacy. They further argue that local ownership is a strategic and rhetorical element to satisfy donors and increase the success of grant applications.

Although the concept of ‘local’ has been a subject of intense debate in academic and policy circles, Peace Direct (2019) attempts to make a distinction between three major initiatives in peacebuilding. I found this conceptual distinction extremely simple and insightful (Figure 2.6). The distinction is presented as follows:

- i. Locally owned – where local people and groups design the approach and set priorities while external partners assist with resources (financial and technical).
- ii. Locally managed – approach and design is imported from outside but transplanted to local management.
- iii. Locally implemented – largely an external approach including external priorities that locals are expected to implement.

Figure 2.6: Levels of peacebuilding ownership



As has been alluded to previously, a crisis of the liberal approach prompted a local turn in peace research that focused on the everyday activities of local actors and the meanings they attach to them (Mac Ginty 2015; Brauchler and Naucke 2017). Brauchler and Naucke (2017) note that although it seemed that the ‘local’ would lose its relevance and meaning with trends towards globalisation and modernisation, urbanisation and technologisation, it is interesting to see localisation taking centre stage in peacebuilding processes.

Mac Ginty (2015) points out that although no mention of the word ‘local’ was made in Boutros Ghali’s seminal publication Agenda for Peace (1992), slightly over two decades later, the word ‘local’ is, in fact, ‘everywhere’, and has become a modern buzzword in development and peacebuilding processes. Paffenholz (2015: 859-60) goes further to argue that whereas in the Agenda for Peace (1992) peacebuilding was defined as an outside intervention, in Agenda for Development (2004), the local turn moved to the core of peacebuilding to rescue struggling international interventions (Mac Ginty 2015).

But what is the cause for a renewed interest in local peacebuilding? Bauchler (2015) and Brauchler and Widlok (2007) offer refreshing insights. They argue that a push towards cultural and traditional justice and ethnographic research served to revive local traditions, political structures and cultures, in tandem with processes of decolonisation, decentralisation and nation building. Billerbeck (2015) notes that local ownership boosts the legitimacy and sustainability of peacebuilding primarily because it preserves the principles of self-determination and non-imposition of solutions. Perhaps a good illustration can be seen in how Rwanda infused traditional dispute resolution mechanisms (the *Gacaca* court system) with the modern justice system as a transitional justice option to come to terms with the genocide (Tshuma 2018a; Hudson 2009). Although some have criticised the partisan nature of Rwanda’s healing process (Kohen *et al.* 2011; Thomson 2013; 2018), it has been hailed as one of the most successful models of a locally driven peace process (Corrigan 2015; Hudson 2009).

The preference for locally driven peacebuilding processes is that they tend to be durable and stable. This is because the greatest resource for sustaining peace in the long term always resides in local people’s knowledge of both their environment and culture (Lederach 1997; 2003; Avruch 1998). Interestingly, in one of its reports the UN acknowledges that externally driven solutions tend to diminish or even eliminate the benefits of legitimacy and sustainability that local ownership brings (UN Report 2009).

Juncos and Blockman (2018) note that in instances where communities have been meaningfully involved, conflict prevention and peacebuilding are seen as more legitimate by local actors and tend to yield better and more sustainable outcomes than those exposed to external actors. More importantly, the need to involve local actors in peacebuilding has been linked to the objective of supporting human security, sparking a paradigm shift from a state-centric peacebuilding where previously peace processes and security were intricately linked to the state.

Using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) design, this study attempted to use peace infrastructures to bridge the gender gap in Zimbabwe's peace efforts. My attraction to PAR stems from its respect for local people's knowledge and their ability to understand and address issues confronting them and their communities. It also recognises and acknowledges the notion that human systems can only be understood and changed by involving members of the system in the inquiry. This is particularly important given the gender insensitivity and lack of inclusivity in previous peace attempts in the country. Previous peace attempts have failed to bring knowledge generated at the local level in informal everyday settings into the mainstream of peace discourse. This is symptomatic of the broader dilemmas around local ownership that often works to disadvantage those whose interventions border on marginality because of their perceived informality. To generate local knowledge on peacebuilding, I employ Richmond's (2016) notion of everyday peacebuilding which helps to return autonomy to local actors by working collaboratively with experts.

2.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored the concepts of peace, violence and conflict that provide a context and grounding for the research. It has demonstrated how these concepts are mutually reinforcing to the extent that it becomes almost impossible to fully appreciate one without a firmer grasp of the others. Over time these concepts have also evolved as a result of fundamental transformations in society underpinned by a shift from state-centric to human-centric approaches to security associated with an end to the bipolar world order that collapsed with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990. The chapter sought to make a distinction between direct, structural and cultural violence. One distinguishable feature from the discussion above is that like the concepts of violence, conflict and peace are mutually reinforcing and, in some instances, straddle seamlessly between and among each other. The chapter also explored the concepts of peace-making and peacekeeping and peacebuilding. It also traced the history of peacebuilding from its nascent stages in the aftermath of the Cold War to the present where

peacebuilding has suddenly become a modern buzzword but whose concise definition is still lacking. The chapter sought to highlight challenges to building self-sustaining peace by drawing on the limitations and failures of liberalism. Liberalism has remained the preferred peace intervention despite its obvious shortcomings. The limits of liberal peacebuilding coupled with a frustration with a bad record of success in countries like Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan among others, have necessitated a paradigm shift in peacebuilding thought and policy. As a result, local peacebuilding, hybrid peacebuilding and post-liberal peace are emerging as the preferred approaches for peace interventions although admittedly the concept itself is still fraught with contradictions and misconceptions.

CHAPTER 3: CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Conflict is normal in human relationships and conflict is a motor of change (Lederach 2003:4).

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce theoretical and conceptual constructs that inform and underpin this inquiry. Within the peacebuilding literature, four theoretical conceptualisations emerge namely: structural violence theory, transformation relationship theory, protracted social conflict theory and relationship building theory (Paffenholz 2015: 859). Several other theoretical perspectives could have suited this study, for example, African feminist peacebuilding theories (Hudson 2009; 2016a), theory of hegemonic masculinities (Connell 2000; 2002; 2005) and Galtung's theory of conflict, violence and peace (Galtung 1969; 1975; 1996). I did not opt to use them for some of the reasons outlined here. For instance, while an African feminist theory helps to point out gender inequalities by analysing the manifestation of gendered power relations between men and women, its utility in action research studies is limited by the theory's inability to translate theory into actionable practice – a key component of this undertaking. In contrast, Conflict Transformation allows not only an analysis of multi-layered dynamics of conflict and post-conflict societies but also generates new perspectives on local and subnational conflicts in an empowering and transformative way.

The Conflict Transformation theory by Lederach (2003) is rooted in a transformative paradigm that puts emphasis on relationship building and the need to transform oppressive and undemocratic systems into democratic and inclusive systems that lay a foundation for achieving positive peace. Relationship building offers important insights about participatory techniques for sustainable peacebuilding. More importantly transformative peacebuilding theories, in particular the work by Lederach, has fundamentally influenced the policy discourse and practice of supporting a 'local turn' in peacebuilding (Paffenholz 2014) and the creation and establishment of peace infrastructures as explained later in section 3.4 of this chapter.

In sociological and anthropological literature, transformation embraces and implies effecting change in social and political structures. Conflict Transformation therefore encompasses a

deeper understanding of the root causes of conflict with a view to positively transforming social structures that breed and sustain violent conflict. Conflict Transformation goes beyond conflict resolution and management by placing emphasis on process and culture, building ownership at all levels while simultaneously addressing the root causes of violent conflict through systemic change, integrating reconciliation and building a shared vision for living together (McCandles 2019: 29). According to Miall (2004), Conflict Transformation is a process of engaging with and transforming relationships, interests, discourses and, if necessary, the very constitution of society that supports the continuation of violent conflict.

3.2 Conflict Management and Prevention

To lay a foundation for Conflict Transformation, it is important to briefly engage two other important approaches to conflict analysis, namely, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Management. Conflict Management refers to techniques and ideas designed to reduce the negative effects of conflict while enhancing the positive outcomes for all parties involved. The techniques and ideas used depend on the type of conflict that needs managing. Researchers often differentiate between affective (relational) and substantive (performance, process or task-specific) conflict, as well as inter-organisational conflict (between two or more businesses) and intra-organisational (conflict within organisations). Conflict prevention on the other hand refers to a variety of activities and strategies within the peacebuilding field that are deployed to pre-empt and subsequently neutralise triggers to widespread violent conflict.

Conflict resolution can be an aim of Conflict Management but not all conflict management techniques and styles have conflict resolution as the ultimate target. Furthermore, models of conflict management vary considerably. For instance, theories that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s focused on intentions of parties involved in conflict as the key to moving towards positive outcomes. Khun and Poole (2000) classify conflict approaches as either distributive or integrative. The former focuses on distributing a fixed number of positive outcomes between warring parties, and the latter on integrating the opposing needs of the parties to create the best outcome for all involved.

Rahim (2002) identifies five common management approaches to conflict resolution namely: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising. For Bloomfield and Reilly (1998: 18) conflict management is the positive and constructive handling of difference and divergence. Rather than advocating methods for removing conflict, conflict management

addresses the more realistic question of managing conflict. For instance, how to deal with conflict in a constructive way, how to bring opposing sides together in a cooperative process, how to design a practical, achievable, cooperative system for the constructive management of difference.

3.3 The Conflict Transformation School

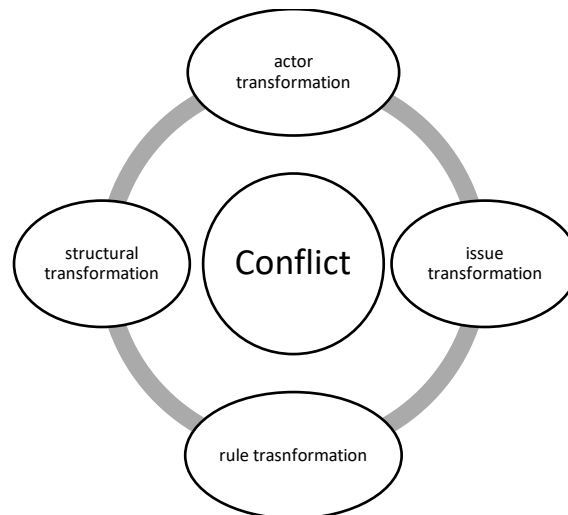
The Conflict Transformation school was largely born out of the limitations of and frustration with the Conflict Management school. It was popularised by scholars such as Lederach (1995; 1997; 2003), Galtung (1995), Vayrynen (1991) and others. Lederach (1997; 2003) in particular, argues that conflict resolution carries with it the danger of co-optation and an attempt to ‘get rid’ of conflict when people are raising legitimate and important issues that need to be looked at and addressed. McCandless and Karbo (2011) refer to this as an expression of a ‘minimalist approach’ to conflict management instead of pursuing a ‘maximalist approach’ that seeks to get to the root of the problem.

In other words, conflict resolution places a premium on the immediate cessation of conflict instead of digging up its roots. Paffenholz (2014) sees this as a huge misstep in development work and peace intervention more broadly since conflict is a normal social and societal occurrence. In this way, Conflict Transformation marks a major diversion from other conflict approaches. Vayrynen (1991: 4) agrees with Paffenholz, who argues that

the bulk of conflict theory regards the issues, actors and interests as given and on that basis makes efforts to find a solution to mitigate or eliminate contradictions between them. Yet the issues, actors and interests change over time because of the social, economic and political dynamics of societies.

Although Vayrynen (1991) does not offer a succinct and precise definition of Conflict Transformation, he acknowledges that conflict is dynamic and much broader in scope, thus requires more than just resolution. He goes further to identify four entry levels that are necessary when attempting to address a conflict, as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Conflict entry levels



Vayrynen (1994) argues that for any conflict to be transformed, there is a need to understand and transform the actors, to transform the issues that are fuelling the conflict, deal with the rules of engagement as well as transform the structural drivers of conflict. However, Vayrynen falls short of a practical model that can be applied constructively to transform conflict (Makwerere 2017). Although several authors discuss transformative approaches to peacebuilding (Galtung 1969; Cule 1971) the most comprehensive and widely recognised approach was developed by Lederach. His most influential and widely used work is his seminal publication Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation and Divided Societies (1997). Paffenholz (2014) argues that Conflict Transformation was born out of Lederach's frustration with conservative approaches to conflict and the debates on intervention sequencing led by the complimentary school which sought to bridge conflict management and resolution.

Lederach's theorising in the late 1980s and the 1990s was hugely influenced by different but related global developments, for example, the end of a bipolar world order and internal wars and civil strife in countries like Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, Cambodia and El Salvador, most of which were settled using the conflict management approach (Paffenholz 2014). The resurgence of armed conflict in Angola, Rwanda, Somalia and Yugoslavia exposed the limitations of externally driven peacebuilding. It also ended optimism associated with a liberal approach to peacebuilding in post-conflict societies. Chapter 7 explains in greater depth the concept of liberal peacebuilding in post-war societies.

While external peacebuilding and conflict management interventions modelled along liberal approaches failed to end violence and bring peace and stability in southern Somalia for example, home-grown peace interventions to the crisis in northern Somalia led to successful post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction. Lederach warns that conflict resolution

associated with external peace interventions run the risk of creating negative peace where the actual conflict is 'resolved' but the underlying root causes are not adequately addressed. Lederach (2003) argues further that seeking quick solutions to deep problems usually means a lot of good words with no accompanying change. Sustainable and durable peace embedded in justice and respect for human rights and life therefore requires more than just resolution of conflicts or conflict management, it calls for political and social transformation of systems that breed violence and sustain conflict.

Lederach's theory of Conflict Transformation help us understand why some societies and communities relapse into conflict immediately upon its cessation more easily than others. Similarly, the theory can provide insights as to why Zimbabwe remains on the cusp of conflict that poses serious existential threats to peace, stability and development. Protracted social conflict, political instability and deep social divisions on the back of the economic malaise of the past two decades continue to worsen and compound an existing problem. It is impossible to engage in an extensive discussion of Zimbabwe here suffice to underscore that successive administrations have failed to find ways and mechanisms to constructively engage in genuine national healing and reconciliation processes that could put the country on a path to recovery and stability (Tshuma 2018b; Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru 2013; Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Benyera 2015; Chiweshe 2016).

The theory of Conflict Transformation advanced by Lederach advocates a holistic and broad peace process that advances justice through eliminating all forms of violence and addressing the root causes of conflict through bottom-up and durable constructions of long-term advocacy and strategic planning (Lederach 2003). Conflict Transformation borrows from the constructivist school in the sense that it offers opportunities to create constructive change processes that minimise violence and increase justice. Put differently, Conflict Transformation concerns itself with resolving and responding to real-life problems that occur in human relationships.

Lederach (1997; 2003) theory of Conflict Transformation becomes therefore an attempt to address perceived weaknesses with other approaches, for example, lack of bottom-up and inclusive approaches found in the conflict resolution and management school. According to Ajao and Wielega (2017) the key elements of Conflict Transformation envisioned by Lederach are relationship-building, and construction of effective and durable social structures that uphold the values of justice and respect for human rights and nonviolent forms of resistance.

3.4 Relationship Building and Conflict Transformation

For Lederach, Conflict Transformation involves processes of “presenting life-giving opportunities for the creation of constructive change processes that reduce violence and increase justice through direct interaction in an attempt to respond to real-life problems in human relationships” (Lederach 2003: 21). Conflict Transformation assumes a bird’s view of conflict by seeking a holistic reconstruction of human relationships through positioning people at the centre of the transformation process. By doing this, the approach moves conflict from a destructive to a constructive level where conflicting parties engage in dialogic sessions with a view to finding common ground. Lederach (2003: 4) calls this process a “constructive change process”. In other words, it is a proactive approach which sees conflict as a catalyst for growth which occurs at personal, relational, structural and cultural levels.

At a personal level, Conflict Transformation entails minimising the destructive effects of social conflict by maximising an individual’s potential for growth and wellbeing (Lederach 2003). At an interpersonal level, Conflict Transformation concerns itself with minimising poorly functioning communication and maximising understanding, cooperation and empathy. As argued by Galtung (1969; 1990; 1996), Lederach (2003) also acknowledges that at structural and cultural levels Conflict Transformation is interested in not only locating but identifying and uprooting the causes and conditions that create, promote and perpetuate violent conflict. Lederach (2003) further believes that these processes are important in promoting nonviolent mechanisms to establish the sustainable and durable peace required to meet basic human needs.

Lederach goes further to note that the greatest resource for sustaining long term peace is local people’s knowledge of their cultures, a phenomenon commonly referred to as Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS).

Lederach was among the first Western scholars to make a case for locally driven peace processes at a time when liberal peacebuilding was uncritically accepted as conventional wisdom in both policy and academic circles in the West/North. Local peacebuilding is an approach to conflict that recognises local people’s capacities to create their own social institutions and make their own decisions about the future (Mac Ginty 2015). In other words, localised peacebuilding refers to ways ordinary people construct their lives through manipulating their environment and utilising resources within their disposal. This approach

contrasts with liberal peacebuilding wherein peacebuilding is a monolithic top-down and one-way process often facilitated by external (Western) peace experts.

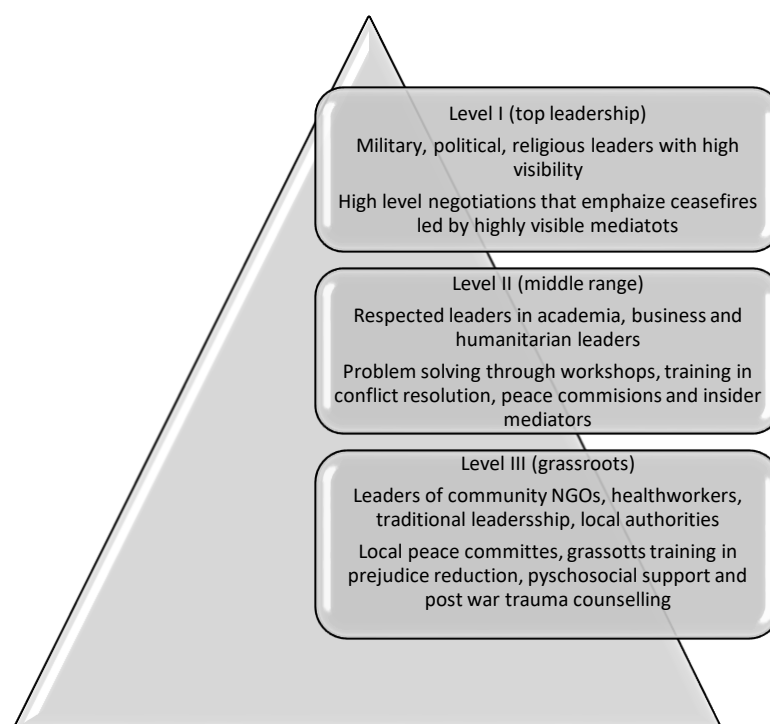
Since peacebuilding is a long-term process of systematic transformation, it calls for changes in personal, structural, relational and cultural aspects of conflict. Structural transformation allows us to shift from international to local peacebuilding praxis by identifying and working with key actors in each system-level. Lederach's middle-out approach (*Fig 2.2*) divides approaches to conflict resolution and management into three tracks of actors:

- Track I – usually comprises top level leadership in the form of top clergy, heads of states and military commanders.
- Track II – made up of civil society leaders, academics and religious leaders. This group has the capacity to influence both Track I and Track III levels. This group is also the watchdog of society providing checks and balances on both levels. However, in some contexts this group can easily be overpowered or completely ignored in negotiations as happened in Zimbabwe in the process leading to the signing of the GNU in September 2008. Furthermore, in situations where polarisation is evident, this group loses its neutrality and ability to bring conflicting parties together.
- Track III – mainly comprised of grassroots leadership whose work is usually seen as informal.

Although Lederach argues that the middle-level track (Track II) holds the greatest potential for establishing infrastructures that sustain peacebuilding over time, this inquiry shifts attention to Track III (grassroots) and aims to build communities' capacity to build peace, anticipate risks and develop resiliencies to withstand social and political shocks. Unlike Lederach's middle-out approach, this inquiry is rooted in a society-based approach to peacebuilding and examines informal peace infrastructures' capacity to promote and facilitate inclusive peacebuilding. These society-based and grassroots initiatives provide the greatest scope for direct and democratic participation by all social groups – minority groups, men and women, boys and girls alike.

This inquiry is inspired by successful case studies of peacebuilding from below. For instance, after years of unsuccessful government efforts to negotiate peace in Mali, traditional decision-making centres and meetings were facilitated by civil society in the northern parts of the country resulting in localised ceasefire agreements while the south (where civil society is inactive) remains engulfed in conflict and violence.

Figure 3.2: The Pyramid of Peacebuilding: Type of actors and peacebuilding approaches



Source: Adapted from Lederach (1997)

In the next section, I introduce a relatively new concept in the peace lexicon: peace infrastructures or infrastructures for peace (I4P). Because of their relevance to this inquiry, I argue that peace infrastructures have proved, and continue to prove, to be crucial structures for sustained peacebuilding. The I4P concept was first introduced by Lederach in his 1997 seminal text where he argued that the nature and characteristics of contemporary conflicts (intrastate, ethnic, state fragility associated with electoral contests, political instability resulting from unequal resource distribution) required more nuanced peacebuilding approaches that transcend traditional statist diplomacy (Odendaal 2010; Lederach 1997; Verzat 2014).

3.5 Peace Infrastructures as Instruments for Peacebuilding

Peace structures, whether formal or informal, are especially relevant in situations of chronic violence and conflict. While Zimbabwe has not been at war since independence in 1980, the country has had to contend and cope with many of war's trappings, including grave human rights violations, population displacements, a shattered and stagnating economy and prolonged periods of political polarisation and social divisions. Within such contexts, van Tongeren (2011) encourages the establishment of peace infrastructures which are essentially peace structures created for societies lacking capacities, mechanisms and structures to deal adequately with on-going and potentially violent conflicts in future.

Peace infrastructures have previously been used in South Africa, Kenya, Ghana and Haiti. The success of peace infrastructures (whether formal or informal) depends on the context and the extent of inclusivity of the peace infrastructure. Odendaal warns that researchers and peacebuilding practitioners must resist attempts to export peacebuilding models, in part because peacebuilding is context driven. This, however, is not to suggest that models cannot be replicated, since peace infrastructures are essentially about ‘giving peace a local address’ (to borrow a phrase popularised by Hopp-Nishanka 2012).

Peace infrastructures have historically been used for many different purposes including but not limited to initiating dialogue, understanding, healing and restoring relationships, sentencing, community building and conflict resolution and management (Odendaal 2010). They are largely built on the premise that human beings desire a connection with others and that this connection is challenged when violent conflict arises. With an emphasis on collective accountability, peace infrastructures encourage integration through community participation and greater self-reliance on the community for those who have been marginalised by society.

3.5.1 Local Peace Committees

Local Peace Committees (LPCs) is an umbrella term used interchangeably with other names for example, District Peace Advisory Councils (DPACs), Multi-party Liaison Committees (MLCs), Village Peace and Development Committees (VPDCs) and Committees for Inter-Community Relations (CICRs) (Odendaal 2010). Both van Tongeren (2011) and Odendaal (2010) agree that successful LPCs tend to exhibit the following traits among others:

- 1) They are inclusive, operating at a sub-national level including district, municipality, town and/or village.
- 2) LPCs are appropriate to contexts within which they work.
- 3) They emphasise dialogue, the promotion of mutual understanding, seek to build trust while creating constructive problem-solving.

Collectively, these traits work to prevent any occurrence and or recurrence of violence while promoting peace and constructive transformation.

3.5.2 Formal LPCs

Odendaal (2011) and Kumar C (2011) note that the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery has been instrumental in the establishment and creation of peace infrastructures in many African countries including in Ghana and Kenya.

Unlike informal LPCs, formal LPCs normally receive formal state recognition and are enacted and established through national legislation or a statutory body as part of its broader formal mandate. Examples include the recent creation of Provincial Peace Committees (PPCs) in Zimbabwe inspired by Ghana's successful peacebuilding model through the National Peace Councils¹⁰.

Like Serbia's Committees on Inter-Community Relations established under the National Law on Local Self-Government of 2003 Art. 63 and LPCs in South Africa (under the September 1991 terms of the National Peace Accord), Zimbabwe's PPCs were established under the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) Act of 2019. In some contexts, national structures, for instance South Sudan's Ministries of Peace (MOP) created in 2011, the Ministry for National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace in Solomon Islands in 2002 and the Ministry of Peace and Reconciliation in Nepal in 2007.

In South Africa, LPCs were employed in the early 1990s during the transitional period to democracy. Although scholars are divided on whether LCPs achieved their mandate, there is consensus these local peace infrastructures helped minimise the escalation of violence without which South Africa could have exploded into extreme violence (van Tongeren 2010; 2011). In Ghana, the National Peace Council of 2005 played a major role reconciling tensions brought about by the existence of two parallel systems of governance structures: a traditional state controlled by tribal chiefs with no formal political authority, and a more modern state controlled at the district level by a district chief executive (Odendaal 2011). The turning point in the conflict was the 2002 violence outbreak in the Dagomba `Kingdom which claimed the life of the patriarch of Dangban along with 40 other people resulting in the government declaring a state of emergency and seeking UN assistance (Irene 2018).

Similarly, in Kenya, the Wajir Peace and Development Committee brought peace to the region towards the end of the 1990s. Because of their huge success in suppressing conflict and election related violence the model was replicated and expanded beyond Wajir to other districts in northern Kenya. Research shows that districts that had functional LPCs experienced far less

¹⁰ For a critique of Ghana's peace infrastructure, see Varzat, V (2014) Infrastructures for Peace: A grass-roots way to do state-building? Berghof Foundation.

violence and post-election violence in the 2007/8 elections compared to districts that did not have LPCs (Odendaal 2010).

3.6 Provincial Peace Committees (PPCs) in Zimbabwe

As part of its five-year strategic plan (2018-2023) the NPRC has established Provincial Peace Committees (PPCs) across the country's ten provinces. The PPCs are the first ever decentralised peace structures and attest to the Commission's commitment to facilitate transitional justice, reconciliation and healing at the local level. PPCs feed into the broader national mandate of the NPRC and are mandated to "provide peace within provinces, create and or facilitate dialogue between groups and communities and for the exchange of ideas and issues that may threaten peace and stability within communities" (NPRC 2019). The creation of PPCs was out of the realisation that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach is unsustainable and impractical in multicultural contexts where individual communities have different needs and aspirations. Communities also face different challenges peculiar to each's context. Owing to these differences; the NPRC encourages communities to employ local knowledge and resources in dealing with conflicts and peacebuilding initiatives within their localities.

The composition of the PPC is such that each PPC is led by a chairperson who is also a Commissioner of the NPRC and seconded to a specific province. The deputy chairperson is elected from among the members that constitute each committee. Each PPC is composed of between 25 and 30 members drawn from a wide range of stakeholders including government officials, civil society, traditional and religious leaders, youth and women's organisations. Membership is completely voluntary, and PPC members serve a one-year term. Renewal is possible but is subject to performance and a clear demonstration of positive results (NPRC 2019).

3.7 Informal LPCs

LPCs can also be informal. In fact, most are informal, established either by civil society leaders or by communities themselves. The majority of informal LPCs do not receive state recognition and this can be both a strength and a weakness (Odendaal 2010). For example, their informality makes them less susceptible to political interference and government action. In Chivasa's (2017) study, members that constituted the LPCs were volunteers with a high level of commitment to peace. This level of commitment gives informal LPCs certain advantages over formal LPCs whose members may seek to derive economic benefits through stipends and

sitting allowances for their involvement peacebuilding initiatives (Odendaal, 2011; Issifu 2016). Furthermore, informal LPCs have also proven to be more committed to peace and have demonstrated far greater resilience and innovation compared to formal bodies tied by bureaucratic governance structures and red tape (Odendaal 2010).

However, the major weakness of informal LPCs is that they sometimes lack the political and social clout needed to engage with government actors and political leaders. The unintended consequence is that informal LPCs, despite the experience they bring to conflict situations, remain side-lined by those who yield formal political power. This was demonstrated in the negotiations leading to the GNU in Zimbabwe in 2008 where informal grassroots networks were unable to influence the transitional justice processes in a meaningful way. Thus, to reinsert themselves into the national discourse, some civil society leaders and their organisations began aligning themselves with political parties eroding the social trust they enjoyed in communities (Eeby 2018). Equally, in polarised contexts local peace infrastructures can be subjected to political manipulation by mainstream political leaders leading to ineffectiveness, division and intra-group squabbles (Chivasa 2017; Rukuni *et al* 2015).

3.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the main theoretical lens that informs the study, namely, Lederach's theory of Conflict Transformation. The theory of Conflict Transformation arose in reaction to conservative theorising about conflict, and frustration with the conflict resolution school of thought. Lederach was among the first group of scholars to break away from this tradition and establish a new school of thought which came to be known as conflict transformation. At the core of Conflict Transformation is relationship building, democratic engagement and collaborative peacebuilding with a view to eliminating all forms of social injustice. Conflict Transformation is transformational in nature and believes that local people possess not just important knowledge about the conflict but also the ability to transform conflict into harmonious relationships.

The chapter also discussed and appraised the concept of peace infrastructures. As discussed above, peace infrastructures are essentially community structures created to support peace in the post-conflict reconstruction phase. They are particularly useful for societies emerging from protracted social and political divisions and those undergoing structural and political transformation at community and national level.

CHAPTER 4: A ‘NON-WAR’ ZONE: INSIGHTS INTO POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT IN ZIMBABWE

You and I must strive to adapt ourselves, intellectually and spiritually to the reality of our political change and relate to each other as brothers bound one to another by a bond of national comradeship. If yesterday I fought you as an enemy, today you have become a friend and ally with the same national interests, loyalty, rights and duties as myself. If yesterday you hated me, today you cannot avoid the love that binds you to me and me to you. Is it not folly, therefore, that in these circumstances anybody should seek to revive the wounds and grievances of the past? The wrongs of the past must now stand forgiven. If ever we look to the past, let us do so for the lesson the past has taught us, namely that oppression and racism are inequities that must never find scope in our political and social system. (De Waal 1990)

4.1 Introduction

Scholars and analysts like Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009; 2012) and Masunugure (2014) among others have argued that violence forms a significant component of Zimbabwe's past and contemporary history. For instance, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) postulates that Zimbabwe's transition from a colony to a sovereign nation and from a promising post-independence state into unprecedented crisis and chaos at the turn of the millennium is largely a result of violence, its memory and impunity. He locates what he describes as a 'culture of violence' within three undemocratic episodes and historical processes that produced Zimbabwe. First is the country's patriarchal and often violent pre-colonial history (pre-1890) where political cultures and practices were influenced and permeated by ideologies of heredity and kinship rather than modern-day competitive politics. Second is a violent colonial project (1890-1979) which imposed an undemocratic system based on white supremacy, patriarchy, and violent authoritarianism.

The system of governance introduced during the colonial period was not only racist and patriarchal but also discriminated against other social groups including sexual and ethnic minorities. Third is the rise of African nationalism (approximately 1950-1979) which inspired and invoked violent and armed military insurrection across southern Africa. Ndlovu-Gatsheni argues that like its predecessor this period was characterised by authoritarianism, commandism and suppression of dissent that often privileged violent problem-solving strategies rather than national dialogue and collective problem-solving strategies.

4.2 Insights on political conflicts in Zimbabwe

Machakanja (2010) notes that since the violent invasion of precolonial kingdoms by Cecil John Rhodes' British South Africa Company¹¹ (BSAC) in the late 19th century and the subsequent colonisation of Southern Rhodesia¹² by Britain, Zimbabwe has remained steeped in violent and intractable conflict. According to data from the DHS conducted in 2015, at least 35% of women had experienced physical violence in one form or the other from the age of 15 and 14% had experienced sexual-based violence (Mukamana, Machakanja and Adjei 2020). Benyera (2014:6) describes Zimbabwe as a "chronically violent state" before colonialism, during colonialism and after independence. I add that Zimbabwe has routinely experienced brief spells of progress and then longer and often intractable cycles of challenges that could easily be interpreted as its dominant narrative. This has not been helped by peace efforts that attempted to build a state to build peace rather than building peace to build a functional and democratic state.

For instance, independence euphoria in 1980 was interrupted by large scale political violence, 'politicide'¹³ and mass repression in Matabeleland and parts of Midlands. Scholars like Huyse (2003) argue that political reasoning that 'justified' political repression in Matabeleland at the time was born out of a belief that multiparty politics and democratic pluralism was bad and counterproductive for a newly established and fragile state emerging from a protracted war. In addition, there was also a security and political threat posed by apartheid South Africa which had shown great determination to destabilise the region to delay majority rule in South Africa. Stability was also interrupted in the late 1990s following successive mass anti-government protests fueled by the failure of neoliberal economic policies of the Bretton Woods Institutions. Mass protests that accompanied the implementation of neoliberal policies threatened to bring the economy to its knees as the economy stagnated, shedding thousands of jobs in the process. A complex combination of both long- and short-term factors resulted in mass social and

¹¹ BSAC was a paramilitary force established by Cecil John Rhodes with the backing of London to promote colonialization and economic exploitation of south-central Africa as part of the 19th century 'scramble for Africa'. BSAC had operations in present day South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, and Malawi.

¹² Zimbabwe has undergone many iterations for example, Southern Rhodesia (1923-1953); Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (1953-1965); Rhodesia (1965-1979); Zimbabwe-Rhodesia (1979) and finally Zimbabwe (1980-present).

¹³ Politicide implies the deliberate decimation and elimination of a legitimate opposition political party through a combination of extreme violence, repression and forced migration. In the case of Gukurahundi, it entailed the use of force and violence to capitulate Zimbabwe's only opposition at the time – PF ZAPU.

political dissatisfaction leading to the formal launch of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in September 1999 backed by a restless and highly coordinated civil society.

In seeking to dislodge ZANU-PF's (Zimbabwe African National Unity-Patriotic Front) political and economic hegemony over the state and its apparatus, and to portray itself as a government-in-waiting, the MDC offered an alternative vision of governance which heightened local imaginations of a new political culture. In an almost predictable fashion, ZANU-PF did not take the challenge to its political and economic dominance lightly, leading to a surge in violence and mass human rights violations specifically targeting human rights defenders, activists and academics critical of the state's excesses as well as opposition backers (Chari 2017; Makahamadze 2019). Consequently, since MDC's entry onto Zimbabwe's political landscape, the country has remained trapped in perpetual cycles of violent conflict exacerbated by disputed and contested electoral contests.

Zimbabwe's opposition parties are predominantly urban-based, and the MDC draws its support from civil society, student movements, churches and workers' unions. The emergence of MDC in the face of ZANU-PF's determination to cling to power was accompanied by a resurgence of politically motivated conflicts, gross human rights violations, forced disappearances and state-sanctioned violence and abductions. Important to note, though, is that the MDC was formed at a critical juncture in the country's history when ZANU-PF's political fortunes were already waning on the back of a collapsing economy, rising food prices, growing unemployment and food riots which were soon accompanied by mass anti-government protests and demonstrations. The mass strikes between 1996 and 1999 deserve special mention because they not only ruptured the country's economic momentum but threatened the prospects of economic recovery and stability (Raftopoulos and Phimister 2003).

ZANU-PF's poor and dismal showing in a high-stakes parliamentary election in June 2000 seemed to signal a new dawn in Zimbabwean politics, with the expectation that the 'transition' would bring an end to elite corruption, governance malfeasance and human rights violations. For some it represented a transition towards a more democratic society where ZANU-PF's excesses could be kept in check by a vibrant opposition working closely with a strong civil society. However, determined to hold onto whatever was left of its legacy, ZANU-PF promoted anarchy and lawlessness by directly interfering with and politicising state institutions including the judiciary, civil service and security forces. As MDC's popularity grew particularly in urban areas, ZANU-PF resorted to authoritarianism and undemocratic means of contesting power,

and in the process committed mass human rights abuses with vigour and determination reminiscent of colonial times.

Zimbabwe's unfolding crises are a manifestation of a complex set of historical, social, economic and political causes. For example, while conflicts often find expression in different interconnected layers ranging from the household level and broader social-level land conflicts, most conflicts are deeply rooted in disputes over national power and socioeconomic hardships (Tshuma 2019: 14; Nel 2020) which are themselves a manifestation of poor governance and incomplete transitional processes.

The unravelling social and political conflicts are also a reminder that colonial struggles for access to, control, and management of political power, were built on a violent culture that bred political intolerance and privileged violent problem solving over dialogue, negotiation, and compromise. Disappointingly, independent Zimbabwe with its nationalist trappings failed to dissociate itself from this violent culture. Sachikonye (2011) notes that since independence ZANU-PF has deployed muscular methods of contesting power including active deployment of violence, intimidation and harassment of opposition members and activists.

The next section focusses on the Gukurahundi genocide in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces. This discussion is important for three reasons: firstly, my research is situated in Bulawayo, which is the capital of Matabeleland, one of the two provinces (the other being Midlands) that became the epicentre of the Gukurahundi between 1982 and 1987. During my discussions with community members and interviewees it became apparent to me that some participants are first- and second-generation victims who have been affected by the violence in various ways. Secondly, numerous surveys and studies show that Gukurahundi remains etched in people's psyches as shown by persistent public demands for truth and justice, particularly in Matabeleland. For instance, a Commissioner with the NPRC revealed during an interview that most community members in Matabeleland provinces conflate the NPRC with a 'Gukurahundi Commission'. In this light, a peace research study that excludes Gukurahundi omits an important aspect of a national collective national memory, however we may wish to erase it.

Thirdly, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021) argues that Gukurahundi laid a foundational base not only in terms of violent conquest of society by the state and imposition of fear among citizens, but also in terms of abuse of the military to deal with civil-political affairs in the country. He thus concludes that for Zimbabwe to forge ahead, the country needs to reinvent itself and craft a new value system and national identity.

4.3 Understanding Gukurahundi Through A Gendered Lens

Gukurahundi¹⁴ refers to the mass atrocities committed by the 5th Brigade, a special force trained by North Korea that operated independently of the integrated Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) in Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands province between 1982 and 1987. As pointed out in Chapter 2, Gukurahundi manifested itself in various harmful ways on men and women. Applying Galtung's (1964) concept of violence as described earlier, one sees how the legitimization of one form of violence can provide a basis upon which to commit other forms of violence. In their study, Thomas, Mesinjila and Bere (2013) note that because gender-based violence is endemic in all societies (structural violence), in moments of turbulence and transition, we tend to see a continuation and intensification of pre-existing violence, rather than a clear transition from non-violence to violence (physical violence). They further argue that forms of violence familiar in the pre-conflict period and those that appear 'new' have roots in patriarchal ideas about women which already exist in society such that when "transitions" occur, sexual based and gender violence does not go away but manifests itself, often with a higher frequency and intensity.

In the case of Gukurahundi, rape was used as a weapon against ZANU PF's opponents at the time – PF - ZAPU. According to Thomas, Mesinjila and Bere (2013), this strategy was intended to achieve two specific objectives, to punish, humiliate and induce fear in women and girls for their alleged support for 'dissidents'. Women who were victimized during Gukurahundi spoke of beatings on their genitals, which were labeled 'dissident possessions' (Thomas, Mesinjila and Bere 2013). Male abductees were forced to rape women abducted by militias while some abductees were forced into humiliating sexual performances with relatives. Men and women who tried to resist had their genitals pierced with sharp objects leaving behind permanent injuries and disability. Women who bore children from rape faced additional discrimination and ostracization by their families and communities and their children treated as outcasts.

¹⁴Although several social and political commentators have reduced Gukurahundi to a comfortable stereotype of ethnic and tribal warfare, it must be emphasized here that the violence was first and foremost political, at least initially before it became more complex in later stages. However, analyses of Gukurahundi that negate the tribal and ethnic animosities that necessitated the split in ZAPU and the formation of ZANU in 1963 and the specific targeting of Ndebeles in the killings are incomplete (see Doran 2017). With Gukurahundi in full swing civilians in Matabeleland and Midlands were put in an invidious position where if suspected of aiding dissidents they were killed by the Fifth Brigade and if they refused to cooperate with dissidents they became dissident prime targets.

Impositions of curfews, food embargos and the suspension of development deprived communities in Matabeleland and Midlands of a critical human resource base crucial for socioeconomic development. This divided the country into two parts of unequal development, increasing resentment and feelings of marginalisation in Matabeleland. Musemwa (2006) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011) agree that while development forged ahead in other parts of the country in the first decade of Zimbabwe's independence ("Zimbabwe's Golden Age"), Matabeleland lagged because investment and development could not be realised in a 'conflict zone'. For inhabitants of Matabeleland provinces, the independence euphoria that accompanied the end of colonial rule in April 1980 was short-lived. Rather, livelihoods were destroyed, thousands of lives lost, and grave mass human rights violations committed including deliberate and forced starvation, curfews, and a return to war-like conditions.

Over 20 000 civilians died in the ensuing violence mostly in Matabeleland (Doran 2017; Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace [CCPJ], and Legal Resources Foundation [LRF] 1997) while hundreds of thousands suffered injuries of varying intensities. Due to a deliberate state sanctioned media blackout at the time (Ndlovu and Tshuma 2021), and constant refusals by the government to declassify Gukurahundi records, the exact number of civilians killed and injured will remain unknown for the foreseeable future. These unfortunate circumstances have not been helped by the fact that the chief perpetrators continue to control the levers of power in government, frustrating transitional justice and efforts directed at national healing and reconciliation (Tshuma 2018a).

The findings of the two Gukurahundi Commissions¹⁵ publicly funded by taxpayers remain closely guarded secrets even today. According to Doran (2017) Gukurahundi was essentially a government sponsored security clampdown on defenseless citizens and communities suspected of shielding alleged ZNA deserters and war renegades – the 'dissidents. On the other hand, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) argues that dissidents were an amalgamation of 'ordinary' armed criminals, isolated bandits, terrified ex-ZIPRA (Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army) escaping witch hunts in the ZNA, a few ideologically persuaded elements not happy about the

¹⁵ The Dumbutshena Commission of Inquiry established in 1981 sought to investigate violent clashes between ZIPRA & ZANLA forces in Entumbane, Bulawayo, and other demobilization camps across the country. The Chihambakwe Commission of Inquiry (1983) on the other hand sought to investigate the Gukurahundi violence. Both reports were never made public by Mugabe.

Lancaster House Agreement, mentally deranged elements who misread the news of the ceasefire, and pseudo and manufactured elements used by ZANU-PF to justify the liquidation of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (PF-ZAPU).

A report published by the CCJP and the LRF (1997) corroborate Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2009) and Doran's (2017) perspectives by noting that Gukurahundi was in fact an ethnic cleansing exercise with the predominantly Shona-dominated ZANU-PF aiming to destroy a predominantly Ndebele-dominated PF-ZAPU. The CCJP and LRF report (1997) notes that PF-ZAPU was perceived in ZANU-PF power corridors to be a stumbling block to Robert Mugabe's (the then Prime Minister) desire for a one-party state modelled along the lines of the Chinese Communist Party of Mao (Doran 2017). With PF-ZAPU standing in his way, Mugabe sought ways to justify his government's brutal crackdown first on PF-ZAPU as a political challenger and then the Matabele people as a PF-ZAPU constituency in order to consolidate his power base (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Banyera 2015; Doran 2017; Miles-Tendi 2020: 189; Cameron 2018).

Although security concerns about dissidents operating in Matabeleland and Midlands (abetted by apartheid South Africa) are valid and legitimate, Cameron (2018: 28) argues that Mugabe "over-politicised" the security situation in Matabeleland and Midlands by ascribing goals to dissidents who in fact had no acknowledged leadership and avowed political aims beyond economic and political destabilisation. Maedza (2019: 4) corroborates Cameron by adding that Mugabe's charges against Joshua Nkomo (PF-ZAPU leader) were accompanied by an intense state-driven propaganda blitz that made the case for a military rather than a policing intervention. No public apology nor acknowledgement of wrongdoing was ever given by Mugabe. The closest Mugabe came to acknowledging wrongdoing was at the funeral of Nkomo in 1999 when he described Gukurahundi as "a moment of madness" (Maedza 2019; Murambadaro 2015).

However, the unanswered but largely whispered questions are: whose madness, was it? And did the mad person[s] receive treatment for their condition? For his part, President Emmerson Mnangagwa (who ascended to power via a military coup d'état in November 2017) has implored Zimbabweans to let "bygones be bygones" (Mpofu 2019: 113). This is testament once again to the fact that the current leadership in both government and ZANU-PF is not prepared (at least for now) to confront the country's ugly and violent past. Following lengthy high-level negotiations involving mostly the male leadership of both PF-ZAPU and ZANU-PF between

1985 and 1987, a peace armistice was finally reached in December 1987 and christened the ‘Unity Accord’. Since 1997 the Unity Accord has been celebrated annually as a public holiday on the 22nd of December. It has also been used in part to officially encourage amnesia by encouraging victims to forget their painful past in the absence of justice. Nonetheless, the signing of the peace armistice was symbolic in the sense that it was interpreted to imply tribal and ethnic reconciliation undergirded by promises and commitments to uphold and cherish diversity. Whether this diversity was achieved would be best answered by questions that address why some former senior PF-ZAPU members like Dumiso Dabengwa, Thenjiwe Lesabe and others soon broke away in due course from ZANU-PF to revive PF-ZAPU.

Despite criticism levelled at Nkomo and PF-ZAPU leadership regarding the way the negotiations¹⁶ were handled, the signing of the peace deal halted the violence in Matabeleland and returned Matabeleland to political normalcy. Among some of the many criticisms of the peace truce between Nkomo and Mugabe is that it ‘reconciled’ political elites while leaving the masses deeply divided along ethno-political and regional lines (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2008; 2011; Chiweshe 2016; Tshuma 2018a). While it is common for negotiating tables to be exclusive (at least at the start of peace negotiations), processes that usually follow back-channel talks failed to evolve and broaden adequately to accommodate broader segments of society who were impacted by the Gukurahundi violence. This elite bargaining resulted in a ‘victor’s justice’ on the part of Mugabe and his ZANU party that was not helped by the fact that throughout his tenure as both prime minister and president, Mugabe exhibited a strong tendency to want to sweep all past wrongs and human violations under the proverbial carpet by pretending all was normal.

Clemencies, amnesties, and presidential pardons were used to conceal mass human rights violations. Bearing this in mind, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008: 48) argues that the bitterness and memory of losing relatives and loved ones did not end in 1987 but continues to live in the memories of individuals and communities. This has since been confirmed by other scholars doing research on Gukurahundi, for example Ngwenya (2018). Maedza (2019) and Ncube and Siziba (2016) have gone to great lengths to show how artists use art to convey the emotional baggage and hurt carried by survivors and victims of Mugabe’s torturous reign.

¹⁶ See Appendix 9 for Unity Accord Agreement signed by both Nkomo and Mugabe in December 1987.

Furthermore, Gatsheni-Ndlovu (2008) argues that Gukurahundi weakened Matabeleland's sense of national identity by emboldening the 'Ndebeleness' of Matebele people resulting in a stronger sense of ethnic identity. These and other developments came on the background of multiple ethnic based groups, political and social movements calling for a cessation of Matabeleland and Midlands from 'Zimbabwe' in protest perceived socio-economic and political injustice. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011: 1) notes that the changing nature of politics in Matabeleland is largely a response to the realities and politics of exclusion, marginalisation and confinement to second class citizenship of Ndebele speaking people that he traces back to the pre- and post-independence eras.

To Gatsheni-Ndlovu, the emergence and existence of radical political formations such as the Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF), Mthwakazi National Party (MNP) and Patriotic Union of Matabeleland (PUMA) signals the state of regional politics of frustration and resentment of domination. Political and social movements in Matabeleland are bound by the common understanding that they claim to represent the interests and aspirations of the people of Matabeleland through 'Mthwakazi nationalism'. Not only has Zimbabwe's unresolved violent past left a trail of human and material destruction, but also traumatic memories of financial loss, deferred dreams, rape and other forms of sexual violence. A spirit of fear remains alive in communities across the country preventing victims and survivors from actively participating in the nation-building project. Zimbabwe's violent episodes continue to raise concerns about the country's dire need for political and social transformation, an aspect this inquiry seeks to illuminate. *Table 3.1* is a summation of Zimbabwe's political and socioeconomic challenges from 1980 to 2018.

Table 4.1: Fragility and political instability in Zimbabwe

Indicator/s	Signs
Increasing inequality (race, class, gender)	Widening social and economic inequalities – especially those between, rather than within, distinct population groups. Rising cases of sexual violence and gender-based violence against women and girls
Rapidly changing demographic characteristics	Rapid changes in population structure, including large-scale emigration after 2000. Excessively high population densities in both rural and urban areas with high levels of rural-urban migration. High levels of unemployment, particularly among large numbers of young people Incessant and recurrent droughts.

	Disputes over land resources largely in overpopulated rural areas that resulted in large scale and violent land dispossessions.
Lack of democratic processes	Violations of human rights. Criminal behaviour by the state – state sanctioned violence, abductions and murders targeting members of the opposition, human rights defenders, lawyers, civil society leaders and activists. Corrupt government and public officials.
Political instability	Contested and violent electoral contests as far back as 1980. Political and economic power exercised and differentially applied based on political party affiliation. Opposition leaders and activists have been at the receiving end of state violence.
Deterioration in public services	A significant decline in the scope and effectiveness of social safety nets designed to ensure minimum universal standards of service in education, health, social welfare and general service delivery.
Severe economic decline	Uneven economic development – centralisation of development and resources in Harare and marginalisation of outlying areas. Grossly unequal gains or losses between different population groups. Hyperinflation in 2008 exacerbated economic suffering for most people while the politically connected elites profited from the crisis through selling scarce “forex” on the black market. Massive economic losses over short periods of time – 2008/09 phase with the adoption of a multi-currency regime that completely wiped-out people’s savings and recently the adoption of a surrogate currency the ‘Bond Notes’ which have lost over 80% of their value since adoption in September 2016.
Cycles of violent revenge	A continued cycle of violence between rival political groups and simmering tribal & ethnic tensions. Mass dissatisfaction and recurring cycles of violent protests and demonstrations. Insufficient healing and reconciliation processes in resolving past atrocities and human rights violations.

4.4 Attempts at Healing and Reconciliation Since 1980

From Gukurahundi to numerous other post-independence human rights violations and crises (see Table 3.1), violent problem solving emerges as the preferred method for addressing political and social differences in Zimbabwe. Considering the country’s violent past, Mlambo (2012) contends that it became increasingly clear at independence that political dissent could only be dealt with through force and not dialogue and negotiation. It is therefore unsurprising

that Zimbabwe remains a fractured and broken society, and with the social contract fragile and weak, multiple new (separate) identities have been heightened and solidified in recent years.

A question consequently confronting peace practitioners like myself is: how do we help build a shared future from a violent and divided past? And how do we make these processes as inclusive and participatory as possible? As pointed out earlier, torture, harassment, threats and intimidation of dissenting voices are weapons of choice deployed with vigour by successive administrations to quell dissent and crush opposition. Not only have these undemocratic measures created a climate of fear and distrust, they have also undermined efforts to build a peaceful and prosperous society. This has not been helped by the fact that until quite recently, with the establishment of the Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation, and Integration (ONHRI) in 2009 and in 2013, the NPRC and the prospects for peace and stability in Zimbabwe seemed a distant dream.

Scholars like Du Plessis and Ford (2009), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2010; 2011) and Chiweshe (2016) attribute Zimbabwe's incomplete nation-building and reconciliation process to a lack of comprehensive and holistic healing and reconciliation approaches that should have investigated issues of past human rights violations, violence, and conflict. Others argue that the state's reluctance to move beyond state-centric to community-based approaches to peacebuilding has resulted in the neglect of human rights and gender-based discrimination. Community-based and inclusive peace and healing processes would have facilitated truth telling and encouraged national healing and reconciliation which are important building blocks for genuine nation-building. Instead, rhetoric, clemencies and amnesties were privileged by Mugabe and Zanu-PF over practical healing and reconciliation mechanisms (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Benyera 2015).

Analysts and academics categorise Zimbabwe's attempts at national healing and reconciliation into three distinct phases, namely, the transitional period leading to independence in 1980, the Unity Accord in 1987, and the period post-2008 following an inconclusive plebiscite pitting President Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai [both now having died] against each other. However, a common thread that runs through all these peace armistices is that they failed to establish the necessary pre-conditions for social cohesion, national healing and reconciliation. Furthermore, these processes were dominated by elite men, with little input from the broader segment of the population including women and women's organisations (Hendricks 2015; Mutisi 2016). These challenges expose the depth of gender discrimination and the dominance of patriarchy in the country.

Zimbabwe's first attempt at reconciling and healing a deeply divided society was through a national reconciliation policy immediately after independence. The policy involved the formation of a Government of National Unity (GNU) comprising liberation struggle rivalries – the Patriotic Front¹⁷ (PF) on one hand and the Rhodesian Front on the other. A new national army christened the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) was born out of this hasty and superficial 'reconciliation' process. Yet again, the shortcomings of this elite arrangement would later plunge Zimbabwe into a deep politico-ethnic strife in southwestern Zimbabwe where thousands of PF-ZAPU supporters were massacred by Mugabe's Gukurahundi forces. [See section on Gukurahundi].

The second attempt was the signing of the Unity Accord in December 1987 between ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU after the genocide in predominantly Ndebele speaking communities of southwestern Zimbabwe. The genocide was perpetuated by Mugabe's 5th Brigade resulting in over 20 000 deaths, numerous cases of human rights abuse and large-scale displacements. No concerted efforts were made to seek justice for the thousands whose lives and livelihoods were destroyed as a result of the violence. Instead, perpetrators were granted amnesty by Mugabe, trivialising the suffering of victims and their families.

The last attempt at reconciliation and nation building [at the time of writing this thesis] followed a violent and inconclusive presidential run-off election in June 2008. The violent nature of the plebiscite forced opposition leader Tsvangirai to pull out of the electoral contest some days before the holding of the poll. International condemnation of the plebiscite forced Mugabe to reconcile with Tsvangirai through a mediation process facilitated by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) with the blessing of the African Union (AU). Following lengthy negotiations in September 2008, the three political parties represented in Zimbabwe's parliament signed a Global Political Agreement (GPA) which provided for the formation of Zimbabwe's third GNU since independence. Both SADC and AU became guarantors of this agreement (Mutisi 2011). The GNU lasted five years between February 2009 and July 2013 coming to an end following yet another disputed plebiscite in which the

¹⁷ The Patriotic Front (PF) is in reference to the two liberation struggle parties – ZAPU and ZANU who, despite fighting the Ian Smith regime collaboratively, chose to contest the elections in February 1980 separately. 'PF' came about in 1975 after attempts to merge the parties' military wings of ZIPRA and ZANLA respectively.

opposition Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai (MDC-T) ‘lost’ to Mugabe’s ZANU-PF¹⁸.

At present Zimbabwe is battling a devastating economic and political crisis since a widely disputed election in July 2018 which pitted incumbent Emmerson Mnangagwa against Nelson Chamisa, leader of the Movement for Democratic Change-Alliance (MDC-A).¹⁹ Numerous attempts, mostly by civil society (particularly the church under the Zimbabwe Council of Churches) to bring the disputants to dialogue have not yet yielded tangible results. The NPRC also attempted to initiate a national dialogue, but the process was abruptly abandoned when Mnangagwa’s government initiated its own negotiating platform through the Political Actors Dialogue and appointed as NPRC Chairperson Retired Justice Selo Nare to oversee the Political Actors Dialogue processes.

This process attempt fell short of consultative democratic practice and was rejected outright by the opposition, the MDC-A included, who argued that as a party to the conflict, Mnangagwa lacked political legitimacy to convene and mediate national dialogue. Consequently, the process has stalled and with disagreements over the content and nature of dialogue, including who should convene it, the resulting political polarisation and deep-seated divisions threaten the prospects for economic revival and political normalcy. These divisions were further magnified when scores of MDC-A supporters were met with brute force by members of the security forces in August 2018. Later in January 2019, security forces were once more implicated in several rape cases, sexual assault and human rights violations. This followed a three-day national strike where ordinary Zimbabweans protested a 150% hike in fuel prices and a steady decline in living standards since the adoption of a quasi-currency (the “Bond

¹⁸ In July 2013, ZANU-PF garnered 61% of the national vote while the MDC-T amassed only 34%. The MDC-T raised the alarm about ZANU-PF’s victory accusing the latter of vote rigging and electoral malfeasance. However, the MDC-T failed to prove its claims. Also, while independent surveys including one by respected Freedom House had predicted in an earlier poll that MDC-T would lose to ZANU-PF based on party rating approvals, for many it was the winning margin that was problematic, given that five years previously ZANU-PF had amassed only 44% of the national vote compared to MDC-T’s 48% (see Chan 2019).

¹⁹ The MDC emerged as a political party in September 1999, but political infighting led to the party’s first disastrous split in 2005. The two MDC formations that emerged after the split are MDC-Tsvangirai (MDC-T) led by the late founding president Morgan Tsvangirai and MDC-Mutambara (MDC-M) led by Prof. Arthur Mutambara (2008/2011) before his replacement by Prof. Welshman Ncube in 2011. The smaller MDC was then christened MDC-N. In 2018, the two original MDCs regrouped under a coalition of pro-democracy parties (MDC-Alliance) involving six other parties. At the time of writing, the MDC still exists as MDC-A although a Supreme Court judgement recently ruled that MDC-A is ‘illegitimate’ and ordered the party to return to its 2014 structures. Some analysts have interpreted the ruling as political to benefit former Deputy President Dr. Thokozani Khupe who now leads a splinter faction accused of hobnobbing with ZANU-PF.

Notes”) in September 2016. With no political solution in sight to resolve Zimbabwe’s myriad challenges, a significant chunk of the population faces a grim future.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has shone a light on the history of conflict and violence in Zimbabwe as well as the various attempts at healing and reconciliation since independence in 1980. It has also attempted to locate the role of gender in peacebuilding in Zimbabwe by showing how peacebuilding processes in Zimbabwe remain trapped in male-centrism and political elitism which subjugates and dominates subaltern voices. While the chapter is a call for transformative peacebuilding in Zimbabwe, it cautions that positive peace can never be realised in the absence of freedom, democracy and the rule of law. The next chapter scrutinises the role of civil society organisations (CSOs) in peacebuilding in Zimbabwe, more specifically, and Africa more broadly. It shows how marginalised groups have intelligently used civil society to organise politically in order to participate in political and nation building processes. This new form of activism comes on the back of shrinking political space in Zimbabwe as ZANU-PF seeks to entrench authoritarian politics through narrowing democratic space and limiting democratic engagement.

CHAPTER 5: CIVIL SOCIETY AND PEACEBUILDING: AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

.....it is important to remind ourselves that the role of civil society – and especially NGOs – is to fill in the spaces in a healthy democracy and not to substitute for government ... (Edwards 2009: 15).

5.1 Introduction

Civil society leaders across the world (particularly in authoritarian regimes) must contend with the realities of shrinking political and democratic spaces. Since 2000 (although trends predate independence), Zimbabwe has witnessed a spate of grave human rights abuses mostly targeting civil society leaders, opposition supporters and human rights defenders and activists. Critics and dissenting voices have been subjected to torture, harassment and beatings by the security and law enforcement arms of government. The predicament in Zimbabwe is more complex and difficult to resolve because the state finds itself entangled and deeply embroiled in patronage networks that breed, nurture and sanction violence and violent conflict. Under such circumstances it becomes difficult for the state to intervene as that would be akin to the state being both a player and a referee in a partisan political game. As a result, the “responsibility to protect” and to speak-out has largely been left to civil society, individuals and international non-governmental organisations.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013: 184) notes that Zimbabwe is celebrated by ZANU-PF supporters and its sympathisers as a product of a violent nationalist revolution that must be defended by the spilling of blood. Those opposed to ZANU-PF’s approach to governance are branded ‘enemies of the state’ who deserve to die for Zimbabwe to live. In Zimbabwe, much like in other pseudo-democracies, civil society sees itself as a bridge between government and citizens, playing a crucial role in holding to account the executive and other arms of the state such as the judiciary and the legislature. Due to pressure exerted on authoritarian regimes by civil society and its partners, most pseudo-democracies are becoming increasingly wary of CSOs since they are perceived as ‘agents of regime change’ pursuing ulterior motives that threaten governments’ ‘legitimate hold on power’. Consequently, such regimes have devised strategies to either silence, suppress or co-opt civil society and its leadership. Strategies range from co-optation to creation of look-alike government backed CSOs to complete hostile measures that include

raiding CSOs, threats of deregistration and in extreme but common cases, the arbitrary arrest of CSO leaders.

5.2 Civil Society and Peacebuilding

This chapter offers a critical discussion of the role of civil society and peacebuilding in Zimbabwe. Firstly, it demonstrates how narratives that praise women's 'peacebuilding success' at grassroots level often and unwittingly serve to legitimate civic and non-governmental spaces as appropriate spheres for women's activism (Hudson 2009). This is problematic because it not only renders peace efforts exclusive and undemocratic but legitimises mainstream peacebuilding as a male terrain and responsibility (Jaji 2020). Secondly, the chapter discusses state-civil society relations and highlights how civil society has adapted to changing political dynamics by adopting different strategies to influence peace processes often on the margins, and usually to the chagrin, of host governments. It demonstrates how in the face of shrinking political and civic space and threats against human rights defenders, civil society has organised itself into a legitimate platform for activism and advocacy on issues of governance, corruption, human rights, democracy and peacebuilding.

However, not all civil society is civil. As will be demonstrated later in this chapter, peace processes give rise to both pro-peace constituencies and counter movements (peace spoilers) who mobilise against peaceful settlements for political and ideological reasons. For instance, some groups may be opposed to a peaceful settlement because they believe strongly that legitimate governments should not be seen talking to terrorists (this is especially true in contexts where armed opposition groups are vilified and publicly humiliated) or because some groups are opposed to the substance of talks. This is particularly common in environments of acute social, political and ethnic polarisation and strife (Schädel, Dudouet and Sallach 2020).

In both advanced democracies and authoritarian regimes, civil society and the civic space continue to be important arenas for subaltern groups to influence decision making on governance issues, peacebuilding and democracy. In spite of civil society's recognition through progressive regional and international instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Art. 19, 21 and 22), the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (Art. 19 and 20) and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR), the reality is that civil society in many parts of the continent continues to be treated with disdain and suspicion by host governments. In Zimbabwe state-civil society relations are characterised by a complex

relationship that at best is cordial and collegial and at worst conflictual and confrontational (Moyo 2010). For organisations that dabble in politics and governance, the relationship is characterised by mutual suspicion and chariness (Moyo 2010, Ncube and Moyo 2015, Mugari and Olutola 2018).

In Zimbabwe, numerous pieces of legislation, most of them oppressive and anti-associational, (for example the Public Order and Security Act 2003) have been enacted by the state with the express intention of regulating civil society. The NGO Bill of 2004 was shelved at the last minute but sought to be the principal law to regulate civil society. However, various parts of the Bill still found their way into the public domain through unscrupulous means. An example is the Constitutional Amendment No. 18 (2004) and the Electoral Act of 2004 (Muzondidya and Nyathi-Ndlovu 2010). The Zimbabwean experience holds true in other pseudo-democratic contexts for example Rwanda (see Hudson 2009; Thomson 2013; 2018); the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia, among others.

To understand the nature of civil society in Zimbabwe and Africa more broadly, a conceptual distinction is paramount. In Zimbabwe civil society consists of a broad and diversified community of organisations ranging from humanitarian charities and community-based organisations to development NGOs complementing government service delivery especially in the areas of health, social welfare and education. There is also governance oriented CSOs who operate in the diverse fields of peacebuilding, human rights protection, research and analysis, media and information and the broader democratisation process (Mugari and Olutola 2018). This chapter expressly focuses on the latter. Civil society activity in Zimbabwe is regulated by the Private Voluntary Organisation Act of 1966. While the Act has been amended at different times since its introduction in 1966, it failed to shackle colonial-era elements used to suppress anti-colonial movements in the 1960/70s. Under Zimbabwe's new Constitution, Chapter 7:05 of the Private Voluntary Organisation Act stipulates and governs the operations and activities of civil society, broadly defined.

Due to the fragility of the security and political situation in Zimbabwe, particularly at the turn of the millennium, the majority of CSOs have assumed a governance orientation (Ncube 2014). Most of these organisations are vocal in representing societal interests, providing oversight to government, and promoting the diffusion of democratic values. Notable CSOs with a peacebuilding and governance orientation in Zimbabwe include the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, Bulawayo Agenda, Habbakuk Trust, the Centre for Conflict Management

and Transformation, Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP), Zimbabwe Peace and Security Programme, Civic Education Network Trust, Peacebuilding Network of Zimbabwe, and Heal Zimbabwe Trust among many others.

Other CSOs include faith-based-organisations such as the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference, and the Ecumenical Fellowship of Zimbabwe, who continue to promote and champion healing and reconciliation programmes at community level. For example, Manyonganise (2017) notes that Churches in Manicaland, an interfaith and interdenominational network of different churches in Manicaland province, was actively involved in bringing healing to communities and seeking justice for victims of state-sanctioned brutality associated with electoral contests in 2000, 2002 and 2008.

According to Aeby (2016) and Masunungure (2014), until 2000 most CSOs in Zimbabwe were development oriented. In fact, most worked to complement government efforts in service delivery in areas such as education, health and social welfare. However, the deteriorating economic and political situation and a spike in human rights abuses at the turn of the millennium saw an increase in the number of CSOs that assumed a governance and peacebuilding orientation.

Scholars like Nelson (2007) attribute the growth and proliferation of CSOs in many parts of the world post the Cold War as a reflection of growth in the processes of democratisation and the intensification of a neo-liberal economic paradigm. Peacebuilding missions in the post-Cold War era were legitimated by the aim of building a liberal 'peace' (Bellamy and Williams 2004; Paris 1997). As a result, peacebuilding interventions in conflict zones followed a standardised, top-down model of reconstruction that placed emphasis on Western politico-cultural norms and neo-liberal economics (Mac Ginty 2007). By its very nature, liberalism combines traditional forms of peacekeeping, mediation, and negotiation with a range of activities designed to promote democratisation and good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law, active civil society, and the development of open market economies.

Predictably, the majority of CSOs that sprouted after 2000 in Zimbabwe occupied themselves with the task of mediating power struggles between ZANU-PF and MDC and mediating the transformation of conflict at national and community level (Ncube 2014). The involvement of CSOs in governance issues (for example in democracy and peacebuilding) is believed to

increase local ownership and legitimacy of processes, enhance accountability of political actors, provide alternative perspectives, prevent the emergence of peace spoilers, and drastically improve chances of a durable and sustainable peace process (Aeby 2016). The following section interrogates the role of grassroots organisations in Zimbabwe's peace efforts and reflects on the successes and challenges of civil society working to promote social cohesion and peacebuilding.

5.3 Gender and Civil Society in Zimbabwe: 1980 - 1999

Zimbabwe's post-independence experience is a stark reminder that when a large section of a society's population cannot fulfil their potential due to violence, ill-health, poverty and exclusion from power and important decision-making, there can never be true peace. For instance, in the fight against colonialism female combatants played critical roles in securing the country's independence that was ushered in in 1980. Notwithstanding the immense contribution women made to the struggle for majority rule, many women soon discovered that the political space they helped expand had contracted sharply after independence (Muvingi 2016). These unfortunate developments left many women with no choice but to organise their political and socioeconomic concerns through civil society.

Cheeseman (2006) defines political and civic spaces as constituting arenas within which political and social actors engage in political and social mobilisation. It is appropriate to credit women with reviving Zimbabwe's civil society after independence; at that stage the majority of men who had been active in civil society before 1980 were absorbed into the public sector in line with ZANU-PF's policy of Africanizing the civil service. During this time the relationship between workers' unions (civil society) and the government was collegial and friendly since both had just emerged from a protracted liberation struggle. The honeymoon was however short lived, and workers' unions soon became confrontational and opposed many of the government's labour policies.

Civic spaces in Zimbabwe can be understood as spaces of legitimisation of political claims and representation, inclusion and exclusion. It is inclusive in the sense that it affords marginalised groups opportunities to organise their political and social concerns into political and social action. It can also be exclusive in the sense that not everyone is accorded equal participation and representation. For example, rural and underfunded CSOs are likely to be excluded due to financial and logistical constraints, whereas state-aligned civil society may be excluded on

grounds that they are viewed as an extension of government. In Rwanda for instance, CSOs that align their activities with government are accorded preferential treatment by the state. Occasionally, the government in Rwanda has created lookalike CSOs and tasked them to oversee and champion healing and reconciliation processes (Thomson 2013; 2018).

As alluded to before, the development of a vibrant civil society in independent Zimbabwe can be traced to the period post-1980 which sought to marginalise women by pushing them further away from state politics and power. This affected their contribution to state and nation building processes. With a shrinking political base and an undying zeal to press on with their needs, women and women's organisations became increasingly active in civil society. The civic space offered women an opportunity to re-enter public life, this time pressing for recognition of women's rights and the erasure of oppressive and gender discriminatory practices and legislation. For example, in June 1999 a group of women activists, researchers and academics with the support of more than 30 women's human rights organisations came together to launch the Women's Coalition, a broad based women's movement born out of the realisation that the February 2000 draft constitution was silent on issues of women rights and empowerment (Gudhlanga 2013).

Immediately, the Women's Coalition set out to invite women from all walks of life to participate in the constitutional reform process with a view to making central women's political, economic and social rights. Women's organisations in coordination with political players and other civil society actors were able to mobilise a significant voter population to reject a draft constitution believed to have sought to curtail people's freedoms and democratic rights (Tshuma 2018b).

In Zimbabwe, activism and the role of civil society in abetting it is traceable to the period after independence, Muzondidya and Nyathi-Ndlovu (2010 cited in Moyo 2010). For example, the continuation of harsh laws in an independent Zimbabwe incensed women and women's groups by provoking them into action. The result was the creation of the Women's Action Group (WAG) as the first women-centred advocacy group post-independence. The formation of WAG heralded a period of intense women's lobbying and confrontation with the state. Women took this opportunity to challenge the state on several unfair and discriminatory practices, among them issues to do with citizenship and inheritance laws.

Emerging from protracted conflict meant that women were often unable to, and found it difficult to, protect their resources, and almost impossible to make claims for compensation for

property lost or destroyed during the liberation struggle. It was also difficult for women to seek other forms of state assistance including psychosocial support and counselling services.

Win (2004) argues that in the context of a predominantly hostile state, women's organisations had to carefully manoeuvre a perilous political terrain by deciding whether to cooperate with the state and risk co-optation or simply challenge it and risk being labelled "neo-colonial puppets" and "regime change agents". Under immense pressure from various pressure and lobby groups to give more attention to gender issues, Mugabe's government finally created a Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development in 1981. The creation of a standalone ministry raised hopes regarding government's readiness to match political rhetoric with practical action. However, to the disappointment of many, and women activists, the creation of the standalone ministry further removed women and women's issues from mainstream politics (Muvingi 2016; Gudhlanga 2013).

In the face of structural hurdles, women parliamentarians working with civil society and independent women's groups like WAG succeeded in removing some prohibitive and discriminatory legal provisions such as the Sex Discrimination Act (1980) which was replaced by the Employment Act (1980) which legislated equal pay for equal work. The Labour Relations Act II (1985) ended gender-based discrimination in employment and benefits while the Legal Age of Majority Act (1982) recognised women and girls as equal before the law. Other progressive legislations including the Matrimonial Causes Act (1985) and the Labour Relations Act (1985) were also passed around the same time (Muvingi 2016).

5.3.1 Gender and Civil Society: 2000 – 2013

By the turn of the millennium women's groups and women-led civil society organisations in Zimbabwe had gained considerable experience in working to advance peace, promote good governance and entrench democratic values. This is significant to note because when Zimbabwe started experiencing political and economic malaise after 2000, women led CSOs became critical partners in the democratic struggle and worked hard to attract international attention to the declining socioeconomic and political situation in the country.

For example, the Save Zimbabwe Campaign (2007) attracted numerous women led CSOs among them Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) who staged numerous demonstrations in the country between 2003 and 2008 calling for an end to gross human rights violations during and after the June 2008 violent plebiscite (Maphosa, Tshuma and Maviza 2015; Ndlovu 2009).

CSOs also strongly condemned government's heavy handedness in dealing with mass dissatisfaction following high number of political violence incidents that accompanied ZANU-PF and Mugabe's defeat by Tsvangirai in the presidential election held in March 2008.

At community level, women led CSOs were involved in mediating political conflicts, promoting healing and reconciliation. Through a range of restorative programmes, for example *nhimbes* (harvest parties), women peacebuilding activists were instrumental in restoring community relations and promoting social cohesion (Jaji 2020; Mandikwaza 2018). In urban areas peace activists championed the concept of "community and peace gardens" to build trust and repair broken relationships in the wake of electoral violence (Jaji 2020).

Due to their outspokenness, women activists and peacebuilders like Jestina Mukoko, the Director of Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) was abducted from her home by state security agents in December 2008 and she was badly tortured and beaten. She was later charged with subversion and accused of recruiting bandits for military training in neighbouring Botswana to overthrow Mugabe's government. Since then, numerous other civil society leaders and activists have suffered the same fate including Grace Kwinjeh, Beatrice Mtetwa, Joana Mamombe and Sthabile Dewa. The Zimbabwe Doctors for Human Rights, in collaboration with the Research Advocacy Unit, released a scathing report detailing grave human rights violations against women by law enforcement officers, ZANU-PF affiliated militia groups and the security establishment. The report documents cases of gang rape, extreme sexual violence and torture through insertion of harmful objects into women's genitalia, Zimbabwe Doctors for Human Rights (2009 cited in Manyogonise 2017).

Women's advocacy and activism further expanded and intensified when the country faced a multifaceted crisis. For example, in the lead up to the constitutional referendum in February 2000, another organisation, Women's Coalition, was formed to ensure the formation of a gender-sensitive constitution (Muvingi 2016; Gudhlanga 2013). Women's Coalition embarked on nationwide civic education programmes and mobilisation of women culminating in the launch of a Women's Charter. The Charter became a platform for women to articulate their issues and concerns with a view of defining what constitutes 'women's consciousness' (Women's Coalition 2001). At about the same time, the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) was born, led by one of Zimbabwe's notable feminists, Thoko Matshe. The NCA challenged government on the process and substance of the nation's constitution. The NCA

had a task force of which 30% constituted representatives of various women's groups and organisations (Muvingi 2016).

Riding on their recent successes, the coalition of women's groups in civil society facilitated the women's political agenda by supporting and advancing the candidature of 55 women to stand for parliamentary elections. Unlike their male counterparts women advanced and endorsed by the coalition group began talking across political parties and intentionally disobeyed the rigid dogmatic laws of political and ideological boundaries (Gudhlanga 2013). In the process, women were able to create common platforms of overlapping consensus, conversation and exchange of ideas presenting women with opportunities to mediate conflict in Zimbabwe although these forms of mediation remained largely informal. Women's organisations and activists were vocal in exerting pressure on the government by demanding that it effectively deals with rising cases of violence directed at women and girls.

Under pressure in February 2007, the government enacted the Domestic Violence Act (DV Act 2007) which provided for both criminal sanctions and civil remedies for violence occurring either in the private or public space. Among the most outstanding achievements of this period was a provision to outlaw oppressive traditional practices such as those that forced widows to marry the brothers of their deceased husbands. However, the irony of this achievement is that the state, accused of perpetrating violence in the public, sometimes with complete impunity, appeared eager to pass legislation to outlaw violence occurring in private spaces. It cannot be right that violence is wrong in one context and justifiable in another.

Critics have argued that in Zimbabwe 'reform' does not always entail reforming society for the better. For example, previous attempts at reforming the London brokered Constitution (1979) were devastating for women. Similarly, a constitutional amendment in 1996 to outlaw gender discrimination was subsequently weakened by a clause which stated that in certain instances the law did not apply. Gender-blind clauses included issues of family law governed by customary law. Ironically, customary law has proven to be the sphere most likely to affect most women by infringing on their constitutional rights.

Banda (2007 cited in Moyo and Ashurst 2007) notes that while there are many customs, and some families, that are generous in their interpretation of women's entitlement, justice for women or anyone for that matter should not be left to the mercy of the family. Women's rights should not be left hostage to custom, culture and religion. As history has shown, it is not uncommon for women in conflict situations to give testimonies which relay the tragedies

suffered by their male relatives – husbands and sons – while remaining silent about their own abuses. Many factors can explain this rather worrying trend, among them the influence of culture and religious beliefs that extoll certain virtues of womanhood, some of them indiscriminately plucked from the Bible and used willy-nilly without context.

For example, Colossians 3 v 18 encourages “wives to submit to their husbands because it is fitting to the Lord” (King James Version). While the verse makes explicit reference to husbands, it has been distorted particularly in conflict situations to refer to all men. Similar concerns were raised in public hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa where calls for gender sensitive peacebuilding were made (Freeman and Hayner 2003).

Following a government constitutional defeat in 2000, and ZANU-PF’s waning fortunes and unpopularity particularly in urban areas, violence and state repression and economic collapse came to define ZANU-PF’s approach to statecraft and nation building. Civil liberties and political space narrowed sharply, particularly for women, as ZANU-PF responded harshly and violently to dissenting voices both in the political and civic space. For example, during negotiations leading to the formation of the GNU - in power between 2009 and 2013, civil society was deliberately excluded from participating in negotiations, effectively leaving the process entirely in the hands of male political elites in ZANU-PF and the MDCs.

Smaller opposition parties and churches were also excluded from the process. In the GPA process itself, only one woman from the smaller MDC faction was present (Maphosa, Tshuma and Maviza 2015). The GPA, like the two other peace attempts before it, was criticised for being exclusive and privileging the interests of political elites and conflict protagonists at the expense of the generality of the citizenry who in fact bore the brunt of the conflict and violence. Like previous peace attempts, women were the biggest losers as peace processes were framed in patriarchal language with essentialist undertones about women and men’s achievements and contributions to the peace process.

The oversight on gender inclusion in Zimbabwe’s peace processes is curious given that gender plays an important role in conflict situations. In Zimbabwe, state violence often targets women who suffer serious trauma from beatings, sexual abuse and rape during and after conflict. Shaba (2011) notes that women were disproportionately affected in the violence leading up to the June 2008 presidential run off. Equally disturbing were the harrowing testimonies by a group of women who testified about Gukurahundi atrocities during one of NPRC’s outreach meetings

in rural Kezi, Matabeleland South (Tshuma 2019). These experiences attest to the differential impact violence has on different social groups, women and men, boys and girls.

Disappointingly, the NPRC has failed to provide a gendered analysis of conflict, violence and past human rights violations. A gendered analysis would help us understand how different genders experience both violence and peace. This is crucial because the intersection of these different identity factors can subsequently affect an individual's agency and power, with multiple factors augmenting vulnerabilities. A gendered analysis is particularly important given the role women play as community builders and protectors. Their identity as cultural custodians and community builders often implies that women and girls are targeted in ways directly linked to their gender and sexuality. In Zimbabwe, sexual violence is a tool used to undermine the strength of the opposition and to annihilate communities opposed to ZANU-PF (Hodzi 2012).

5.4 A Place for Civil Society in Zimbabwe's Peace Processes?

As noted in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3, Zimbabwe's current and violent past has its roots in the colonial and precolonial eras. The exclusive application of violence for the sole purpose of state craft is a creation of colonialism and colonial conquest. At independence, ZANU-PF perfected the 'strategic use of violence' prompting scholars like Machakanja (2010) to conclude that Zimbabwe remains a fundamentally violent society. It is only recently with the establishment of the ONHRI in 2009 and later the NPRC that Zimbabwe has taken very deliberate steps to confront its violent past. Previously, government-peppered and cosmetic initiatives achieved little in the way of healing and reconciliation. Zimbabwe's experience and that of many other countries is a stark reminder that reconciliation and healing are not overnight events and that these processes cannot be commandeered and enforced by those in authority.

Researchers who are critical of Zimbabwe's state-driven reconciliation and healing process argue that it was found wanting on many fronts. Critics like Huyse (2003) have argued that Mugabe's reconciliation approach placed less emphasis on reconciliation among blacks by deliberately ignoring the black-on-black violence that went as far back as the 1960s. Others argue that Mugabe's preoccupation with rebuilding the political machinery of ZANU-PF, stabilising the currency, and rebuilding a war-torn economy could have led him to seek a quick route to reconciliation and healing. Ncube (2014) argues that a state-driven and top-down

approach to healing and reconciliation which privileged stability and strengthening of state institutions inspired little confidence in the population in general and victims.

A similar neoliberal approach was repeated in the period leading to the GNU when emphasis was placed on rebuilding the economy and strengthening state institutions. With little to no tangible input from civil society, negotiations revolved around the holding of free and fair elections, guaranteeing the physical security of political players, establishing apolitical state institutions, and rebuilding of the economy. In the absence of a vibrant civil society, collective amnesia, pardons and clemencies became government's preferred method of righting past wrongs (Ncube 2014). One of the consequences of presidential pardons, clemencies and amnesties as means of 'restoring justice' is that it licensed and legitimised the use of violence by the state with no consequences and no one to hold the state to account for violence and impunity.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Benyera (2015) argue that because rhetoric and amnesties have often been privileged over practical healing and reconciliation mechanisms, opportunities to deal with the root causes of conflict and violence have been missed. What has further compounded reconciliation, healing and integration efforts in Zimbabwe is that interventions have largely been designed and shaped by the state, leaving little room for participation by civil society in the form of community-based organisations, churches, academia, labour unions, student movements and research think tanks. Previous attempts in 1980, 1987 and 2008 were negotiated and executed by men with little to no input from women, civil society, churches and smaller opposition parties.

While Aeby (2016) argues that the exclusion of civil society from peace negotiations eroded local ownership and popular support for the GPA, Masunungure (2014) notes that civil society embeddedness in partisan politics eroded and dented its public image as a trusted mediator and neutral actor. The crisis facing Zimbabwe's civil society partly explains why civil society has repeatedly failed to provide a lasting solution to the crisis in the country. Indeed, the success of any peace process hinges on the ability of mediators to rally local support for the peace process and to empower citizens to own the process. These are necessary ingredients for successful post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. Like the peace process in Cote d'Ivoire (see Hudson 2009), peace processes in Zimbabwe have failed to transcend political and elitist trappings (Tshuma 2018a; Chiweshe 2016).

Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Benyera (2015) argue that mechanisms historically used as vehicles for justice and reconciliation, namely amnesties and pardons, commissions of inquiry and amnesia, have failed to resolve the country's history of violence and conflict. For example, instead of instituting a broad-based healing process as happened in South Africa with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Mugabe's approach to dealing with past wrongs was through encouraging coercive collective amnesia where both victims and perpetrators were encouraged to 'forget the past for the sake of progress'. Mugabe's acclaimed and widely quoted speech on the eve of the country's independence in 1980 is poignant enough to be reproduced here:

You and I must strive to adapt ourselves, intellectually and spiritually to the reality of our political change and relate to each other as brothers bound one to another by a bond of national comradeship. If yesterday I fought you as an enemy, today you have become a friend and ally with the same national interests, loyalty, rights and duties as myself. If yesterday you hated me, today you cannot avoid the love that binds you to me and me to you. Is it not folly, therefore, that in these circumstances anybody should seek to revive the wounds and grievances of the past? The wrongs of the past must now stand forgiven. If ever we look to the past, let us do so for the lesson the past has taught us, namely that oppression and racism are inequities that must never find scope in our political and social system (De Waal 1990).

Chiweshe (2016) argues that Mugabe's reconciliatory speech failed to factor in historical conflicts which required a much wider process of healing that should have included grassroots organisations, civil society and community organisations that are more organically linked with communities. 'Justice' was not only politicised but sacrificed in the name of national progress, peace, and stability. Jaji (2020: 3) argues that Mugabe chose to bury festering wounds as a path to healing and reconciliation. In fact, one could even speculate that the granting of amnesties to known perpetrators of human rights violations was a tacit admission by Mugabe and his government of the simple fact that atrocities and violations had his approval. Civil society leaders and activists who criticised Mugabe's reconciliation approaches were branded 'anti-reconciliation' and 'puppets of the West'. According to Masunungure (2014) several CSOs working on democracy, governance and peace issues in the country have been threatened with deregistration while some have had their bank accounts frozen without prior notice.

Instead of learning from a failed reconciliation project in the 1980s, Mugabe and his cronies seemed to have learned nothing. The Matabeleland genocide never afforded victims and survivors opportunities to be involved in negotiations to end the violence. Instead, peace processes remained an exclusive affair between Nkomo and Mugabe (Doran 2017). Scholars like Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008) and Sithole (1999) have written extensively on historical

animosities and hostilities between the PF's armed military wings of Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) and Zimbabwe African Nationalist Liberation Army (ZANLA) during and after the liberation war.

These divisions proved problematic for nation-building, since power and politics came to be framed based on tribal and ethnic extraction. A combination of complex security issues plunged the country into a series of high-level political conflicts and extreme violence which left a trail of destruction both human and material. Despite the high death toll and injuries involving civilians, no national healing policy was implemented to investigate the root cause[s] of the conflict. Instead, Mugabe orchestrated a witch-hunt operation targeting anyone who criticised his government's handling of Gukurahundi.

With the signing of the peace truce in 1987, the assumption on the part of protagonists was that all grievances had been amicably 'resolved'. Some PF-ZAPU senior leaders were given ministerial positions in Mugabe's government and Nkomo became one of the two Vice Presidents. Mpofu (2019) argues that in the hands of the government Unity Day has become a mechanism to officially encourage amnesia by making victims forget their past. As he did in 1980, Mugabe once again privileged a 'forgive and forget' approach over practical healing and genuine reconciliation. He would go on to employ similar approaches with virtually any other grievance from the violent land reform programme in early 2000 to the bloody presidential run-off election in June 2008.

Bhargava (2000) sees 'forgetting' as a bad strategy given that without genuine engagement with the past and institutionalisation of remembrance, societies are bound to repeat and relive the horrors of war and violence. Because of this poor healing and reconciliation policy, victims of 2002 and 2008, like those of the Gukurahundi genocide, continue to live with the bitter memory of having lost loved ones through state sponsored violence and senseless torture at the hands of a state obliged to guarantee citizens' safety and dignity.

Article 7 of the GPA that culminated in the creation of Zimbabwe's third unity government mandated negotiating parties to come up with a mechanism to promote national unity, cohesion and unity. The outcome of the GPA was the creation of the ONHRI. The 'Organ' was created with a mandate to create an environment of tolerance and respect among Zimbabweans and that everyone be treated with dignity and decency. However, the ONHRI faced monumental challenges including political interference and as a result did not achieve much. It was subsequently disbanded and replaced with the NPRC in 2013. Although the NPRC represents

Zimbabwe's first genuine attempt at confronting the country's gruesome and violent past, the Commission has had a fair share of its own challenges including but not limited to logistical challenges, political interference and general distrust by the population (Tshuma 2018a).

However, to the Commission's credit, unlike its predecessor- the ONHRI, NPRC is actively working to involve civil society in some of its activities including a decentralisation strategy that will result in the creation of peace committees at subnational level (NPRC 2019).

To complement the work of the NPRC, the church through the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations has established a National Convergence Platform (NCP) – an initiative formally launched in Harare in December 2019. According to its founding documents, NCP is a nonpartisan and nonpolitical initiative led by the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations to deal with multiple and complex socioeconomic and political crises in Zimbabwe through calls for 'national dialogue'. NCP is proposing a 'sabbatical', a mechanism involving suspending and postponing all forms of electoral contests for a period of at least seven years. NCP argues that suspending elections and election campaigns will put an end to perpetual electioneering that has arrested opportunities to undertake developmental work.

The sabbatical will also be an opportunity for reflection and introspection while society undergoes fundamental political and socioeconomic reforms that are long overdue. However, these proposals have elicited mixed reactions from both the opposition and ZANU-PF. Some in the opposition have intimated that a sabbatical may be an attempt to give a 'dying ZANU-PF' another chance to live. NCP regards itself as an inclusive national initiative enjoying broad-based support from civil society, the church, grassroots organisations, the diplomatic and business community, academia, worker and student unions and political players. Over 1200 delegates attended the formal launch in Harare. In spite of its noble intentions, NCP is silent on addressing past human rights violations, state sponsored violence and an undemocratic culture that continues to fuel resentment against both the state and ZANU-PF.

5.5 Opportunities to Strengthen Civil Society's Support for Peacebuilding

Since the mid-1990s Africa has witnessed an increase in women's political activism and civic participation (Tripp 2013). Women are taking up important decision-making positions in government, the corporate sector and in civil society. In 2005, Liberia elected its first and Africa's first female president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and almost seven years later Malawi elected its first and Africa's second female president, Joyce Banda. In Ethiopia, the parliament

nominated Ms Sahle-Work Zewide as state president. Today Africa has approximately one-fifth of female parliament speakers which is way above the world average of 14% (Tripp 2013). Women also take up approximately 50% of all AU Parliamentary seats.

In Lesotho and Seychelles, women occupy almost 60% of all local government positions, 43% of the members of local councils or municipal assemblies in Namibia and over a third of local government seats in Mauritania, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Uganda (Tripp 2013). Ethiopian women make up 50% of the cabinet in that country (The Irish Times 2018). In many African countries more women than men vote in regular national elections. In Zimbabwe's most recent election 54.6% of the electorate were women (Tshuma 2018b). A question that arises with all these positive developments on the continent is: what does this mean for peace and security in Africa? I attempt to answer this question in subsequent sections.

With several progressive laws passed in the last two decades it is not surprising that some African countries are being touted as gender empowerment champions. Rwanda has the highest female representation in parliament in the world, while Senegal, Seychelles and South Africa have more than 40% female representation in parliament (The Irish Times 2018). Mozambique, Angola, Tanzania and Uganda hover around 30% to 35% (Tripp 2013; African National Congress 2009; Maina 2016; The Irish Times 2018). This is in fact higher than in some Western countries. For example, in the US women hold only 18% of the seats in the House and 20% in the Senate (Tripp 2013). What could possibly explain these developments? Tripp (2013) argues that the changes witnessed in the African social and political terrain can be explained by three interrelated factors:

- i. Decline of conflicts in Africa.
- ii. Expansion of civil liberties and the shifts from authoritarian to slightly more liberalized hybrid regimes and emergence of autonomous women's movements.
- iii. Pressure from international actors like UN agencies, regional organisations, donors and other external actors that influenced the state.

5.6 Fast Track

For a long time, the 'Nordic model' was used as a reference point and model for countries aspiring for gender parity in decision making and equitable female representation. Most Scandinavian countries have, until quite recently, enjoyed the highest rates of female

representation in the world. With recent developments in Africa it would appear the Nordic model has now been replaced by what Dahlerup (2002) calls the ‘fast-track model’. This dramatic jump in female parliamentary representation across Africa can partly be explained by the adoption of electoral quotas (Tripp 2013; Svobodova 2019). Tripp (2013) notes that before 1995 not more than six African countries had adopted quotas, but today more than half of African countries have adopted gender quotas.

Quotas are mechanisms used in politics to address women’s macro and micro level needs (Tshuma 2018b). The UN Conference on Women in Beijing in particular helped spur these trends by adopting a Platform of Action that incentivised countries to advance women’s political aspirations (UN Women 2015). Three types of quotas have been used to increase women’s involvement in politics, namely:

- i. Reserved seats – these are mandated by constitutions and legislation or both to set aside seats for which only women can compete. This guarantees from the outset that a predetermined percentage of seats will be held by women.
- ii. Voluntary quotas – commonly used at party level regardless of whether there is a legal mandate. Zimbabwe employs both [i] and [ii]
- iii. Compulsory quotas, which legally require all parties to include a certain percentage of women on their candidate lists. Very few such arrangements exist in Africa.

5.7 Democratisation

Literature on the third wave of democratisation paints a rather disappointing picture particularly in Latin America and Eastern Europe (Tripp 2013). Reasons are varied, including women’s movements being declined the space to operate or simply its leadership being co-opted by political parties. In contrast, Africa’s democratisation wave was accompanied by an expansion of women’s rights and women’s organisations. This is because the broader democratisation project that followed the collapse of the Cold War opened political space previously unknown to women, presenting them with new spaces for activism and advocacy.

In Zimbabwe, several CSOs emerged at the same time when political space opened up to accommodate multi-party democracy. Some of the civil society organisations that emerged during this period include Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA), the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) and the Women’s Coalition among others. In post-genocide Rwanda, a women’s lobby group (Forum of Rwandan Women’s Parliamentarians) enacted and passed

several new gender-sensitive legislation to improve women's electability and participation in the national assembly (Svobodova 2019).

Ironically, across the African continent, several democratic and non-democratic countries have almost similar levels of women's political representation in politics and public life. Tripp (2013) argues that this is so because pseudo-democracies like Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe have adopted female quotas to boost female representation in line with SADC and AU provisions for achieving gender equality in the public domain. Emerging research demonstrates a link between the expansion of civil liberties, and the growth of women's legislative representation (Tripp 2013). Tripp (2013) further argues that it is democratisation rather than levels of democracy that may account for the relationship between democracy and women's political representation. In Africa, the 1990s 'big shift' was not so much towards democracy but rather a transformation of authoritarian to hybrid regimes that straddle democracy and authoritarianism (Tripp 2013).

5.8 Post-Conflict Impacts

Profound changes in women's political fortunes have been most noticeable in post-conflict countries. For example, post-conflict countries like Rwanda and South Africa have twice as many women in legislatures compared to non-post conflict countries like Botswana. Post conflict countries in Africa have also passed twice as much women-friendly legislation compared with non-post-conflict countries. Post-conflict countries have also made profound constitutional reforms geared towards women's emancipation. For example, in the aftermath of the 2008 political crisis, Zimbabwe pushed for legislative quotas for women and passed several progressive laws on sexual and gender-based violence and child rights (Gudhlanga 2013, Gaidzanwa 2009). UN Women (2018) reports that by June 2018 women in conflict and post-conflict countries with legislated quotas occupied 19.8% of parliament seats. This contrasts sharply with 12.1% recorded in countries with no quotas.

These developments challenge us to think about the relationship between conflict, peace and democracy. Tripp (2013) and Svobodova (2019) argue that the decline of conflict often creates opportunity for structures like peace negotiations and constitution-making exercises that allow women activists to press for a women's rights and increased representation in public and private sectors. Zimbabwe, Rwanda and South Africa are among the examples where cessation of conflict brought fundamental changes in the conditions of women and girls. However, these

countries' experience contrasts sharply with Angola where conflict simply ended with the military decimation of a rival force, in the process denying civil society and women's groups the much-needed space for dialogue, national reconciliation, and a platform to assert and re-insert their interests into the public discourse.

In Angola, the capture and subsequent assassination in 2002 of National Union for the Total Independence of Angola leader, Jonas Savimbi, by government forces denied women and civil society in general opportunities to mobilise around women's rights and demands such that although Angola did adopt a quota system, it was largely superficial and cosmetic. As demonstrated by the case studies of Zimbabwe, South Africa, Egypt and Rwanda, Sülleabháin (2015) argues that transitions and post revolution settlements often do provide windows of opportunity to reshape existing political settlements to address underlying power dynamics and enshrine the principles that promote gender equality and women's rights.

5.9 The Role of International Actors in Women's Activism

Opening of the political and civic space in Africa can be attributed to the international wave that swept through the continent necessitating changes in international norms regarding women's political representation and women's rights (Tripp 2013; Svobodova 2019). This international wave influenced not only domestic women's movements which saw an increase in donor funding for women's NGOs, but also influenced operations of multilateral agencies such as the United Nations and the World Bank (United Nations and the World Bank 2018).

As noted earlier, the end of conflict in many African countries also disrupted gender roles and relations and created incentives for women to demand greater rights and representation. This was especially evident in countries that had undergone major conflict. The presence of women combatants in countries like Liberia, Mozambique and Sierra Leone challenged existing gender norms as did women's roles in peace movements. The gender disruptions were evident both in countries where women were active in battle and in peace movements or both, but these changes were not as evident where women played neither role in the conflict for example in Chad.

5.10 Chapter Summary

The civic space continues to be an important arena for inclusive peacebuilding and democratic engagement in Africa. Although often treated with suspicion and disdain by the state, civil

society in Zimbabwe continues to play important roles in the democratisation process as well as state and nation building processes. The experience of civil society in Zimbabwe calls into question uncritical narratives that often view civil society as weak and unable to exert pressure on authoritarian regimes to uphold human rights and hold the state accountable. In spite of threats to their own personal freedoms, civil society leaders in Zimbabwe have been consistent in their calls for justice, healing and reconciliation in the country. With a reduction in global financial commitments to peacebuilding, there are legitimate concerns about a slide into authoritarianism and authoritarian rule and the general reversal of democratic gains won in recent years. The international community has a responsibility to commit more funding to sustain peacebuilding to avert a reversal of the democratic gains of the last four decades.

The next chapter examines the relationship between gender, peace and security. It discusses important theoretical standpoints that are important for analysing the relationship between gender and peacebuilding as well as gender and conflict. In drawing attention to the way colonialism radically transformed gender relations, the chapter borrows heavily from feminist peacebuilding theories that highlight the pitfalls of uncritical narratives about gender in postcolonial Africa. The chapter provides a sociohistorical analysis of gender relations across three historical periods showing how peacebuilding has fundamentally transformed the repressive gender relations established by colonial conquest, colonialism and Christianisation. It also raises questions about African liberation struggle movements' commitment to gender equality and the impact this has had on peacebuilding more broadly.

CHAPTER 6: GENDER AND PEACEBUILDING

There are no losers - when women advance, everyone benefits (President Paul Kagame 2015 cited in Mugari and Olutola, 2018).

6.1 Introduction

This chapter locates gender in the context of Africa and Zimbabwe by highlighting the complex intersection of gender and peacebuilding. Using African feminist peacebuilding theories, it provides a sociohistorical analysis of gender relations and peacebuilding in Africa across three historical periods: pre-colonial; colonial and post-colonial episodes. By providing a snapshot of the impact of colonialism on gender relations in Africa, this chapter attempts to demonstrate how the complex interaction of patriarchy, colonialism and Christianisation and the complex gender roles arising from them continue to negatively impact peacebuilding praxis.

This interrogation is important because it helps situate the need to democratise peacebuilding and helps shine light on the differential impact armed conflict and violence has on men and women and sexual minorities. By engaging the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in peacebuilding, this chapter highlights women's participation in peacebuilding and their contributions to peacebuilding more broadly. The chapter draws inspiration from Africa's past with a view to enhancing future peacebuilding praxis.

6.2 Gender: A Historical Perspective

The aim of this section is not to provide an extensive history of precolonial Africa but rather to provide the historical context of gender relations in selected African countries in order to locate contemporary gender relations and transformation over time. In gender studies, sex refers to biologically determined differences between men and women, boys and girls while gender is a social construct where relations of power and dominance play out (Gudhlanga 2013; Hudson 2016a). These power relations in-turn structure and shape life's opportunities between men and women. A significant portion of uncritical African literature tends to present peacebuilding as a 'male terrain' (Jaji 2020). This is in part because African women's history, particularly during the precolonial and colonial period, remains very scant at best and overly generalised at worst. For this reason, gender differences across historical contexts have been completely ignored and distorted with some scholarly accounts portraying precolonial societies in which women had

little or no political power (Muvingi 2016: 109). However, a careful re-examination of black history by scholars such as Amadiume (1989; 1997) and Isike and Uzondike (2011) and Isike (2016; 2017) is beginning to render these accounts suspect.

Historically, precolonial African women were always at the centre of peace processes whether formally or informally. In fact, their roles extended beyond localised conflict resolution to transboundary peace making and peacebuilding (Amadiume 1997; Isike and Uzondike 2011; Isike 2017). Bauer (2009 cited in Muvingi 2016) contends that African women yielded considerable power which permeated economic, political and social spheres. Using an African feminist lens Hudson (2009) and Ntahobari and Ndayiziga (2003) argue that Burundian women were traditionally considered bridge builders and symbols of unity across families, communities, ethnic groups and clans through the institution of marriage.

Marriage therefore strategically positioned women (especially elderly ones) as peace envoys and peace makers to facilitate peace negotiations (Mohammed 2003; Lihanba 2003). Among the Ndebele and Shona of present-day Zimbabwe, women like Mbuya Nehanda and Queen Lozikeyi commanded great respect in their respective societies. For example, Clarke and Nyathi (2010) recount how Queen Lozikeyi, wife to King Lobengula facilitated peace processes in the famous Matobo Mountains following the King's defeat by Rhodes' forces.

In her influential text Male Daughters, Female Husbands, Amadiume (1989) draws our attention to the power and influence precolonial African women exercised. She cites an example of the Nnobi, an Igbo community in south-eastern Nigeria, where women could technically become 'sons' through lineage and could control property. Married and widowed women occupied the economic and social positions of husbands by marrying other women. Jaji (2020) argues that among the "Shona"²⁰ community, femininity and womanhood was exercised with great flexibility. For example, women could become proxy fathers to their brothers' children, especially in their absence. These traditional and cultural practices are an indication of the power and influence yielded by precolonial African women. Hoppe (2016) further adds that precolonial African women were not an undifferentiated, exploited and powerless group

²⁰ The Shona in present day Zimbabwe are an amalgamation of different tribal and ethnic groups that share a similar culture and speak a similar language. Numerically they are the largest group in Zimbabwe comprising the Karanga, Zezuru, Korekore, Ndau and Manyika ethnic groups.

requiring feminist intervention. She argues that colonialism and the Christianization of Africans served to further subjugate and disempower African women.

Unlike uncritical narratives that present peacebuilding as a male responsibility, precolonial women played important and crucial roles as chiefs, arbitrators in traditional courts, village elders and leaders in war through providing spiritual guidance (Gudhlanga 2013). In Reinventing Africa's heroes: The Case of Makatilili in Kenya, Carrier and Nyamweru (2016) show how Mekatilili waMenza played a critical role in the fight against British colonial rule that gave rise to the uprisings in July and August of 1913. WaMenza's rebellious nature would later inspire groups like Mau Mau to wage a successful anti-colonial struggle against white minority rule in Kenya.

This attests to the fact that precolonial Africa had no clear distinctions between religious and political domains, therefore spirit mediums like Nehanda and Mekatilili waMenza were key political and religious players in struggles for self-determination. Clarke and Nyathi (2010) note that Queen Lozikeyi stepped in to provide leadership after the defeat of the Ndebele army in 1893. During this period Lozikeyi temporarily assumed leadership of the Ndebele Kingdom and fought tirelessly to resist further land dispossessions. In fact, her resistance and determination to square-off with white settlers is believed to have sown the seeds of what later became the first war of resistance (Clarke and Nyathi 2010). Colonial administrators at the time described Queen Lozikeyi as a 'dangerous and intriguing woman' (Clarke and Nyathi 2010).

Not only did women assume key roles as spirit mediums and mediators in local disputes but they were also consulted on other matters of societal importance, for example, societal calamities including droughts and outbreak of diseases (Gudhlanga 2013). Some women have continued in this tradition by mediating political conflicts and promoting healing and reconciliation at community level (Jaji 2020). Women's involvement in such important societal issues made them significant political actors. For example, Gudhlanga (2013) notes that some of the best combat regiments during the Munhumutapa period were comprised of women only combats and often constituted the young and unmarried. She argues that being accorded the opportunity to lead was a manifestation and confirmation of women's capabilities and a clear indication that they were not marginalised but worked together with men for the betterment of society.

This confirms Diop's (1989) argument that precolonial African societies were a manifestation of 'harmonious dualism' where patriarchy and matriarchy coexisted in a stable manner.

Amadiume (1997: 92) describes precolonial African states as exhibiting ‘fluid demarcation’ a situation where two contrasting systems exist and the balance of forces is constantly tilting and changing all the time. Isike and Uzodike (2011) argue that gender relations in precolonial Africa were fluid as they were not only a means of dividing roles and responsibilities between men and women, but also a means of integrating and coexisting in dynamic ways that enabled stability and order based on justice, fairness and equity. That sex and gender did not necessarily coincide and that gender roles were neither rigidly masculinised nor feminised (Amadiume 1987: 3) attests to the fact that colonial subjugation had a devastating effect on gender relations that in turn fundamentally transformed the practice of peacebuilding on the continent.

However, Hoppe (2016) warns against what she sees as over romanticisation of precolonial African women. She argues that the presentation of strong precolonial Igbo institutions and ideologies about women’s power and societal positioning without questioning male power structures plays squarely in the hands of patriarchy. For example, she argues that Amadiume’s idea of female husbands bewilders biological determinism, but not patriarchy or hierarchical gendered institutions (Hoppe 2016: 5). While Hoppe’s criticism of African patriarchy may be valid, it is persuasive to argue that she may be unaware of both the theoretical and conceptual distinctions between Western and African feminisms as will be explored below.

Unlike Western feminism, African feminism is a new brand of feminist thinking that borrows certain aspects of Western feminism while seeking to chart its own course reflective of African value systems based on Ubuntu (Hudson 2009). This new strand of feminism acknowledges gender oppression but also sees opportunities to work within the system for the betterment of society. Hudson (2009: 293) sees African feminism as a form of transformational feminist strategy that concentrates more on long term strategic analysis and transformation of gendered power relations. I argue that using Western feminist lenses to understand precolonial African societies obscures the gender fluidity that Amadiume (1997) refers to.

6.3 Colonialism and its Impact on Gender Relations

There is no question that colonialism left indelible marks on gender relations and human bodies every time it met local systems. For example, removing black African women from positions of power and influence and domesticating them enabled colonial administrators to undermine existing precolonial gender relations (Walker 1990; Sesanti 2016). Mfecane (2018) argues that colonialism and its related means of production hinged on individualistic and economic

conceptions of manhood which interfered with and altered African men's previous roles as protectors of both households and communities. Martens (2008) and Pierres (1989) argue that because colonialism was conceived ideologically as a 'civilizing mission' it transformed existing social systems to align with Western notions of societal progress. Within such arrangements, women's statuses were considered a key measure of progress justifying the intrusion into African gender systems (Martens 2008).

Gudhlanga (2013) notes that women's participation in politics and public life in general diminished during the colonial period. This was aided by imperial domination, introduction of oppressive legislation (customary law) and the general dwindling economic and social opportunities available to African women. The introduction of capitalism favoured men and white men specifically. Its introduction was followed by other oppressive laws by whose operation and implementation women immediately lost not only their political power but increasingly also their social and economic power (Gudhlanga 2013). The masculinisation of power and peacebuilding was devastating for women. Consequently, women involved in peace work came to be deviants, problematic and social misfits who deserved to be punished for encroaching into a predominantly male space (Jaji 2020).

Customary law reduced women to perpetual minors as it became illegal for women to inherit or own property. These pieces of legislation transformed precolonial fluid and flexible gender relations into hard and fast rules. In Rhodesia for instance, small scale commercial farms were designed to cater for a small group of black elites who could afford to buy land from the state. This was facilitated through the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951 which set aside Purchase Areas (PAs) where blacks could purchase freehold land. In such contexts women's access to resources such as land was negotiated and mediated through their relationship with men (Gudhlanga 2013; Gaidzanwa 1993).

Muvungi (2016) argues that some extremely important and influential traditional and cultural public functions such as the role of spirit mediums had no equivalence in the European model, and because of competing interests between spirit mediums and missionaries for spiritual allegiance and loyalty among indigenous people, one of the powerful public roles of women was also silenced in the process. Gudhlanga (2013) argues that with African women marginalised and excluded from public spaces constructed by colonial governments, African societies became poor imitations of a deeply classed and gendered Anglo-imperialist society.

6.4 Gendered Violence and Peace: Women's Roles in Conflict

Women participate in violent conflict in multiple and complex ways including direct and indirect participation. Indirect participation or support may include providing intelligence, serving as messengers and spies in conflict situations or providing logistical support to aid war and fighting through the provision of food, water, shelter and purchasing guns and weapons or stealing weapons from rivals. In Kismayo, a Somali community in southern Somalia, some women sold their possessions such as gold and even homes to keep the war chest against rival clans well resourced (LPI Report 2018), while others tacitly encouraged men and boys to take up arms and fight. Hesitant men were humiliated in both public and private and accused of being women. By insulting men's manhood, these women were able to compel unwilling men to engage in violent acts to disprove the insults. In some instances, some directly engaged in violent conflict and combat through finishing-off wounded enemies (LPI Report 2018). There is also documented evidence of some women from rival clans giving advice about which rival homes to attack and women to rape (LPI Report 2018). In the following sections, I show how gender remains a central theme in discussions about violent conflict and peacebuilding.

Across Africa, struggles for self-determination and political independence brought contradictory changes in gender relations between men and women. For instance, in some countries gender relations were transformed whereas in other contexts gender transformations failed to hold post-conflict. Liberation struggles against colonialism in many African countries, Zimbabwe included helping to reshape and insert women's military and political agency into the nationalist narrative (Gudlhanga 2013). In Mozambique, the Mozambique Liberation Front had female political mobilisers, leaders and fighters Urdang (1989 cited in Muvungi 2016). According to Disney (2009) the Organisation of Mozambican Women was born out of a Women's Detachment, an all-female military unit established in 1968. It consequently became the first civil society organisation after the country's independence in 1975.

However, this reconfiguration of gender relations was short lived as many women found themselves once again disempowered, marginalised and excluded from decision making post-independence. This resulted in women waging 'new struggles' mostly through civil society in order to reclaim their space and make demands for equality, fairness and justice. This section attempts to answer two core questions: why did liberation struggles with their promises of a just and fair society turn against those that helped liberate African societies? A related question is whether it had been realistic and feasible for anyone to expect any better from male figures

in these struggles, given the documented evidence of rampant abuse of female combatants during the struggle?

Gudhlanga (2013) notes that in Zimbabwe, only educated women, those in elite positions and those related to powerful male politicians enjoy[ed] the fruits of political independence. This is even though during the liberation war women had participated in the war irrespective of their social positioning (Chung 2007; Sadomba and Dzinesa 2004). Gudhlanga concludes that the post independent state in Zimbabwe became an exclusionary state where people were excluded based on their class, gender and ethnicity. This critique is important because it challenges uncritical narratives that seek to homogenise women, especially black women, as an undifferentiated and homogenous group.

Mushonga and Seloma (2018) note that throughout history women across cultures have worked alongside men to resist and dismantle oppression. For example, during the Algerian war of independence from France between 1954 and 1962, thousands of women actively participated in the struggle for self-determination as combatants, spies, fundraisers, couriers, nurses, launderers and cooks. Similarly, in Zimbabwe and South Africa, women and women's groups played instrumental roles in the struggle for political freedom and majority rule (Muvungi 2016; African National Congress 2009; Sadomba and Dzinesa 2004). Despite having played active roles in the liberation of their countries, many women faced similar challenges of political, economic and social exclusion and marginalisation upon cessation of conflict.

Odendaal (2010) notes that South Africa's National Peace Accord did not give marginalised groups such as women and youth enough spaces to articulate their vision of an alternative and democratic South Africa. Male political elites in the African National Congress, Inkatha Freedom Party, South African Communist Party among others dominated peace infrastructures such as the LCPs. The author further notes that although an 'invitation' was extended to women and youth there existed no policy to strengthen the participation of marginalised groups through LPCs.

In Algeria, many women including former combatants returned to private life after the war only to be rejected by the same society they had liberated (Turshen 2002). In Egypt the women who had played pivotal roles in the Arab Spring had their concerns ignored in the aftermath of the revolution, further removing them from key decision-making spaces (Fadel and Hasner 2012). Similarly, women ex-combatants in independent Zimbabwe faced similar challenges of political exclusion, economic and social marginalisation (Muvungi 2016; Dzinesa 2007;

Sadomba and Dzinesa 2004). In many post-independent governments, women combatants faced extreme difficulties in reintegrating into society after the war (Mushonga and Seloma 2018; Muvingi 2016). Sandole and Starotse (2015) argue that the post-colonial African experience has been that spaces created by women during war and conflict shrink with the cessation of conflict and war as calls for a return to the status quo are amplified.

Gughlanga (2013) argues that male dominance is not only a sexual and social problem but also a political problem directed at maintaining existing power relations which privilege men while subordinating women. In post-genocide Rwanda for instance, women's demands to legalise abortion due to rape-induced pregnancies were disregarded (Sandole and Starotse 2015). Gaidzanwa (1993) notes that after gaining independence from colonial masters, a good number of nationalist governments across southern Africa adopted models of society in terms of both nationhood and citizenship based on the liberal and capitalist models of Western Europe that disadvantaged women while advantaging men.

For example, independent Zimbabwe assumed patrilineality which was reflected in several laws around inheritance and ownership of resources such land and property. Some scholars argue that this could have been anticipated because for many liberation struggle movements gender came as an afterthought. In other words, anti-colonial struggles sought to address political issues first in the hope that political freedoms in newly independent states would 'trickle down' to address social issues like women and minority rights.

Writing on the Mozambican civil war (1977-1992), Chingono (2015) argues that conflict and war often open opportunities for women to break free from traditional patriarchal control. The author further argues that the weakening of the state in Mozambique as the result of the civil war opened unprecedented opportunities for women with some seizing entrepreneurial opportunities in informal markets which reduced their dependence on male provision, and others becoming actively involved in civil society setting up victim support networks and participating in peacebuilding initiatives.

Similarly, the decade's long conflict in Somalia has opened up opportunities for women, helping them break gender stereotypes that prevented them from actively participating in the country's economy. Not only has the war in Somalia disrupted traditional gender roles but it has thrust women into the centre of Somali's informal economy by offering opportunities for

entrepreneurship and economic enterprise, allowing them to set up small businesses which they continue to run successfully (Amin 2017). Considering this, Chingono (2015) characteristically concludes that while war destroys society, it also opens avenues for gender transformation, social fragmentation and civil society activism.

6.5 Gender Mainstreaming and Peacebuilding

Peace and conflict studies have a long history of engaging the complexities of ending hostilities and resolving conflict. Disappointingly though, a huge body of research on conflict has tended to focus on governments, disputants and mediators and their strategies for addressing underlying causes of conflict (Ellerby 2016). This narrow conceptualisation of conflict and peace has resulted in a dearth of knowledge and scholarship about women's participation and engagement with peace and peacebuilding more broadly (Waylen 2014).

As argued by Aderlini (2007), women's peace activities are often treated as secondary to formal processes and often under the guise of gender-neutral processes. This is despite a growing body of research highlighting the important roles women play in conflict and peacebuilding. The result of women's marginalisation in both knowledge creation and production is that women's peace activism often appears outside the confines of formal peace processes. Hudson (2009) warns that the danger with normalising these narratives is that it legitimates the non-governmental space as the most appropriate space for women's peace activism.

While women and girls are often presented in literature as passive and submissive, subordinated and a powerless group, Bhatasara and Chiweshe (2017) argue that these uncritical narratives miss out on the various practices and resources that women deploy in conflict situations to save lives and rebuild communities in the aftermath of conflict and war. Hudson (2009: 296) further argues that the underlying problem with these unhelpful and homogenising stereotypes that portray women as 'powerless and passive' is that they fail to see women as individuals with diverse and sometimes even opposing needs. Gender mainstreaming therefore offers a premise to understand the gendered complexities of peace and conflict and not the mere glorification of any one sex over the other.

The UN defines gender mainstreaming as strategies employed to make women and men's concerns and experience an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes so that both women and men benefit equally (Karame 2004; Paffenholz 2018). Gender mainstreaming rejects the notion that women are inherently

peaceful and that men are inherently violent. In fact, Vincent (2003 cited in Corrigan 2015) warns against perpetuating unhelpful stereotypical assumptions about a gender arguing that both men and women alike are capable of being either violent or peaceful. In the same manner that both men and women can advocate conflict, they can similarly advocate peace.

Rwanda offers an insightful case of the role played by women combatants in both encouraging and abetting violence and rape during the 1994 genocide.²¹ Rwanda's case demonstrates that essentialist narratives that women can negotiate complex conflict situations because of their 'innate peaceable' nature are very problematic. These narratives wittingly associate women with peacefulness and perceived moral superiority. As argued by Hudson (2016) this usually works to women's disadvantage as they are kept out of power and crucial decision making about conflict and its aftermath.

Both Tickner (1999) and Corrigan (2015) argue that associating peace with women plays into unhelpful gender stereotypes that see men as active and women as passive, men as agents and women as victims and men as rational and women as emotional. These uncritical narratives are not only damaging to women's credibility and self-worth as valuable actors and participants in matters of international politics and national security but equally damaging to the peace process itself (Tickner 1999). Similarly, Barry (1979) argues that victimism (woman's victim state) creates a framework for others to know them (women) not as a people but as victims.

6.6 What Difference Does Gender Mainstreaming Make?

In 2010, the UNSG released a report on women's participation in peacebuilding. The report contains seven commitments to increase women's representation and to include a gender aspect in all peace processes (UNSG 2010). The first of these is a commitment and a call for greater women's participation in peace processes (UNSG 2010:8) and entails two specific methods for achieving this, two of which aim at increasing the number of women involved directly in peace negotiations, both as chief mediators and as participants. The other two measures call for increased consultation with women's representative groups and for the inclusion of gender expertise at senior UN levels (UNSG 2010:9-10). The report has over the years received criticism from women's rights groups who feel that the document seeks to quantitatively

²¹ For a discussion on the Rwandan genocide and associated peace processes see Cameron (2017), Yanagizawa-Drott (2014), Thomson (2013; 2018), Hudson (2009), and Corrigan (2015).

increase the number of women in peace processes without a deliberate strategy to make women's quantitative representation translate to positive policy outcomes with respect to qualitative inclusion (Paffenholz 2018). Paffenholz et al (2016) argue that gender mainstreaming must shift from 'counting women' to 'making women's participation and involvement count'.

Policy and scholarly evidence show that gender-sensitive and inclusive peacebuilding processes improve the quality of agreements reached and increase the chances of successful implementation. A UN study of peace processes between 1990 and 2017 found that women only constituted 2% of mediators, 8% of negotiators and 5% of witnesses and signatories in all major peace processes (UN Women 2018). This is despite evidence from a study involving 82 peace agreements in 42 armed conflicts between 1989 and 2011 that peace agreements where women acted as signatories were associated with durable peace. The same report notes that peace agreements signed by female delegates had a higher implementation rate.

However, critics of gender mainstreaming have argued that the mere participation of women as negotiators and mediators does not necessarily guarantee a gender sensitive peace process. They argue that women's numerical presence does not necessarily translate to greater equality and in male-dominated spaces such as peacebuilding, gender reform could in actual fact entail women having to become like men in order to fit which doesn't necessarily promote women's rights nor their needs (Hudson 2021). For example, Ellerby (2016) cites the case involving El Salvadoran rebel movement Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation, where the presence of women at the peace table did not translate into a gender sensitive peace process. According to Ellerby (2016), some of the women who attended the negotiations felt raising women's issues would jeopardise the peace process while those who were willing to raise the issues were simply silenced by the 'system'. These programming shortcomings are precisely why gender mainstreaming must constitute a core aspect of peacebuilding. Important to emphasise is that gender mainstreaming is not akin to a 'add women and stir approach' (Cohn, Kinsella and Gibbings 2004: 137), but making known the concerns and experiences of both men and women on conflict and peace. As alluded to earlier, a gender inclusive peace process increases the chances of successful post-conflict reconstruction and rebuilding.

In spite criticism by scholars such as Thomson (2013; 2018) and Yanagizawa-Drott (2014), Rwanda is often touted as a successful model of what a gender inclusive peace process entails and what it can achieve. The transitional period that followed Rwanda's genocide presented

women with windows of opportunity to reorganise and demand change. Today, Rwanda has the highest representation of women at parliamentary and cabinet level than any other post-conflict society with 64% female parliamentarians in 2015 (Hudson 2016b). Ellerby (2016), and Hudson (2009; 2016b) argue that the post conflict phase for many women is not about returning to the status quo but is an opportunity to disrupt gendered violence and exclusion going forward. Rwanda's post conflict reconstruction success is believed to have spurred the UN into passing UNSR 1325 in October 2000.

It is common knowledge that building lasting positive peace that sustains post war economic, political and social development requires the full participation of all citizens. It is therefore imperative that all peace processes involve women as equal partners in the peace process. Some evidence exists to the effect that when women take up leadership roles and are able to meaningfully participate in peace negotiations, resulting agreements tend to last longer and there is greater satisfaction with the outcomes of the negotiations including implementation of peace agreements (O'Reilly, O'Sulleabhaim and Paffenholz 2015; Paffenholz *et al.* 2017, Ellerby 2016; Stone 2015; UN Women 2015). Gobwee (2015) notes that the involvement of women in the peace agreement in the Philippines was instrumental in ending the 45-year civil war. A corresponding study by UN Women concluded that recurring conflicts are due in part to gender insensitive approaches to peacebuilding (UN Women 2012).

Until the adoption of UNSCR 1325, most peacebuilding pursuits by the UN tended to focus exclusively on formal political processes such as peace negotiations, institutional building and holding of elections (Pruitt 2013). This ran the risk of excluding women, youth and girls who are not actively engaged in formal peace processes. Because peacebuilding is complex and often occurs in diverse contexts with different levels of conflict, it requires that the process be as broad and inclusive as possible. The goal of peacebuilding in any society is to help create functional institutions that prevent both social and political violence and empower individuals and groups to work for social change (Zelizer and Rubinstein 2009).

UNSCR 1325 affirms the right of women and girls affected by conflict to participate in decision making relating to peace and security as well as the obligation of states and international actors to protect them, provide relief and prevent violence (UN 2000; UN Women 2015). Since 2000 there has been increasing global awareness that gender is important in understanding conflict and working for peace with growing efforts to implement these resolutions. Disappointingly, the implementation of UNSR 1325 has been slow with only 82 UN member states (41% of all

UN member states) adopting UNSCR 1325 National Action Plans on WPS as of 2019. However, the number of WPS envoys and ambassadors has increased, demonstrating an ability to match rhetoric with concrete action by the UN and its partners. Such initiatives are supported by empirical research which shows that inclusivity and gender sensitivity are crucial to any peace process. Exclusive and gender-blind peace processes tend to be very fragile and risk relapses into conflict and war.

Encouraged by the adoption of UNSCR 1325 and subsequent declarations (among them the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), women's demands for accountability for violations and abuses have gained momentum, greater attention and consequences than ever before in history. The following UN Security Council Resolutions form the foundation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda:

- i. Beijing Conference (Platform for Action) in 1995 signed almost a quarter century ago. Much has been achieved, but much still needs to be done especially, in deeply patriarchal societies in the global south.
- ii. In terms of peace and security, UNSCR 1325 marks an important period for women's activism as it affirms that peace and security efforts are more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of violent conflict and delivery of relief and recovery efforts in the forging of lasting peace.
- iii. SCR 1820 (2008) recognises that conflict related sexual violence is a tactic of warfare and calls for the training of troops in preventing and responding to sexual violence, deployment of more women to peace operations and enforcement of zero-tolerance policies for peacekeepers with regards to sexual misconduct.
- iv. SCR 1888 (2009) seeks to strengthen the implantation of 1820 by calling for leadership to address conflict related sexual violence, deployment of teams (military and gender experts) to critical conflict areas and improved monitoring and reporting on conflict trends and perpetrators.
- v. SCR 1889 (2009) addresses obstacles to women's participation in peace processes and calls for development of global indicators to track the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and improvement of international and national responses to the needs of women in conflict and post conflict settings.
- vi. SCR 1960 (2010) calls for an end to sexual violence in armed conflict particularly against women and girls, and provides measures aimed at ending impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence, including targeted sanctions.
- vii. SCR 2016 (2013) provides operational guidance on addressing sexual violence and calls for the further deployment of Women Protection Advisers.
- viii. SCR 2122 (2013) calls for all parties to peace talks to facilitate equal participation of women in decision making and aims to increase women's participation in peace-

making by increasing resources for women in conflict zones and acknowledges the critical contribution of women CSOs to peace.

- ix. SCR 2242 (2015), marking the 15th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, affirms and highlights the role of women in countering violent extremism and addressing the differential impact of terrorism on the rights of women and girls.
- x. Through its Seven Point Action Plan on Gender and Responsive Peacebuilding, the UN has committed to allocating a minimum of 15% of all UN managed funds in support of peacebuilding projects that advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

Text Box 6.1 provides a summary of findings about women and peace processes since 2000.

Text Box 6.1: Women's involvement in peace process since 2000

- UNSCR 1325 appears to have resulted in more references to women in peace agreements, especially in cases where the UN has been involved in the peace process; however, progress has been limited.
- Only 92 out of the total 585 – 16% – of the peace agreements reached since 2000 that have been examined by the PSRP include specific references to women.
- These 16% correspond to the peace agreements where women have been part of the process.
- Worldwide, very few women are appointed as negotiators or mediators in peace processes.
- Only 4% of negotiators and only 2.4% of chief negotiators have been female.
- Gender-sensitive mediators appear to make a big difference to the outcomes for women.
- Pre-negotiation deals are crucial to framing final political settlements. Parties come to talks aware of what will be formally demanded and agreed, but research finds that these talks are usually held in secret and inaccessible to women. Therefore, issues that women might have brought to the table are not included.

Sources: UN Women, Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the Political Settlements Research Programme (PSRP) at the University of Edinburgh (2008).

6.7 Gender Mainstreaming and Challenges of Implementation

The passing of UNSCR 1325 in 2000 was accompanied by a growth in women's peace activism (UN Women 2015). UNSCR 1325 became the first formal and legal document by the UN to recognise the critical role of women in peacebuilding. It urges parties involved in conflict to respect women's rights and support their equal participation in peace negotiations and post conflict reconstruction (Hudson 2009; 2016b). Despite its achievements to date, UNSCR 1325 has been criticised by Kaufman and Williams (2015) for presenting boys and men as sole beneficiaries of war. The authors argue that while UNSCR 1325 prioritises women's issues the UN does not stand firm enough to propel women at the centre of social change and social transformation. In other words, the UN lacks strategies to transform structural and cultural

barriers that suppress and oppress women leading to gender-blind and insensitive peace processes.

Hudson (2016a) notes that the challenge of gender-sensitive reform (gender mainstreaming) in male dominated environments is that gender reform in these contexts usually entails “women behaving like men” in order to fit without necessarily challenging and disrupting the very mechanisms that subordinate, oppress and marginalise women. Even disaggregating data about women involved in peace processes and devising measures to address these gaps often does little about reinforce power relations in such arrangements. Hudson (2016a) cautions that rhetorical commitments to the empowerment of women, the eradication of domestic violence and equal opportunities between sexes are on their own insufficient to shift patriarchal power relations that disadvantage women. In fact, critical feminist scholars have voiced concern with several resolutions that do little to challenge structural causes and power hierarchies that perpetuate women’s inequality and insecurity, reducing women to groups deserving of international protection.

Gender justice in peacebuilding therefore becomes a question of not whether gender is acknowledged in the broader institutional frameworks but whether the kind of approach utilised can contribute to sustainable peace (Hudson 2016b). At the core of critical and post-colonial feminism is a recognition that decolonising peacebuilding calls for institutional and structural reform, conflict prevention and protection, justice and healing, development and capacity building efforts that respect the agency of those most affected (Hudson 2016b).

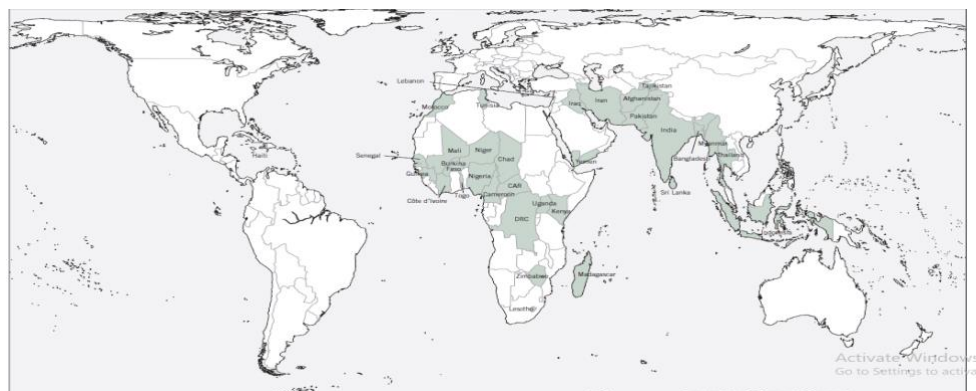
6.8 Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Framework in Africa

Strengthening the role of women in peacebuilding and reducing the impact of violence and conflict on the lives of women and girls requires a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of gender norms, gender identities, and gendered experiences of both conflict and peacebuilding. In the past women have participated in wars and conflicts from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Mozambique, and Sierra Leone to Uganda. For instance, during Uganda’s civil war, some women smuggled contraband arms, precious stones and even sold illegal drugs. Yet, for other women conflict and violence tends to deepen and lengthen their vulnerability (Sandole and Staroste 2015). Women experience increased sexual violence and lose homes, family members and often their own lives remain at risk too. Most women in conflict situations are often cut off from access to justice, economic opportunities and essential

social services like education and health. A UN Women study found that women in conflict environments faced an increased rate of maternal mortality estimated to be 2.5% higher on average in post-conflict environments (UN Women 2012).

While research has shown that armed conflict and conflicts in general and their aftermath affect women's lives in ways that differ from men (UN Women 2015; United nations and World Bank 2018; Agbalajobi 2009), women remain marginalised in knowledge, networks, economics and political matters. For example, men in communities under siege tend to abandon public spaces to avoid being conscripted, attacked or even taken hostage. This increases the burden put on women to hold families and communities together in the absence of men. Also because women act as community symbols and of ethnic identity, they essentially become targets of sexual violence. The global conflict map in Figure 5.1 shows that countries with armed conflict and socio-political crises have the highest levels of gender discrimination and inequality. Country profiling was accomplished using the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) tool.

Figure 6.1: Global conflict map



Notes: Parts in grey show conflict zones where it is evident that GVB is also rampant

(Source: International Alert 2019)

For example, Nigeria's Borno state and that of her two neighbours Adamawa and Yobe have been epicentres of extreme violence, abductions and extra-judicial killings by the Islamist group Boko Haram. In 2018 alone the three states hosted a combined 92% of internally displaced persons (IDPs) with females accounting for over half the entire IDP population (Pillay 2018). Vulnerability assessments conducted in north-east Nigeria indicated that female-headed households were at a higher risk of sexual violence and physical violence and were more likely to experience rape, sexual abuse and exploitation. There are also cases where

abductee girls and women face discrimination and stigma on return to their communities (Pillay 2018).

Pillay (2018) notes that while the conflict in north-eastern Nigeria may have started over disputes between the north-eastern states and the federal government, over time conflicts degenerated into territorial conflicts with the battle being waged through the bodies of women and girls. Similarly, conflicts in Rwanda, Somalia and South Sudan have highlighted the use of rape as a tool of warfare Uwineza (2016). The purpose of rape and associated sexual violence in conflict serves as a vehicle to not only terrorise the individual (women and girls) but also instil fear in a community and in an ethnic or social group. The resultant effect is that conflict has devastating impacts on women's civil, political, sociocultural rights as opposed to men though this is not to suggest that men remain completely unaffected by conflict (Uwineza 2016). The disruptions wrought by conflict and demands by insurgent groups have cast women and girls into new roles outside the domestic sphere as both fighters and in some cases supporters of conflict (Pillay 2018).

With the loss of their husbands, sons and other male figures to violent conflict who also happen to be family breadwinners, Pillay (2018) notes that many women in the three states of Nigeria found themselves with new and additional responsibilities such as being breadwinners and decision makers in their families. Agbalajobi (2009) acknowledges that although in some instances, violent conflict and war may 'improve' gender relations owing to shifts in gender roles, for instance women becoming breadwinners and decision makers in families, the overall impact of war and violent conflict on women is devastating, presenting substantial challenges for gender mainstreaming.

6.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter located gender and peacebuilding in the context of Africa more broadly and Zimbabwe specifically. It highlighted the complex intersection of gender and peacebuilding across three important historical periods namely: the pre-colonial; colonial and post-colonial times. It demonstrated the devastating impact of colonialism and Christianisation on gender relations in Africa. It argued that processes of colonialisation and Christianization transformed fluid gender relations that existed in precolonial Africa into fast and hard rules. The cumulative effect was the marginalisation of women not only from the public sphere but also from their important roles as conflict mediators and negotiators. I argued in the chapter that women's

positioning in peacebuilding praxis in Zimbabwe and Africa more broadly must not be understood in isolation but rather as a mirror of the larger sociocultural configuration of gender relations in society.

However, this is not in any way a suggestion that precolonial Africa was an ‘egalitarian’ society, but rather a demonstration that gender responsibilities were complimentary rather than confrontational. Also, important to note is that while anticolonial struggles across Africa were pregnant with hopes of a new order based on fairness, justice and equity, these visions were deferred the moment independence had been achieved. This is because the same men who had promised to liberate women turned around to perfect and improve the colonial system with all its oppressive and unjust systems. Some scholars have concluded that while colonialism brought many transformations across the continent of Africa, it failed to challenge patriarchy and the post-colonial phase altered this even less. Consequently, Walker (1990: 180) concludes that gender ideologies of the coloniser and the colonised converged over the question of women.

CHAPTER 7: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

I do not separate my scientific inquiry from my life. For me, it is really a quest for life, to understand life and to create what I call living knowledge; knowledge which is valid for the people with whom I work and for myself (Marja-Liisa Swatz cited in Reason and Bradbury 2001).

7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed description of and motivation for the choice of the research design and methodology. It further outlines the research setting, offers a discussion on the choice of population and sampling procedures used and data collection and analysis techniques employed in this inquiry. Designing a well-thought-out research plan is often cumbersome and requires due diligence at every stage of planning. This is especially true when research is action based, aiming to effect social and sometimes political change [transformation] through cyclical stages of planning, execution and reflection (Lewin 1946). This chapter offers a discussion of the research design, research methodology, data collection and analysis used for execution of this inquiry. The subject of methodology in peace research is broad and complex and this is in part because peace research, and action research specifically is a multidisciplinary subject that uses a diverse set of disciplinary and methodological tools and perspectives to investigate and study social and political problems. Chivasa (2017) notes that although peacebuilding is a relatively new concept, it has grown rich in literature though it still remains poor in theory. This is partly because peacebuilding theories are not validated independently and then applied to practice, but instead are validated inductively through practice (Elliot 1991).

7.2 Research Design: Setting the Stage

This section articulates how the inquiry was conceived and executed while simultaneously explaining the philosophical framework within which the inquiry was conceived. This study is philosophically grounded within a participatory approach²². The purpose of my inquiry was to ‘give peace a local address’ through working with local people in communities to develop capacities for promoting inclusive peacebuilding approaches through creation of a local peace

²² For Creswell (2014), the ontological assumption that undergirds studies framed within a participatory framework is that researchers believe that social inquiry is intertwined with politics and a political agenda. The research therefore must contain an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of participants and the communities they live and work in, as well as transforming the researcher’s life (see reflective sections).

infrastructure covering four community wards in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Rightfully, I conceive of this inquiry as constituting building blocks towards advocating for inclusive and democratic peace efforts in Zimbabwe that resist systemic marginalisation and domination in all its manifestations.

Participatory approaches arose in the late 1980s and early 1990s largely from practitioners who felt disenchanted with structural limitations (laws and theories) associated with the post-positivist approach. They argued that the theoretical orientation of the post-positivist approach often failed marginalised individuals and groups through its inability to tackle issues of social injustice (Creswell 2014). Notable advocates of the advocacy and participatory approach include Marx, Ardoni, Habermas, Marcuse, and Freire (Nueman 2000). More recent writers include Fay (1987), Reason and Bradbury (2001; 2008), Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998) and Kaye and Harris (2017; 2018).

This inquiry is informed by an action research design guided by a qualitative research methodology. It is exploratory and seeks to investigate the possibilities of using an informal peace infrastructure to democratise peacebuilding in Zimbabwe through overcoming structural barriers that hinder participation by marginalised groups. Action research at least in the field of peace research is slowly beginning to gain traction. The Durban University of Technology's (DUT's) Peacebuilding Programme, which is tailor-made for graduate students is one of the few programmes on the continent promoting and encouraging the use of action research to solve community problems. The advantage of applying action research to social problems is that it brings a balance between action and reflection which, according to Kaye and Harris (2018: 63), resolves two common but familiar problems in research – an overemphasis on data collection and or on action without adequate foundations (see section 7.5).

A research design serves two complimentary but different functions. The first relates to the identification and development of procedures and logistical arrangements required to undertake research inquiry of any type. The second highlights the importance of quality in these procedures to ensure validity, reliability and accuracy (Kumar R. 2011: 94). I return to these concepts later in this chapter. Below I offer a few definitions which are critical in providing a context to the way I chose to conduct my action research.

Mouton (2000) defines research design as a plan or blueprint detailing how a researcher intends to conduct research. Similarly, Creswell (2014: 12) defines research designs as “types of inquiry that provide specific direction for procedures in a research design”. Denzin and Lincoln

(2011) refer to them as “strategies of inquiry”. Kumar R (2011: 93) identifies three different but related questions that constitute a good research design.

- i. What procedures are you adopting to obtain answers to the research questions posed?
- ii. How do you carry out the tasks needed to complete the different components of the research process?
- iii. What should you as a researcher do and not do in the process of undertaking the study?

Throughout this inquiry, I constantly reflected on these questions to plan, design, and execute my research. The advantage of reflecting on these questions is that they helped me refine the purpose of my research. The methodology aspect of this research covers issues regarding the philosophical framework for action research as well as the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the research. By this, I refer to the action research design, population and sample population, the data collection instruments and data analysis as well as ethical considerations that guided this inquiry from infancy to maturity. I expand on these aspects in subsequent sections.

7.3 Action Research: A History

In attempting to provide an historical outline of action research, I am fully aware that history is first and foremost political and thus can be written in many ways and that it is almost impossible for anyone to write a definitive history. I also believe that it is not possible to present and provide a completely objective account of the development of action research. Because of these limitations, what I therefore refer to as “a history of action research” is in fact a genealogy of action research as I have come to understand it.

Action research has a long history dating back to at least the 12th century and has been applied and practiced in many diverse fields from indigenous land rights, green and conservation activism, and disease prevention, as well as in professional fields such as education, health and agriculture (Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon 2014). While action research is believed to have many origins, it has its roots in the work of easily distinguishable scholars among them Kurt Lewin, believed to be one of the founders of psychology whose research on workplace democracy informed action research approaches, and Paulo Freire whose work on consciousness cuts across various schools of liberation thought notably Marxism and Feminism (Kaye and Harris 2018; Coghlan and Brannick 2005; Castello 2007).

Some trace its roots through intellectuals like Gramsci and Karl Marx whose radical theorising sought to transform the world (Castello 2007). Put in simpler terms, action research involves collaborative cyclical processes of diagnosing change situations or problems, planning, data gathering, taking action and then fact finding about the results of that action (reflection) in order to plan and take further action (Lewin 1946 cited in Coghlan and Brannick 2005; Dickens and Watkins 1999).

Action research has gained popularity in recent years across disciplines. For example, DUT's Peacebuilding Programme boasts a rich and diverse student population interested in making positive contributions to society through practical research. With emphasis on applied research, the Peacebuilding Programme is interested in bridging the gap between academia and practice. The attempt to bridge this gap is particularly important given the chasm and disconnect that exists between action researchers on the one hand and policy makers on the other. DUT's Peacebuilding Programme places a premium on doing research *with* rather than *for*. By combining research and action, the Peacebuilding Programme aims to create change catalysts who use research for positive social transformation.

Action research refers to a family of related approaches that integrate theory and action with the goal of addressing social problems together with those who experience them (Kaye and Harris 2017; 2018). The primary purpose of action research therefore is to produce practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday conduct of their lives (Reason and Bradbury 2001; Bradbury-Huang 2010). Action research is an approach to research whose aim is to act while creating knowledge or theory about action (Kaye and Harris 2018; Coghlan and Brannick 2005). The outcome of action research is therefore both action and research.

Action research is a type or form of inquiry which aims to shift what research looks like, sounds like and feels like towards an inquiry that is both humanising and empowering. Put differently, action research places emphasis on doing research *with* people instead of *on* or *to* people. It is a participant-centred methodology where researchers work collaboratively with participants (co-researchers) in a cyclical research process involving planning, execution (action) and reflection. Action research places emphasis on practice and problem solving within the broader scope of [social] justice and equality (Kaye and Harris 2017). Greenwood and Levin (2007: 4) refer to action research as research practice with a social change agenda. In other words, action researchers are not only researching issues but are engaged in various forms of social and

political activism. This point is succinctly captured in the quote by Marja-Liisa Swartz at the start of this chapter, which I reproduce here:

I do not separate my scientific inquiry from my life. For me, it is really a quest for life, to understand life and to create what I call living knowledge; knowledge which is valid for the people with whom I work and for myself (Marja-Liisa Swatz in Reason and Bradbury 2001).

At the core of action research is a commitment to democratic social transformation through research, analysis and action design (Greenwood and Levin 2007). Action research rejects the conventional research approach where ‘external experts’ enter the setting to record and represent what is happening. This demonstrates action research’s commitment to democratising knowledge production by seeking ways to recover indigenous forms of knowledge. By democratising knowledge production and dissemination, action research rescues knowledge from the confines of a select few (Gaventa and Cornwall 2001). Action research is therefore distinguishable from other forms of social inquiry in that it places emphasis on the combination of three important elements: action, research, and democratic collaborative participation.

7.4 Philosophical and Methodological Framing in Action Research

The philosophy of science has produced useful principles relating to epistemology and ontology which together constitute the philosophical underpinnings of reasonable knowledge or theory (Reason and Bradbury 2001). As such epistemology (grounds for knowledge) and ontology (nature of the world) can be assessed along an arbitrary continuum moving from an objectivist (realist) to a subjectivist (relativist) perspective. Action researchers’ epistemological and ontological perspectives influence how they conduct research.

An objectivist epistemology accepts the possibility of theory-neutral language, for example that it is possible to access the external world from an objective viewpoint. On the contrary, a subjectivist view denies this possibility. Similarly, an objectivist ontology assumes that social and natural reality have an independent existence prior to human cognition whereas a subjectivist ontology dictates that we regard reality as being the output of human cognitive processes (Johnson and Duberley 2000).

Because different epistemological and ontological standpoints encourage different kinds of reflexivity, it must not surprise us that we have different types of reflexivity. Reflexivity in

social science is a concept used to explore and deal with the relationship between the researcher and the ‘object of research’. However, it is important to note that reflexivity and reflection in research do not imply the same thing. The latter refers to thinking about the conditions surrounding what one is doing, and investigating the way in which theoretical, cultural and political contexts of individuals or their intellectual involvement affect interaction, whatever is being researched (Alvesson and Skoldberg 2000). This usually happens in ways that are difficult to become conscious of.

7.4.1 Critical Realism Approach

Critical realism informs several pragmatic approaches that belong to the growing family of action research approaches. Critical realism follows a subjective epistemology like the hermeneutic tradition but with an objective ontology like the positivists. Informed by epistemic reflexivity, critical realism looks at exposing interests and enabling emancipation through self-reflexivity. Put differently, critical realism is an empowering approach whose aim is to transform how we think and feel about research. Critical realism does not see reflexivity as a neutral process but as something socially and historically conditioned. Its proponents further argue that if reflexivity is to be positioned to facilitate change, then it needs to be guided and informed by principles of democratic engagement and a commitment to change (Reason and Bradbury 2001). Because of its empowering and emancipatory nature, including its commitment to change, I chose to ground my study in this approach.

The rationale to adopt PAR for purposes of this research are discussed in Chapter 1 and need only to be briefly brought to light in the context of the present discussion. Some motivating factors include increasing attention being paid to how gender influences not only how people experience conflict but peacebuilding. Research shows that gender plays an important role in how women and men (and girls and boys) experience and respond to conflict and peace. Chivasa’s (2017) study of community driven peace committees in rural Seke, Mashonaland East, Zimbabwe, found that women and youth continue to be sidelined in decision making processes particularly within Village Development Committees and chiefs’ courts (commonly referred to as customary courts). This raises important questions about the sustainability of donor driven peacebuilding processes given not only its gender bias but also its entrenchment in harmful cultural practices that promote subtle forms of violence. Asymmetric power relations have potential to distort even the most benign of processes.

7.5 Participatory Action Research (PAR)

As has been discussed in the introduction, PAR belongs to a family of action research approaches that takes pride in integrating theory and action with the goal of addressing social problems alongside with those who experience the problems (Reason and Bradbury 2008). PAR belongs to a new methodology used mainly in social sciences (Ngwenya 2018). It is a form of inquiry which aims to create participative communities of inquiry in which qualities of engagement, curiosity and question-posing are brought to bear on significant practical issues (Reason and Bradbury 2008: 1). Because of its emphasis on collaboration, action and research, PAR moves away from the traditional practice of viewing researched individuals and communities as sources from which information is merely extracted to viewing them as active participants or co-researchers.

Unlike action research carried out by a researcher with the sole intention to improve their own practice (Ngwenya 2018), PAR involves stakeholders coming together to study a common problem, devise plans to deal with it and implementing the plans in a collaborative and democratic process devoid of power hierarchies. PAR therefore subscribes to the notion of 'Nothing for Us Without Us'. As mentioned before, the approach in PAR is to treat participants (co-researchers) as partners in the creation and validation of knowledge. Also, the aim is not just to describe a problem but to formulate ways of bringing about positive social change (Cahill 2007). Because of this, PAR is intentionally political in that it resists oppression and marginalisation of social groups. It positions itself as a catalyst for social change in the name of justice and equality. This point is succinctly captured by Nelson and Mitchell (2008: 589) who argue that "at the heart of PAR is emancipation, empowerment, participatory democracy and the elimination of social ills".

PAR occupies itself with addressing power imbalances in society and its starting point is collaborative research. Power as we have come to understand it through the work of Foucault (1982) can either be used *over* others to dominate them or *with* others to empower them. PAR seeks to use power in the latter sense. Guishard (2009: 81) sees PAR as deliberately seeking to address what he calls the "politics of knowledge production". This means that PAR researchers and co-researchers co-generate knowledge through collaborative communicative processes in which everyone's views are not only taken seriously but are equally valid and appreciated (Greenwood and Levin 1998).

I must acknowledge from the onset that prior to commencing my doctoral studies, I had no prior experience nor full understanding of action research beyond the few times I had come across the phrase in my master's course on Research Methodology. The only time I found myself reading extensively on the subject was after enrolling for doctoral studies at DUT. After extensive reading around action research and with the guidance of and encouragement from my supervisors, I began seeing the relevance and practicability of using PAR for my research inquiry. My choice was influenced and motivated by several interrelated factors, among them the fact that PAR is a systematic inquiry that works in close collaboration with those affected by issues an inquiry seeks to understand and resolve. This way, PAR becomes an empowering paradigm. Second, PAR is concerned not only with generation or creating new knowledge but also with taking collaborative action to address social problems. These distinctive advantages made PAR particularly attractive for this inquiry. PAR's utility for purposes of this study lay in its ability to link research with action to bring about positive social change – moving the needle of change.

I could have used other research designs for this study, for example a social constructivist or pragmatic approach, but PAR's ability to bring together stakeholders gave it an advantage over other research designs since my study sought to create a new practice (Whyte 1991). The emancipatory agenda of PAR also made it very attractive for my study. PAR helps unshackle people from the constraints of irrational and unjust structures that limit self-development and self-determination. Part of this study's aim was to create political debate and discussion on how envisioned change can be implemented.

Letts *et al.* (2007 cited in Chivasa 2017) see PAR as involving individuals or groups researching their own personal beings, socio-cultural settings and experiences. Together they reflect on their values, shared realities, collective meanings, needs and goals. PAR's emphasis is on the ownership of the research process right from the design stage, through implementation and evaluation of the outcome (Ngwenya 2018; Chivasa 2017; Kaye and Harris 2017). True to the values and spirit of PAR, co-researchers helped in the formulation of questions, data collection and data analysis.

7.6 Population and Sampling Procedure

7.6.1 Study Population and Setting

Figure 7.1: Map of Zimbabwe



Source: ACCORD www.accord.org.za

The study utilised purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to identify respondents for in-depth individual interviews and for focus group discussions. Snowball sampling helped to identify grassroots peacebuilding groups, civil society leaders, community leaders, government officials, and other peacebuilding stakeholders unknown to the researcher at the time. The study sample size consisted of a total of 46 respondents. The study relied on four focus group discussions (FGDs) comprising 38 participants drawn from four wards within the city of Bulawayo as well as eight in-depth interviews with experts (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1: Wards from where participants were drawn

Ward No	Constituent/ suburb	Responsible Political Party
7	Makokoba, Thorngrove Industries, Thorngrove Rented, Thorngrove, Westgate, Steeldale, Westondale	MDC A
8	Barbourfields, Mzilikazi, Nguboyenja, Thorngrove Infill including Burombo Flats	MDC A

16	Enqameni, Luveve 1, 2 and 3, Gwabalanda Extension, Luveve North	MDC A
28	Cowdray Park Phase 1, 2, 3 and 4	ZANU-PF

Bulawayo is located in the south-west of the country. It is Zimbabwe's second largest city and has five districts namely: Bulawayo Central, Imbizo, Khami, Mzilikazi and Reigate. Politically, the city is divided into twelve House of Assembly constituencies. Historically an 'Ndebele capital', contemporary Bulawayo is now a multicultural and multiracial metropole. It was founded by the Ndebele monarch uMzilikazi kaMatshobana around 1840 after the Ndebele great trek from Zululand (now KwaZulu-Natal). In 1893 King Lobengula was attacked by Cecil John Rhodes' British South Africa Company (BASC) forcing him to flee his burning capital by further retreating to the north towards the Zambezi River.

In 1893 Leander Starr Jameson declared Bulawayo a settlement under the rule of BSAC ordering a new settlement to be built on the ruins of what was left of Lobengula's royal town. This symbolic act signified BASC's conquest of the Ndebele and a victory for the white colonialists. In 1897 Bulawayo acquired the status of a municipality with Col. Harry White as its first mayor. From 1897 going forward Bulawayo became an economic hub in Southern Rhodesia with the region attracting cheap labour to work in its sprouting industries hence the colloquial 'KoNthuthu Ziyathunqa' (the place of persistent industrial smoke).

Administratively, the city of Bulawayo is run by an Executive Mayor elected based on universal suffrage and a council made up of representatives elected on a ward-based system. There are 29 wards in the city, each represented by a councillor. The local authorities in the city have authority over quite a significant number of infrastructures and services. The city has a very serious disproportionality in the gender representation at the local government level, with only eight females out of the 29 councilors. This reflects marginal female participation in local government.

Municipalities across the country are governed by the provisions of the Urban Council's Act (Chapter. 29:15) which states that they shall be governed by a Council. The Act provides that the number of councilors shall not be less than six but there is no upper limit imposed. A council area may be divided into wards with a prescribed number of councilors for each ward. The Act also provides for two systems of election. The first is that of the annual election of councilors

(retiring by rotation) for the chairpersonship of the council committees. The second is the general election of the councilors every four years. In Bulawayo both the systems are in use.

The city of Bulawayo presently has 29 councilors who each serve a period of four years and are eligible to serve for two terms. Qualifications for election as a councilor are set out in the Urban Council's Act. For instance, for one to stand as a candidate for councilor, the candidate must be enrolled on the voters roll and above the age of 21. In addition, the candidate's name must also appear on the national voters roll and the individual must be either an occupier of property or owner of rentable property within the council area concerned.

Two factors made Bulawayo an ideal study location for this inquiry. Firstly, the diversity and plurality of its population meant that I was able to capture diverse views that reflect Zimbabwe's demographic diversity quickly. Secondly, because Bulawayo is my hometown, I utilised preexisting networks to facilitate my 'entry' and 're-entry' into the field as well as arrange interviews with known persons working on peace related matters. As a Ndebele researcher and ethnographer, my identity and closeness to the field helped me to study in greater detail the everyday experiences of research participants in ways that may not have been possible for a non-native. My ethnic identity alongside my ability to understand deeper and the cultural meanings of certain words and phrases was extremely beneficial. Collectively, these advantages afforded me opportunities to understand my research environment better.

7.6.2 Sampling Procedure

Most participants were identified through purposive convenience sampling. Snowballing was employed to access key people recommended to me by participants. Bernard (2002) and Lewis and Sheppard (2006) define purposive sampling as a non-random sampling technique where a principal researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can willingly provide information by virtue of their knowledge and experience. For this inquiry, I purposively selected participants based on two criteria: grassroots leaders with whom I have had previous contact.

I had worked with some potential participants on an international project on African elections. Besides electoral work they were actively involved in other community development programmes including but not limited to violence prevention, conflict resolution and mediation. One of them was a vocal grassroots leader who has had numerous run-ins with law

enforcement officers for their activism on issues affecting Bulawayo and Matabeleland. Other participants were deliberately selected participants based on their knowledge of and experience in community and grassroots peacebuilding processes while some were chosen based on their expertise and knowledge of peacebuilding.

I also elected to interview academics and lecturers based at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) and Lupane State University (LSU). Both institutions are state owned and publicly funded institutions of higher learning serving Matabeleland province. For Robinson (1993), sampling is an important aspect of life in general and social inquiry. Uys and Puttergil (2003: 107-108) succinctly sum up the purpose of a research design as being a strategy to optimise use of resources; coming up with a sample is one of the ways of achieving optimal use of resources which are usually scarce. Developing an appropriate sampling technique allowed me to obtain rich and informative data albeit on a small budget.

7.7 Data Collection

Data collection for this inquiry included field-based primary sources drawn from a qualitative design: observation, in person, in-depth interviews (IDIs) with experts, academics, civil society leaders, activities and peace practitioners. I also used focus group discussions (FGDs) and document analysis combined with extant secondary source materials. Data for IDIs were generated from first-hand informants including religious leaders, representatives of community organisations, and interactions with participants at community workshops, community meetings, funerals and religious and political gatherings. Participants were accessed using purposive convenience sampling and snowballing.

7.7.1 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

For this inquiry, I conducted four FGDs each with between 8-10 participants. FGDs are a format in qualitative research in which attitudes, opinions or perceptions towards an issue, product or service can be explored through free and open discussions between members of a group and a researcher (Kumar R. 2011: 127-8). FGDs are principally guided discussions where a researcher (or a group member in the case of PAR) raises issues and asks questions that stimulate discussion among group members. For purposes of this inquiry FGDs provided an opportunity to reach out to individuals who are not part of the national conversation on peacebuilding in Zimbabwe and represent missing voices on peace processes.

The FGDs were structured around a topic developed during a research planning session held in December 2019 and participants were selected from among women and men mobilised by two partner organisations involved in grassroots peace work in communities within Bulawayo (Figure 8.2). Participants were drawn from different communities within Bulawayo. This was done to obtain a cross section of targeted social groups and to capture significant variations and similarities that may exist along these variables. Research questions were further refined with the action research team during the research planning process and elaborated through FGD topic guides. We expected that these questions would generate evidence that would nuance, productively complicate and effectively interrogate narratives about gender and peacebuilding within the Zimbabwean context.

I was attracted to FGDs because, compared with other designs, FGDs are less expensive and need far less time to complete. This was particularly important for me because I was working with a small research budget which required me to be optimal and highly efficient in the conduct of the research. Using FGDs enabled me to gather detailed and rich information in a relatively short period. The information gathered from FGDs also enabled me to explore a vast variety of issues pertinent to this study that I would not have been able to gather using other methods. During group sessions I guarded against the tendency of FGDs to reflect the views and opinions of domineering members. In this regard I encouraged everyone to feel free to participate in the discussions. In some groups, participants even suggested that we formulate ‘group rules’ to guide discussions, such as the need to respect others’ views and give everyone an equal opportunity to talk with little to no interruption.

Table 7.2: FGDs participant bio-data

Age range	No of M participants	No of F participants	Total	%
20-25	2	4	6	15.8
26-30	6	8	14	37
31-35	3	5	8	21
36-40	0	2	2	5.2
40+	5	3	8	21
Total	17	21	38	100

7.7.2 In-Depth Interviews (IDIs)

Eight IDIs were conducted with key resource persons with an aptitude for and experience in peacebuilding and grassroots work in the country. Participants were drawn from peacebuilding groups, organisation leaders, community leaders, media, government officials and academic and research institutes. Kumar R (2011) defines interviews as being an interaction between two or more individuals with a specific focus. Put differently, interviews are conversations with both an intention and purpose. In-depth interviewing is a technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on an issue. Deploying in-depth interviewing allowed me the freedom to think through and formulate questions as they arose and the freedom to order questions in whatever sequence I wanted to, depending on the nature and flow of the interview. Respondents were unrestricted regarding how to answer questions which enabled me to raise issues on the spur of the moment, depending on the context of the discussion. The ability to explain and clarify questions made the interactions rich and insightful.

IDIs helped me to gather information from community leaders, policy makers, academics and those who work with women and are involved in civic engagement for peace. The interviewees were prominent members of the community who were able to verify information emerging from other sources but also provide insights into community dynamics based on their extensive experience. Over a 12 to 18-month period I conducted eight in-depth interviews and four FGDs as summarised in *Table 8.3* (also see Appendices 1 & 2 for the guiding questions used for IDIs and FGDs). The data generated was triangulated by means of a review of government reports, news reports, press releases and reliable online sources. These were thematically analysed and critical findings presented in a validation workshop in February 2021. Although the intention was to conduct at least two in-person validation workshops in Bulawayo, COVID-19 related challenges prevented this from happening such that the validation workshop had to be conducted online, with fewer participants.

Table 7.3: In-depth interviews bio data

Interview No	Sex	Sector
1	Female	Civil society + works for a local NGO
2	Female	Academia + media
3	Male	Political party + policy maker

4	Female	Civil society + activism
5	Male	Retired from public service and now in academia
6	Male	Civil society (founder of a local NGO)
7	Female	Quasi-civil society (NPRC)
8	Female	Academia

7.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis involved making sense of the data gathered by carefully studying the data and developing themes. Thematic analysis involved breaking down the huge volume of data into common sub-themes. This enabled the action team to move deeper and deeper into understanding the data and making sense of the data (Creswell 2014). Data analysis involved an on-going process of continuous reflection on the data by means of asking analytical questions and in some instances writing memos throughout the research. In our case it required asking general questions and developing an analysis from the information supplied by participants. Interpretation of findings in qualitative research can assume many forms and can be adapted for different types of designs. However, the interpretation must be flexible enough to convey personal and research-based meanings. Walcott (1994) notes that most participatory interpretations tend to ask further questions at the conclusion of the research.

To understand the lived experience of participants, I adopted an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) note that IPA is an analytic tool that helps researchers make sense of individual and group experience within the societies and communities in which participants live. IPA draws on principles of various orientations such as phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ideography (Pietkiewicz and Smith 2012). The central tenet of IPA is the identification of components of phenomena or experiences which make them unique from others (Pietkiewicz and Smith 2012: 362). A central premise of IPA is how people talk and narrate their everyday experiences. For this study, IPA helped to explore how individuals, groups and communities interact with their everyday realities as they navigate life.

Main units of analysis were FGDs, observation, and interview data. Data coding and organisation entailed identifying, summarising, explicating and structuring emerging themes or patterns that addressed the research questions, using coding sheets. Analysis also involved looking for connections between conceptual categories emerging from the data, by carefully

examining whether any of the concepts relate to the literature section. To draw meaningful conclusions from the data, I made inferences and reconstructed meanings from the data by exploring the attributes of the different data sets. Relationships between data categories were noted. Quotations considered key to addressing the research questions are incorporated in the analysis although I remained mindful of Patton's advice that one should 'strive for balance between description and interpretation' Patton (2002 cited in Zhang and Wildemuth 2009).

The analysis was completed in three phases. In the first stage, I distinguished key ideas using content examination and a mind-mapping process that involved developing a conceptual framework to organise the data. The action team and I examined and coded a selected number of transcripts, then compared the codes against the domains integrated into the interview protocol as demonstrated in the three phases of analysis. In this stage, two cycles of coding were conducted: in the first one, all transcripts were revised, and initially coded, and key concepts were identified throughout the full data set. The second cycle comprised an in-depth exploration and creation of additional categories to generate a codebook. The codebook was a condensed document comprising all the perceptions singled out as primary to the study.

The second stage of analysis involved comparing participants' experiences, perspectives, and attitudes. The third and final stage of analysis sought to produce a theory-driven perspective and provide an in-depth understanding of the role of peace infrastructures in community peacebuilding initiatives. Here, data were coded into categories using the five thematic areas generated from the research questions. For added clarity, both the codes and the quotations were additionally examined throughout the content and thematic analyses. Thematic analysis was constructed from these variables.

During analysis, memos were written as coding unfolded based on emerging ideas and themes. These codes were later clustered into thematic sections and further analysed to demonstrate the general meaning. The memos were assembled with the new themes into the findings. This enabled the researcher to establish coding categories based on actual themes visible in the data. This was followed by an analysis of these themes to seek patterns and find the themes that were most common (Merriam, 2002). Coding is the process of qualitative data analysis, which includes open coding and closed coding. The former consists of discovering common themes and the latter consists of establishing coding categories.

Table 8.4 is a summary of the research design.

Table 7.4: Research design summary

Research Focus	Methods of data collection	No of IDIs and FGDs	Background of participants
To identify and understand conditions that promote successful conflict intervention at grassroots level and second, determine the extent to which such interventions help to positively transform conflicts	Field data from IDIs, FGDs and document analysis of media outlets, official government reports, press releases and extensive review of relevant literature	Eight in-depth interviews were conducted with selected individuals and four FGDs with participants over an 18-month period	Civil society leaders, politicians, academia, community activists, peacebuilding practitioners, community leaders, human rights defenders, community members

7.8.1 How I Dealt with Questions of Quality and Rigour in Action Research?

The important question to address in respect to quality control and rigour in action research is the following question: how can we as action researchers ensure that our work and interventions bring about the envisioned change and desired outcome[s] whilst preserving the academic rigour of the discipline? This question is particularly pertinent when one undertakes research for purposes of acquiring an academic qualification, and in my case a PhD qualification. Quite frankly, these are not easy questions to answer without thinking deeply about what constitutes action research. This is because it is extremely crucial that research of any kind produces sound and credible results, regarding the process as important as the outcome. To reflect on the question I posed earlier, I draw extensively from the work of Robson (2002) and Greenwood and Levin (2007).

Robson (2002) poses four important questions that we as action researchers must ask when attempting to convince others that our work is credible and valid. I illustrate these questions diagrammatically in Figure 7.2.

Figure 7.2: Credibility test in action research



Ideally, these questions are answered by concepts usually, although not exclusively, associated with traditional research. I introduce these terms in Table 7.5 and explain how these concepts are justified in studies that are action oriented.

Table 7.5: Credibility and validity in action research

	Action Research	Justification
Validity	Are the solutions arrived at workable and can the envisioned transformation be implemented?	Because an action research paradigm has its own quality criteria it would be unwise and methodologically fatal to seek to judge action research by the criteria used in positivist science
Generalizability	Extent to which the findings of an inquiry can be applicable outside the specifics of the situation studied	Action researcher is less concerned about results being generalisable as this is not the motivation for any inquiry. Generalizability usually does not feature prominently in action research studies
Reliability	Consistency or stability of a measure; for example, if the study was repeated elsewhere, would it still produce the same results?	

As can be gleaned from the table above, validity is largely concerned with whether the findings are “really about what they appear to be about” (Robson 2002: 93) or in Bell’s words (2015: 104) “whether an item measures or describes what it is supposed to measure and describe”. In action research, the interpretation is more nuanced, and our concern is whether solutions arrived at are workable and if the envisioned transformation can be implemented (Greenwood and Levin 2007). Action researchers argue that because action research has its own quality criteria it would be unwise and methodologically fatal to seek to judge action research by the criteria used in positivist science. Reason and Bradbury (2001) list the following (Textbox 7.6) as important considerations when ascertaining quality and rigour in action research.

Textbox 7.6: Quality and rigour in action research

- I. Is the action research explicit in developing a praxis of relational participation? In other words, how well does action research reflect the cooperation between the action researcher and his/her constituency?
- II. Is action research guided by a reflective concern for practical outcomes? Put differently, is action research governed by constant and iterative reflection as part of the process of change and or transformation?
- III. Does action research include a plurality of knowing which ensures conceptual-theoretical integrity, extends our ways of knowing and has methodological appropriateness? This is because action research is an inclusive process comprising practical, propositional, presentational, experiential knowing and so as a methodology, it is appropriate to furthering knowledge on different levels.
- IV. Does action research engage in significant work? The significance of the project is an important quality in action research.
- V. Finally, does the action research result in new and enduring infrastructures? In other words, how sustainable is the project?

Source: Reason and Bradbury (2001)

According to Robson (2002), reliability refers to the consistency or stability of a measure; for instance, if a study was to be repeated elsewhere, would it still produce the same results? On the other hand, generalisability refers to the extent to which the findings of an inquiry can be applicable outside the specifics of the situation studied. On both accounts, it is important to reiterate that as action researchers, we are less concerned about our results being generalisable as this is not the motivation behind our inquiries and therefore generalisability does not feature prominently in action research studies. Rather, our concern is whether solutions arrived at

work. If these conditions are met, action research studies would have satisfied the rigour and validity tests.

7.8.2 Overcoming Threats to Validity and Credibility in Action Research

Credibility in social science research refers to arguments and processes necessary for having someone trust the research results. Like in any other discipline, it is important for research results in action research studies to be trustworthy. As pointed out earlier, results of action research studies must be judged in terms of the workability of the solutions arrived at. But what does workability entail in the context of action research? Workability entails whether a solution can be identified as solution to the initial problem or whether revision of the interpretation or redesign of the action is required? (Greenwood and Levine 2007). This judgement must be made collectively by knowledgeable participants regarding the outcomes of a collective social action. Social judgement is itself the result of a democratic conversation in which the professional researcher has only one vote (Greenwood and Levine 2007).

There are two types of credible knowledge in any action research study, namely, internal and external credibility. Internal credibility refers to internal knowledge applicable to the group generating it. It is realised from a collaborative process and its direct consequence is altered patterns of social action that constitute a credibility test (Greenwood and Levine 2007). It is common cause that members of a community or organisation are unlikely to accept as credible the objective theories of outsiders if they cannot recognise their own connection to the situation. We achieved this by conducting a validation workshop to assess the impact of our intervention. As was seen, most action team members rated the intervention positively against the evaluation criteria.

External credibility on the other hand involves external judgements; for example, is the knowledge arising from the research convincing enough to someone who did not participate in the inquiry? Put differently, are the results believable? (Greenwood and Levine 2007: 67). However, this is a very complex matter on its own, in part because action research depends on the conjugation of reflection and action and the co-generation of knowledge in specific contexts. This means that effectively conveying the credibility of this knowledge to an outsider may prove to be an uphill task.

Because action researchers must undertake attempts to ensure that work is believable and trustworthy, we prolonged our involvement in the study communities, spending 18 months in

the field. We also undertook a validation workshop towards the end of the research process to evaluate ourselves. While Robson (2002) argues that prolonged engagement raises questions of researcher bias, I found prolonged field engagement to be beneficial for the purpose of this study because it allowed me a deeper connection with participants which enabled transformation of power relationships in the direction of greater democracy associated with participatory research. Since action research studies are generally much longer, triangulation of data collection methods helped to overcome threats associated with results not meeting validity and credibility tests. In my case, this involved the use of multiple data collection methods from IDIs, FGDs and an extant review of relevant literature including media scanning.

7.8.3 Dealing with Subjectivity in PAR

According to McNiff and Whitehead (2000), positivist forms of research are deemed to be value-free. This means that the researcher tries to ‘stay out’ of the research to avoid ‘contaminating’ it. For instance, reports are written in the third person to reduce or guard against bias while enhancing objectivity associated with positivist practice. However, in action research studies subjectivity is not only accepted but taken for granted (Ngwenya 2018). Within the interpretivist methodology which I employed in this study, subjectivity refers to one’s conscious and unconscious thoughts and notions of individuality as well as one’s sense of oneself and way of understanding one’s relation with the world (Cahill 2007: 269).

In contrast to positivist science, action research studies are intentionally value-laden and do not try to be neutral as required by traditional forms of research. As action researchers, we accept that our values and experiences influence how we perceive the world which in turn influences how we conduct our inquiries. Action research studies are therefore premised on the belief that people – more so those who have experienced historic oppression – have a deep understanding and knowledge of their lives and experience and thus form an integral part of the research process, from formulation of questions to interpretation and validation of research outcomes.

7.9 Ethical Considerations

This study followed and complied with the DUT ethical code of conduct including seeking informed consent (through written letters explaining purpose of the study) (Appendix 1) and assuring participants that participation was completely voluntary and that there would be no repercussions for withdrawal at any point of the research when participants felt uncomfortable. As the principal researcher in the project, I also made all reasonable efforts to observe the ‘do

no harm' principle of research. I did this in numerous ways which included not revealing information that could potentially endanger participants and co-researchers' lives, friendships or families.

In the spirit of participatory research, I made every effort to shift power dynamics and redistribute power by affording participants space to communicate their stories rather than leaving this responsibility to a well-meaning researcher. I also actively encouraged honest and genuine engagement by taking seriously input from participants. In some instances, I made changes to some aspects of the research plan in order to accommodate and reflect suggestions made by the team. In some cases, this proved difficult as I already had a research plan approved by the Faculty Research Office (FRO) but in the spirit of participatory research I tried to remain as accommodative and open as possible. For me, this was also liberating in the sense that it allowed me to cede 'power' to the group thereby bridging the power hierarchy that often characterises traditional research.

I also made available to co-researchers and participants any data collected during the research process which included data transcripts, audio recordings and other works produced during the research period. I emphasised and assured the research team that they were free to use this information in any way to meet either own or group objectives provided they all agreed on what to use the data for. Where possible and in line with the spirit of participatory research, group opinion was sought on the relevant parts of the report write up through providing them with summaries of findings or discussing emerging issues through a WhatsApp group which was created specifically for this purpose.

As principal researcher in the project, I endeavored to ensure that all work undertaken during and after the research process was motivated by a genuine desire to transform the circumstances of participants rather than solely for the exclusive benefit of obtaining an academic qualification. I believe I remained honest, genuine, truthful, ethical and forthright in my interaction and engagement with participants. I also took the opportunity to unlearn, learn and relearn. Admittedly, the ethics book could not have prepared me for the challenges that I faced once in the field. For instance, how to deal with research extractivism that is blamed for reproducing colonial hierarchies of power where data is extracted from 'field experts' to be analysed and disseminated by 'technical experts' who are leaders in research design, methodology development and deciding what tools to be employed for data collection and analysis.

7.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has carefully explained the research design, context and methodology that informed my study. It elaborated the philosophical assumptions that underpin my study and explained my choice to use PAR as a guiding framework for this study. I also discussed data collecting techniques which included IDIs, FGDs, observation and interviews. My study was framed within a qualitative paradigm because of its strong grounding in interpretivist methodology and inclination towards action research. For a study of this nature a qualitative design was arguably the most appropriate paradigm particularly when the aim was not just to collect data but to bring about change through participative transformative processes.

The chapter also discussed challenges I encountered during data collection and how I sought to navigate ethical dilemmas centered on knowledge coloniality, power hierarchies and asymmetrical power dynamics. While I took all necessary measures to ensure that my research does not violate research ethics, this did not exempt me from having to deal with difficult questions, the majority of which required that I look beyond the ethics booklet for guidance. These experiences are captured in detail the concluding chapter. I offer personal reflections on the research process and share vulnerabilities and uncertainties that come with doing research in conflict sensitive and politically risky environments like Zimbabwe. Such experiences are hardly captured in theses out of fear that reference to them could compromise the robustness of research findings. The next chapter presents and unpacks research findings gathered during fieldwork.

CHAPTER 8: DATA PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

There is so much of bottling up of issues in Zimbabwe. There is so much polarisation because we are so divided. Even as civil society, no one knows who who is. And maybe what we are talking about now is being watched somewhere, such are the suspicions we have of each other! (Excerpt from an interview).

8.1 Introduction

This chapter marks the beginning of the data presentation, discussion and analysis phase. It presents data gathered through interactions with study participants in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, over a 24-month period between November 2019 and December 2021. During this period, I conducted in-depth interviews with different stakeholders, convened four group discussions and a peacebuilding workshop and attended different community events and documented all proceedings in my field journal. This section first offers a brief overview of the research design and later presents findings from the study. Findings are analysed in the light of information gathered through an extensive review of literature on peacebuilding in the country, field notes, participant's evaluation forms and workshop sheets. The kinds of questions asked to generate thick qualitative data included the following: 'what does peace mean to you?', 'who builds peace?', 'what are your needs for sustainable peace?', 'what peace initiatives have you encountered where you live?', 'what challenges are you facing as a peacebuilder in your community?' This data was codified and generated multiple themes including justice, 'reparations' 'marginalisation'. Additional themes such as 'resilience', 'motherhood', 'masculinity', 'femininity' 'empathy' were identified.

Due to the sensitivity of the topic in Zimbabwe and particularly on the back of an increase in human rights violations targeting civil society leaders, activists and community workers, participants in this study requested to remain anonymous. For some, it was due to personal and professional risks involved in participating in a research project of this nature while for others it was about personal security. Participants requested that I maintain the same level of confidentiality for all the material gathered for purposes of this research. In keeping to this request and for this reason, I cite in full only data obtained through on-record interviews and other publicly available data sources, for example newspaper interviews.

For this reason, all the information and quotations for which no complete references are provided came from confidential interviews and observation. In choosing evidence from the

many discussions to illustrate arguments raised here, I select only quotations that express opinions or examples illustrating recurrent experiences. In some instances, I quote individuals who state a widely held opinion with clarity and when necessary, provide information about the individual to give context to the quote. Some respondents' comments are included here at length because of the valuable insights that they provide.

8.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Field research for this study was carried out over 24 months between November 2019 and December 2021. During this period, I conducted in-depth interviews with differently positioned women and men in Bulawayo and attended different community events. I also convened group discussions with research participants from the four wards (see Tables 9.1 and 9.2). During group discussions, participants engaged in experimental activities, small group discussions and group brainstorming sessions. With participants' permission, group proceedings were recorded on audio and video and group sessions tapped, transcribed, and analysed using a qualitative methodology. In total, 46 people participated in this study, 26 of them female and 20 males (see Tables 8.1 and 8.2). Participants were selected using snowballing and purposive sampling. Four focus group discussions were conducted with the first two group discussions conducted in wards 7 and 8 and the remaining two in wards 15 and 16.²³ Field notes, participants' drawings and workshop sheets and participant evaluations provided additional data.

Table 8.1: Research design

Research focus	Methods of data collection	No of IDIs and FGDs	Background of participants
To identify and understand conditions that promote successful conflict intervention at grassroots level and second, determine the extent to which such interventions help to	Field data from IDIs, FGDs, workshop sheets, participant evaluation forms, drawings and field notes and document analysis of media outlets, official government reports, press releases	Eight in depth interviews were conducted with selected individuals and four group with participants over a 24 - month period	Civil society leaders, politicians, academia, community activists, peacebuilding practitioners, community leaders, human rights defenders, community members

²³ See Bulawayo administrative map in Appendix 9.

positively transform conflicts	and extensive review of relevant literature		
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Primary data was supplemented by means of document analysis involving government reports, news reports, press releases and reliable online sources. Qualitative analysis involved taking note of frequently used words and phrases; and phrases and words with a higher frequency constituted a theme. I also paid attention to meanings attached to words and phrases rather than preferences for certain behaviors. Thematic data was analysed, and critical findings presented in a validation workshop with members of the action team in March 2021. Although the intention was to conduct at least two in-person validation workshops in Bulawayo, COVID-19 related challenges prevented this from happening such that the validation workshop had to be conducted online and was limited to the action team. The validation workshop served as a forum to review research findings and to assess the action intervention.

Table 8.2: Data collection timeline

Period	Steps Taken	Data Collection Tools	Purpose
Nov 2019 – Dec 2020	Conflict mapping	interviews + group discussions	To understand the nature of conflicts in the community, prior peacebuilding interventions, challenges and opportunities
Jan 2021 – December 2021	Action team identification	collaborative sessions	Identifying an action research team to work and collaborate with. In total, 8 members were identified
Feb – October 2020	Intervention	training workshop	Collaborated with AVP Network in Bulawayo to provide training to action team members aimed at developing individual, interpersonal and organisational skills to enhance peacebuilding effectiveness. Training lasted three days and covered Basic, Advanced and Training of Trainers certification levels.
June – Nov 2020	Training evaluation	process evaluation	This was done to evaluate whether the workshop had managed to meet the objectives of the intervention programme.

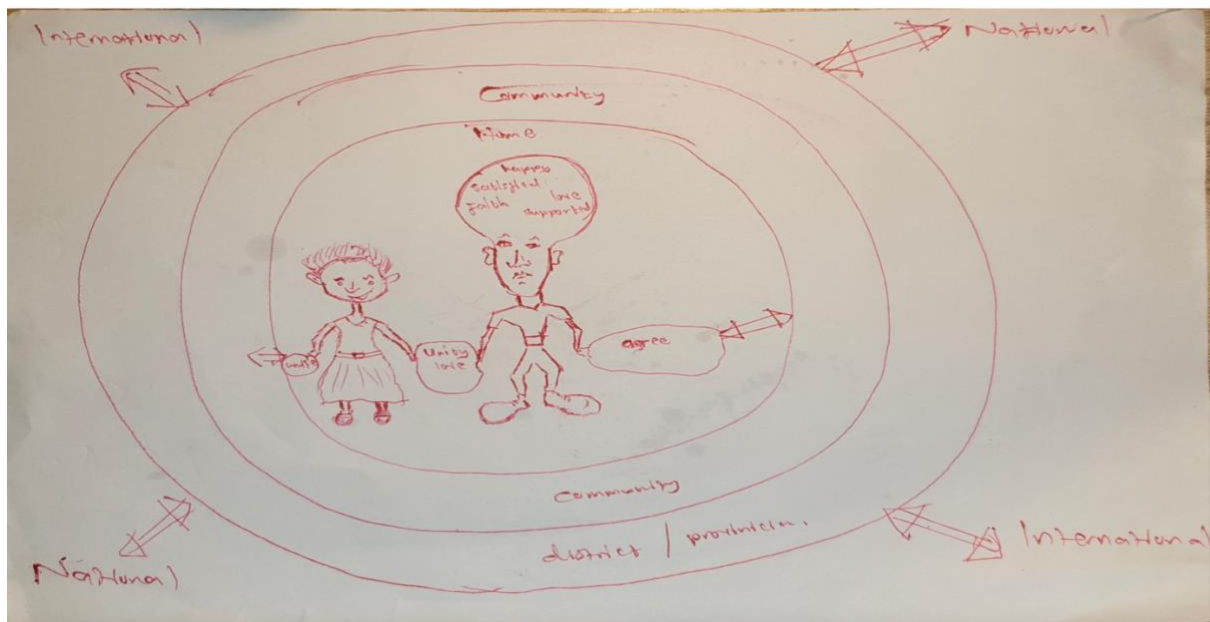
			Participants were happy although some indicated that they would have preferred more training especially on mediation
March 2021 - December	Validation workshop and report write ups	Snapshot survey	Validate outcomes of research

This study generated multiple themes and to situate the proceeding discussion within a broader context, an understanding of the concept of “peacebuilding” from the perspectives of research participants is crucial.

8.3 Meanings of Peacebuilding

Although discussions about peacebuilding most commonly occur within international and mainstream discourse, the use of the term has become pervasive and ubiquitous across different levels including grassroots groups, national NGOs, and UN bodies. How peacebuilding is defined by these actors varies as do the actual process and activities of building peace (Mazurana and McKay 1999). Among international actors, peacebuilding is frequently understood in terms of post-conflict societal reconstruction with little attention paid to cultural factors and gender dynamics of each context. This section outlines the gendered understanding of peacebuilding and how these dynamics are influenced and mediated by gender and context. Among participants in this study, the conception of peace as a process was quite pervasive. However, there was consensus among research participants around the image of peace being a process that is “cyclical and never ending”. A drawing exercise (see image Fig 8.1 and Appendix) that involved small groups that were asked to illustrate meanings of peace and peacebuilding produced images of a symbolic journey with no end in sight as the essence of peacebuilding. Interestingly, the image of a cyclical and never-ending journey was represented in drawings by all groups in the form of a circle, a road, or wheels. The interpretation of the drawings is that while people are involved in different parts of the journey, the goal is to achieve a peace which is a common vision for all. For instance, in the image below, the journey towards peace starts at the level of the family, the cascades to the level of one’s community, district, country and the global level.

Fig. 8.1: Illustration by participant.



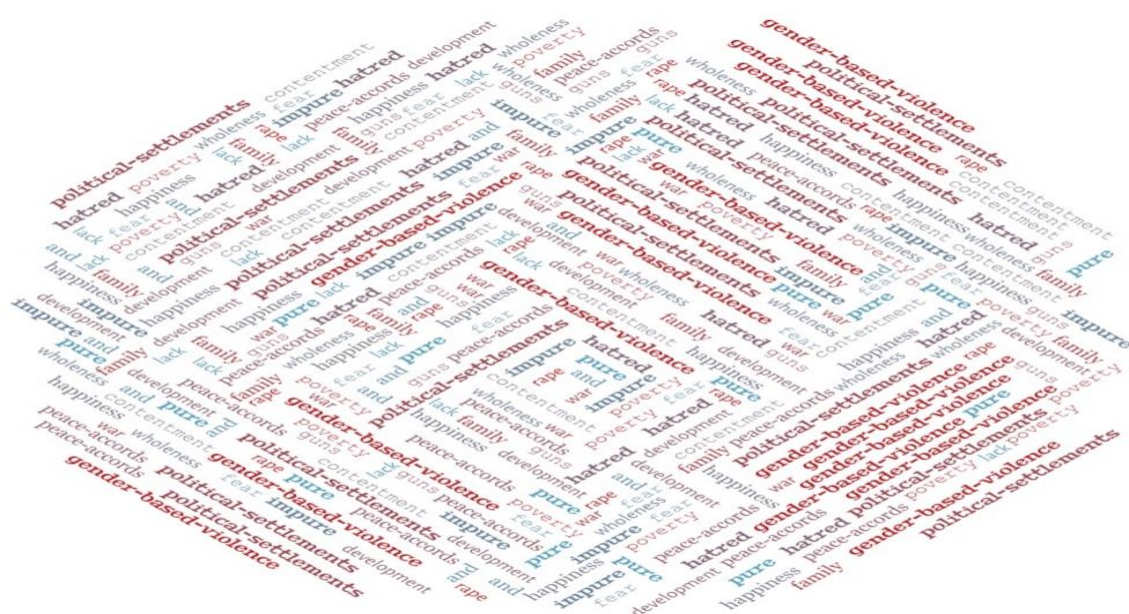
Another critical feature identified by the groups has to do with the notion of peacebuilding being the ability to meet society's and individuals' basic needs. Participants emphasised that peacebuilding entails the satisfaction of basic individual needs such as food, water and shelter. It was pointed out that when individual basic needs are met, society is more likely to develop an appreciation of differences of culture, gender, ethnicity, race and religion. A lengthy discussion ensued on how to address basic individual needs and the relevance for peacebuilding for encouraging a culture of tolerance, respect, and empathy. Furthermore, questions such as which needs ought to be addressed first and if it is possible to address all needs equitably were debated in detail, generating additional nuanced perspectives. Focus on basic needs spoke directly to the most pressing issue in the country – poverty and acute food shortages. A 2021 report by the World Food Programme warned that half the country's population faces extreme hunger, and 4 million Zimbabweans are on the brinks of acute food scarcity.

Another issue that related directly to the context concerned the ability to manage diversity. The ability to manage diversity was seen by participants as necessary to keep the process of peacebuilding moving. Furthermore, as the discussions evolved, participants noted that peace as a process is about the differences between men and women and how they relate to each other. This definition surfaced when domestic and intimate partner violence - one of the most pervasive form of violence in the country (see study on intimate partner violence against women in Zimbabwe by Mukamana, Makachanja and Adjei, 2020) - was discussed. Participants were unanimous in acknowledging that the DVA Act constitutes efforts to enforce

peace. An exercise that involved participants generating a list of words and phrases that women and men each group associate with either peace or conflict was analysed using a qualitative software tool (Atlas.ti). The outcome is a visual representation of words and phrases generated by this software showing the gendered interpretations of peace as shown below (see Fig. 8.1).

Men and women associated peace with “purity”, “wholeness”, “happiness”, “contentment” and conflict with “impurity”, “fear”, “lack”, and “hatred”. Female participants also viewed peace in very personal terms while male participants spoke of peace in very broad terms. For instance, female participants listed words like “development”, “education”, “freedom” “gender-based violence”, “rape”, “family”, “shelter” while common words and phrases among male participants included: “war”, “peace accords”, “career”, “education”, “guns”. This supports findings that while men typically focus on achieving political settlements, with the assumption that peace will ensure post-conflict settlement, women’s vision of peace transcends this narrow interpretation to include sustainable livelihoods, education, truth, healing, justice, and reconciliation. In essence, women’s struggles for peace are inextricably linked to that of the wider society and the protection of human rights. This nuance reflects key challenges in policy formulation where policy agendas only focus on frameworks and themes that play out in a much more inter-connected manner at the level of the community, such as women’s literacy and access to economic resources as necessary prerequisites to participate in peacebuilding.

Fig. 8.2: Field work



This exercise was helpful in that it stimulated debate by integrating different perspectives, challenged prevailing views, and compared experiences and insights on the ground as shown below.

Table 8.3: Analytical framework

Stage I	Stage II	Stage III	Stage IV
Participants generated indicators of peace	Participants followed a two-step verification process where they were added/subtracted indicators and rated indicators by voting to identify the most representative indicators	Action team used indicators as a data gathering tool to inform design of intervention	Action team tracked whether people's perceptions had changed over time

The results of this exercise are presented in Table 8.4.

Table 8.4: Results of analysis

List of indicators	Most representative	Intervention	Changes over time
Freedom from fear, food security, shelter, no wars, political violence and conflicts, education, safety, deepened democratic participation, responsive and efficient local government, sexual and reproductive health rights, job security, freedom from want, non-discrimination, gender equality	Democratic participation, non-discrimination, efficient and responsive local government, security, safety, no political violence	Creating systems to deepen democratic participation and inclusivity	People's perceptions transformed over time. For instance, participants believed the community had power to influence what happens by actively working to promote peace

8.4 Gender and Peacebuilding

The inclusion of domestic and gender-based violence in a discussion on the meanings of peacebuilding may specifically suggest the need for nuance for women in Zimbabwe, this is a crucial concern. As indicated in chapters 1, 2, 4 and 6, definitions of peacebuilding have not sufficiently captured and embraced the significance of gender and cultural factors. Participants showed an awareness of the limitations of current definitions in use by mainstream peacebuilding organisations. This was illustrated by a female participant who noted that:

The framing of peacebuilding by mainstream building organisations and institutions and subsequently the dominance of the field by men casts men as doers and women as either

passive or innocent victims requiring the intervention of men. These essentialist narratives trivialise women's peacebuilding work and it is no surprise that women's peacebuilding work on the ground has not been institutionalised and rarely influences national policy and global norm setting because women's work, experience and ideas remain marginalised and invisible.

This observation was shared by an academic colleague who noted that women in the country have been let down by the government that is yet to formulate a comprehensive gender policy to provide gendered analyses of violent conflict, human rights violations, and peace as mandated by the Transitional Justice Policy of the African Union. In 2013, Zimbabwe's new constitution adopted in May 2013, mandated the creation of independent institutions to facilitate institutional reform as part of the peacebuilding process. Of note in this discussion is the Gender Commission and the Human Rights Commission. Critics note that although these institutions are legally autonomous, they receive funding from the same state apparatus that is implicated in human rights violations.

Discussions further pointed out that men are typically the drivers of peace processes while women are at the peripheries, occupying very tangential roles. Studies by scholars like Jaji, Hudson and Paffenholz have shown that women do not effectively participate in peace processes generally because these spaces tend to be dominated by men who enforce patriarchal beliefs and customs. In contexts of a male dominated and highly patriarchal sociocultural environment as with Zimbabwe, violent conflicts continue to remain highly gendered activities that are treated as a preserve for men, characterised by heightened inequalities and gender imbalances that perpetuate violence and discrimination against women and minorities. Similarly, male dominated spaces about peacebuilding further entrench patriarchy and masculinity in societies already struggling with gender discrimination and inequality. This perspective was aptly articulated by a participant who stated the following:

“Women like me are often obliged to keep a low profile and let men take all the praise for the hard work we put in building peace in our communities. We do this because we don't want to be seen as overstepping our boundaries or encroaching men's headship.”

This partly explains why it is often men and not women who engage in national politics and mainstream peacebuilding involving negotiating and mediating national politics. However, some participants also revealed that privately, especially at family level, older women can unquestionably step into masculine roles. Among the Ndebele in Zimbabwe, it is men, especially the elders who traditionally have the means to make peace through dialogue and mediation platforms (*iz'kundla zabobaba*). But although women are typically excluded from decision making forums where peace accords are negotiated, the position of women in society, especially

elderly women give them the ability to bridge divisions and act as the first channel for dialogue between disputing parties.

Our local women's group was effective in influencing the elders (mostly men) and others to intervene in crisis situations. We used our own networks to mobilise resources and other logistical operations to facilitate peace meetings between ourselves and representatives of political parties. Our efforts caught the attention of UNDP and other donor agencies who became more interested in our approach and asked if they could provide financial resources to scale-up our initiative. Of course, we gladly accepted the offer. They (donors) did not interfere with our operations and helped us gain credibility as mediators.

That women and men experience conflict and peace differently is well documented in literature. For instance, a report published by the Life and Peace Institute found that how men and women define, experience and measure security and peace differently (Life and Peace Institute Report 2018). Additionally, a peace and conflict gender analysis study conducted in the Solomon Islands by UNIFEM (2015) showed that women and men act in and are affected by conflict and peace in different ways. However, what is not immediately clear are the types and forms of justice and peacebuilding pathways preferred by men and women. Similarly, men's and women's roles and experiences are complex and multiple, and do not fit precisely into the stereotypes of women as victims and caregivers, and men as combatants and community leaders. For instance, apart from being caregivers, in many cases when men were killed, women in Solomon Islands became heads of households and were actively engaged in economic production which was viewed as a preserve for men. In some extreme situations, women tend to suffer backlash against any few found freedoms and are expected to return to their traditional gender roles when peace is restored or face new enemies from within: most often these are male relatives who return from war as alcoholics and who have been traumatised or needing psychosocial care and support.

Gender is used here as a relational concept rather than a concept synonymous with women and girls. This approach provides nuance that help to us understand that both males and females are gendered beings with socially constructed gender identities and that most of their identities are constructed in relation to one another and that both are subject to and agents of power relations. A gendered analysis of power relations is an important tool for peacebuilding because it looks at relations between men, between women and men and between women. It also examines the intersectionality of gender with other identity markers and axes of power such as age, class, marital status, sexuality, disability, and ethnic extraction, religious and cultural backgrounds. The statement below from one of the research participants illustrates the different

ways women and men experience conflict. Furthermore, asymmetric power relations between women and men reinforces existing local and national power disparities that marginalises women and minority groups.

Women are the face of violence in Zimbabwe, whether one refers to the liberation struggle, Gukurahundi and numerous other post-independence episodes of violence. As women, we are resolute in our commitment that the voices of women who bear the brunt of violence be heard. If you talk to people who are familiar with what happened in the bloody elections in 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2008, they will tell you that most of the violence that happened in rural areas was at the behest of traditional leadership, in particular the chiefs. How can women be given space to articulate their challenges in a space dominated by men who may or may not understand and even relate to their problems?

While the NPRC Act places emphasis on addressing sexual violence against women, some participants raised concern that the Commission is yet to develop appropriate institutions to enable victims of sexual violence to discretely participate. Further, the Commission does not seem to have a concrete plan and person power to support victims requiring psychosocial support. Some participants noted that there are burdens that disproportionately affect women because of violence against their partners that should also be recognised as consequences of violence in Zimbabwe.

When you look back the people that were killed and kidnapped, majority are men, but then what happens to the women who remain behind? She now must look after the children. What are the pressures she suffers from raising these children without the support from her husband or male spouse?

Literature from post-conflict societies in Africa, Asia and Latin America has shown that in instances where men and young boys are violently conscripted into armed forces, women and girls carry the burden of assuming their normal feminine duties but also traditionally masculine tasks that include providing security to households, communities, and villages. Women and girls also become family breadwinners.

8.5 Emotional Components of Peacebuilding

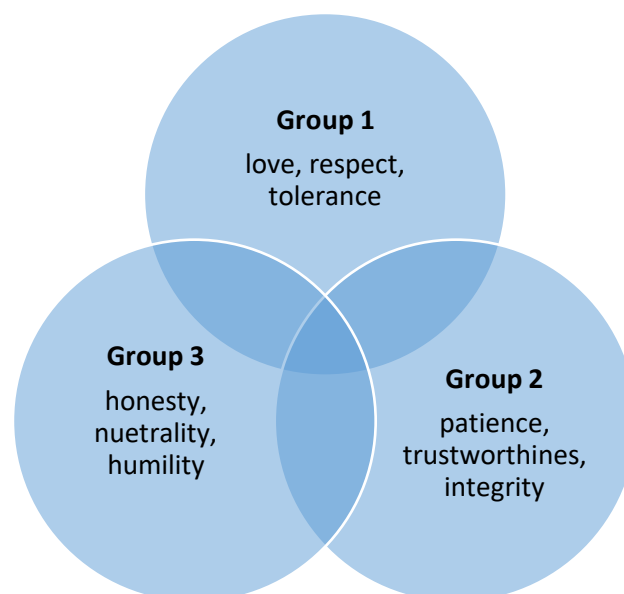
This theme covered the emotional aspect of peace from the perspective of research participants. The emotional aspects of peace such as love, compassion and forgiveness were identified as being more abundant in and more important to women than men. In describing a particular incident in which communities that had previously been in conflict were brought together in a peacebuilding workshop to help facilitate peace and reconciliation, a participant noted that

women were more ready to reconcile and forgive their perpetrators than men although both groups underscored the need for reconciliation as crucial for sustained peacebuilding efforts:

In the aftermath of political violence in 2008, we set up a women's group to put an end to the suffering that visited our communities. In the lead up to the presidential run-off election, neighbours turned on each other and some were killed while others lost property, and some were displaced to rural areas. Our immediate aim was to put an end to the conflict by facilitating inter-party dialogue in a non-partisan manner. We engaged the main political parties', MDC and ZANU, and met with the leadership of the party including the women's league. The women we engaged listened to us and were happy to work with us, but not so much the men. I think our efforts were driven by compassion, love and empathy. We are one people after all.

However, participants recognised that human beings are inherently emotional and therefore nurturing and cultivating certain soft skills like conflict sensitivity, cultural empathy and intercultural skills is a crucial element of peacebuilding. Hence, sustainable peace depends in large part on creating and establishing functioning institutions as well as constructive and healthy social relationships based on trust, mutual respect, humility, and tolerance for diversity. Strong and functional institutions serve little purpose if people working with them do not recognise them as peacebuilding assets or if they lack capacity to manage them properly. Participants were then divided into three subgroups and asked to identify at least three soft skills required for constructive engagement as a basis for building peace. These are presented in the diagram below.

Fig. 8.5: Soft skills



Other emotional components that were highlighted by participants included collaboration, mutual respect, solidarity, support, and trust. They noted the importance of networking and providing support for one another as instrumental in building coalitions and creating solidarity among grassroots organisations. Dialogue occurred about the need to create a nationwide network of grassroots organisations and peace practitioners to serve as a platform for peer learning, experience sharing and best practice. The envisioned network will help to strengthen the capacity of grassroots organisations and bring the voices, experience, skills and knowledge of grassroots peace practitioners to mainstreaming peacebuilding discourse. This point was summarised by a participant in the following way:

Building synergies and networks of solidarity is very important. We need to develop the capacity to transcend past divisions and hurts by forging new partnerships even with those with whom we may disagree with.

Participants further recognised that their peacebuilding initiatives are constrained through lack of power, voice and recognition by others, especially donors and funding agencies like UNDP. Participants also recognised that although peacebuilding work at the level of the community is important, they need to work at all levels, involving themselves with formal and mainstream peacebuilding structures so that their perspectives are better integrated and mainstreamed within institutionalised peacebuilding. Hence there was a great deal of discussion on strategies of transforming gender relations between women and men but also integrating local perspectives into mainstream peacebuilding through coalition building, advocacy, and lobbying.

8.6 Peacebuilding is Justice

The question “what are your needs for sustainable peace?” generated multiple themes including justice, reparations, marginalisation and resilience. State power as exercised by the executive arm of government, the legislative assembly and the judiciary in Zimbabwe has origins in inherited colonial governance systems. This has implications for how justice is administered and perceived by victims of state brutality. Zimbabwe’s “new dispensation” is nascent but is already demonstrating repressive ruling tactics that suggest the continued influence that the military has over politics. Human rights defenders and critics of government and ZANU-PF are fearful of the repercussions should they vocalise dissent since public statements that contradict the ruling party’s positions have consequences. The institutionalisation of violence and fear has potentially been worsened by the fact that yester-year leaders who emerged from

a brutal and violent struggle against the British were not properly demobilised and integrated into society. Similarly, youth militias that have participated in violent episodes like Gukurahundi, land reform events, and those used to instill fear in the electorate, have not been properly integrated into society and some still carry past traumas. The majority of these have at different stages assumed leadership at a time when they themselves are hurting and are traumatised, which continues to feed into the unending cycle of violence and fear.

The people at the helm of this country were not demobilised properly to allow them to swiftly reintegrate into a new society, so in a way they still feel at war. If the next generation of leaders who have been through multiple traumatic incidents don't receive healing and psychosocial support, we will continue to move in circles as a country. Tomorrow you will vote me in, I am traumatised. I am carrying my trauma with me in that office and will likely to carry over my own traumas.

Further, the continued repressive governance of the state, as well as the complicity of leadership with those who use violence and commit human rights violations, has meant that the political environment within Zimbabwe is not conducive toward peace, healing, and reconciliation. Additionally, some participants also understood their present socioeconomic circumstances within the context of past violence. For example, grievances about poor socioeconomic conditions and opportunities in Matabeleland are understood in relation to Gukurahundi. Socioeconomic deprivation and Gukurahundi are understood as different consequences of the state's institutionalised marginalisation and persecution of the Ndebele population. Thus, socioeconomic deprivation is not experienced solely as a developmental issue, but a political and ethnic one too. In this way, it is difficult for healing and reconciliation to occur when the inequalities that exist are understood as a form of political violence. There were repeated calls for justice, reparations, and the overall reconstitution of society. Personal healing and rebuilding of intergroup relationships leading to conflict transformation was cited by participants as a priority for rebuilding relationships broken by mistrust and protracted conflict. For example, a participant noted the following:

In my culture, peacebuilding and society building entails restoring and repairing norms, values, relations and social institutions damaged and destroyed by violent conflict. Incremental peacebuilding means that we need to start building peace from the ground up, starting with our communities, by building resilience so they can withstand social and political shocks that spark and trigger violent conflict.

Within a social justice framework, peacebuilding is associated with reconstruction of social new environments. Conflict transformation encompasses a deeper understanding of the root

causes of conflict with a view to positively transforming social structures that breed and sustain violent conflict. Lederach (2003) notes that conflict transformation requires constructive change to occur at four levels: the personal, relational, structural, and cultural. Seen this way, justice implies engaging with and transforming relationships, interests, discourses and, if necessary, the very constitution of society that supports the continuation of violent conflict and discrimination.

A participant noted that transformation in the interests of justice involves taking actions to identify and support infrastructures to solidify peace to avoid relapses into violent conflict starting at the level of the family. This is because familial relationships form a crucial socio-cultural base in African communities. As correctly observed by Haruna (2017: 1):

“Scholars of the family know that traditional values in Africa are primarily not for the individual but for his family and community of which he is part. In other words, there are no persons that are without a family. Members live in kinship adhering strictly to the norms and values of their family and the society at large”.

Peacebuilding therefore is a process of rebuilding society to resuscitate the fabric of social and community life. She noted that her organisation’s approach to peacebuilding focuses on the entire conflict spectrum and the various stages of the conflict cycle including pre-, conflict and post-conflict phases noting that in most societies and communities in Africa strive for social harmony and equilibrium and not necessarily to punish, isolate and marginalise the guilty and offenders. Within these societies, guilt is not an individual act, but a collective act aimed at restorative and not retributive justice. The organisation promotes the establishment of informal peace infrastructures in rural and peri-urban communities across the country to build resilience for when tensions and actual violence erupts especially during and after election time.

After the violent election in 2008, we took a decision to adopt a bottom-up approach to building peace by targeting key areas where we believe constructive change can happen. These are the personal, relational, structural, and cultural. At the personal level, our work deals with cognitive, emotional, and perceptual development around well-being, trauma and guilt emerging from experiences of violent conflict. Relational requires rebuilding relationships between and within social groups and facilitating interdependence, communication, and mutual trust. Structural change relates to the need to recognise social, political, and economic structures that have been affected by and are instrumental in conflict to ensure they promote basic needs and access to public resources like education, water, health etc. Last, cultural change refers to the broadest patterns of social life and identities, rituals, language, and symbols. These are also the hardest to deal with.

She explained the success of this approach by noting the following:

Community peacebuilding, anchored through familial connections, community networks, trust and dignity, integrity and respect are variables that create cohesion needed to sustain peace. Similarly, these value systems strongly contribute to the success of conflict resolution and transformation at community level, in part because both perpetrator and offender abide by verdicts passed by mediators. Under these circumstances, both the mediated and the mediators are required to demonstrate impeccable social and moral integrity.

8.7 Women's Peacebuilding Initiatives

The participation of women in policy and decision making and their access to power and other resources is critical to unleash their potential to act as effective pillars and stakeholders in the process of building peace. In Zimbabwe, the role of women in peacebuilding has increased phenomenally since the start of the 21st century. As conflicts ravaged societies and race and political tensions intensified, bringing in their wake severe social and economic suffering, women worked through local associations such as informal market associations (iqembu labomama), faith-based organisations and voluntary community associations to protect their families and communities. These informal institutions became outlets for women's peace activism with organisations like WOZA being formed at the height of political crisis in Zimbabwe. Given women's lack of resources and skills, women in these associations devised alternate strategies to facilitate their work and involvement in efforts to build peace. Most of these institutions are still relevant and now serve as models that have been adopted and adapted by mainstream peacebuilding institutions in the country. Most withstood the political and economic crises in Zimbabwe. Commenting on women's involvement in the peacebuilding process in Zimbabwe, a participant noted the following:

The fight for democracy, freedom and human rights is seen as a just and noble cause by many Zimbabweans and women have participated in this fight in different ways. Women and women's organisations have been instrumental in the fight against ZANU-PF and its excesses. Women like Thenjiwe Lesabe, Jennifer Williams, Beatrice Mtetwa and others who earned respect from participating in this fight used their involvement to seek and demand concessions from the government and the ruling party. Several of them became leading and respected voices in civil society and in opposition politics asserting women's engagement in politics and mainstream peacebuilding.

Commenting on the role played by women's informal institutions in peacebuilding processes, a participant noted that:

We were able to establish efficient information networks and systems to share and spread accurate information on suspected attacks and informed our members of safe routes when they were returning home. I think we saved a lot of lives at the time. Some of our members

used their proximity as mothers, wives and sisters to violent mobs to obtain information which we used to protect our families and communities. The police were nowhere to be found, and if we made reports, they told us they were unable to help. We had to devise own strategies to protect ourselves and our families.

Participants indicated that most of their peacebuilding activities occur outside of the aegis of national government institutions like the NPRC and that their work focuses less on structural rebuilding associated with mainstream peacebuilding discourse but is more focused on processes, people and relationships. The approach applied by women's organisations contrasts with how international bodies and UN agencies and government bodies view peacebuilding – with emphasis on post conflict reconstruction of societal infrastructure like schools, roads, clinics and rebuilding and strengthening institutions through judiciary and legislative reform, security sector reform alongside economic reform.

Some women's organisations were involved in humanitarian initiatives through the provision of survival necessities like food, water, temporary shelter, medical care. Peacebuilding efforts included facilitating and building bridges of reconciliation across the conflict divide and initiating inter-party and community dialogue, advocating for women's rights and access to decision making and leadership. Other initiatives include providing psychosocial support to victims of rape and other violations to supporting integration efforts by ex-members of militia groups.

Lessons from elsewhere have shown that sustainable peace can only be achieved with the full participation of segments of society, of which the contribution of women is integral. This is because women bring alternate and gendered perspectives to peacebuilding that can lead to transformation at both structural and practical level. Despite the contribution made by women to peace processes, they continue to be underrepresented in mainstream peacebuilding especially at the technical level where their impact is least visible. Women's associations and institutions working on peace continue to face numerous challenges from the international, national, and political milieu as well as impediments created by the patriarchal nature of societies where they come from. Other impediments are created by women's own lack of confidence, skills and resources needed to scale up their peacebuilding work. This point was succinctly summarised by a participant who noted that:

Because we're perceived to lack skills, networks, and resources, we are seen as recipients of peacebuilding interventions crafted and designed by men. We want to be involved as co-designers and implementers of interventions and not just passive recipients of these projects.

A participant added that peacebuilding environment in the country, including civil society space, is designed to marginalise women's voices and treat their concerns as tangential to peacebuilding. She noted that peacebuilding institutions in the country evolved as fraternities and hence the civic space became another way to keep women out of decision-making processes. The peacebuilding space is also unsafe for women since the state with its repressive tactics finds itself entangled and deeply embroiled in patronage networks that breed, nurture and sanction violent conflict. Participants noted past conflicts where the state played a key coordinating and enforcement role in violent episodes such as the Gukurahundi massacres in Matabeleland, violent land grabbing and farm invasions. The state has also been implicated in pre and post-election violence campaigns dating back to the 1980s. Participants added that although it could be argued that the violent conflicts and the political milieu in the country has afforded women greater responsibilities and with them greater possibilities of exerting leverage in decision making processes and women's political participation, role reversals exhibited in times of crises have not been accompanied by ideological shifts and institutional changes which give women decision making power consistent with their new roles. A participant summed it up this way:

Many reforms later and a new constitution in place, ideologies of superiority and masculinity remain almost unaltered; the exclusion of women from decision making structures is still intact and for the most part, women's status remains subordinate to that of men even within civil society where we preach about equality between sexes and other liberal democratic values.

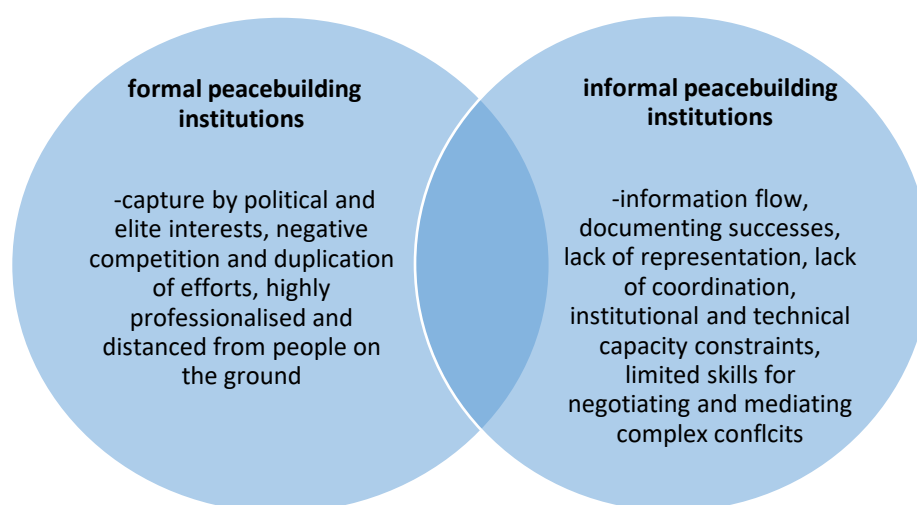
8.8 Challenges and Opportunities for Strengthening Women's Involvement in Peacebuilding in Zimbabwe

With the adoption of UNSCR 1325 by the UN in 2000, women's roles and potential for peacebuilding has gained global recognition. In Zimbabwe, the government developed policy interventions and instruments to address challenges affecting women. For instance, in consultation with civil society, government adopted and passed into law its DVA Act in 2007 and in May 2013 adopted a progressive new constitution alongside the National Gender Policy (2013-2017). These institutional reform processes were boosted by the creation of five independent commissions, among them the Zimbabwe Gender Commission and the Human Rights Commission. The challenge now is to ensure that policy instruments and other interventions are not implemented a tokenistic manner but in a way that demonstrates that women are equal partners in the country's developmental plans including the active

involvement of women in mainstream peacebuilding initiatives. This section highlights challenges and opportunities for strengthening women's involvement in peacebuilding in Zimbabwe.

Challenges undermining the effective functioning of community-based and informal peacebuilding initiatives range from the inability to influence national and global norm setting on peacebuilding because of underrepresentation of women's voices, limited skills to mediate large-scale and complex political conflicts, funding constraints, documentation of successes, institutional and technical capacity, information flow and coordination between informal organisations on one hand and state legislated institutions like the NPRC, Gender Commission and the Human Rights Commission on the other (see Fig. 8.6). Shared challenges between formal and informal institutions include socioeconomic hardships which increase overreliance on donor funding and disconnect between communities and implementing agencies and institutions, exclusion and marginalisation and political and media repression.

Figure 8.1: Challenges faced by peacebuilders in Zimbabwe



Participants noted that resource constraints negatively impact grassroots driven initiatives' ability to contribute to mainstreaming peacebuilding. For instance, participants noted that competition for scarce donor funding stifles innovation and undermines cooperation and coordination leading to duplication of efforts and initiatives. In Zimbabwe, a large portion of funding for peacebuilding comes from external sources and consistent donors such as the Swedish International Development Agency, United States Agency for International Development, Australian Development Cooperation, and UNDP etc. In addition to the limited funding pool, peacebuilding practitioners noted that most of the funding community

peacebuilding networks receive is usually short-term in duration and extremely limited in scope, possibly because some donor agencies and external parties are wary of the unfolding political and economic climate in the country. With limited funding, donor agencies often demand results within short and sometimes unreasonably unrealistic timeframes especially given the complex peacebuilding environment in the country. These developments were captured by participants in the following way:

The major challenge we have is that the peacebuilding funding pool is very limited. The growth in peacebuilding organisations and networks has not been accompanied by increase in funding to support independent peacebuilding work. This has created a climate of negative competition which stifles innovation and creativity. We have a good number of organisations doing pretty much the same work. There's lots of duplication of efforts and little coordination among grassroots entities.

Because most funding is short-term, long-term processes that allow for real change do not receive funding. Consequently, we spend a great deal of time and resources trying to access funding and if we get it, we spend a lot of time accounting to the donors – who have complex reporting and accountability systems. We could use time spent on reporting to do actual peacebuilding work on the ground.

In some instances, funding and grants are limited to NGOs of a particular size and structure. This creates challenges for community driven organisations whose profile and operation style does not fit the profile associated with calls for proposal for example. Another challenge highlighted by participants is that informality of grassroots initiatives is often associated with disorder, chaos, and therefore lacking accountability mechanisms. Donors and international agencies are less inclined and willing to fund informal organisations, mostly run by women preferring formal institutions with accountability and reporting mechanisms similar to those of funding agencies.

Furthermore, the undervaluing and underutilisation by both the state and civil society of the competences of women in conflict resolution, mediation and transformation projects peacebuilding as a masculine activity. This is despite evidence from the field demonstrating women's centrality to peacebuilding and the rich experience, knowledge, and skills they bring to peace processes. Some female participants noted that Zimbabwe's current polarising politics and a volatile political and security situation affects their ability to effectively participate in peacebuilding initiatives. While the number of peacebuilding practitioners and peacebuilding organisations has grown in the last two decades, especially at the turn of the millennium, there is still a shortage of skilled and highly experienced personnel who are able to intervene in

complex conflict situations. The problem is exacerbated when inexperienced personnel intervene in conflict situations even though they lack the requisite skills and training needed to de-escalate conflict situations to build trust and confidence. The multiplicity of actors and initiatives has led to a highly crowded and fragmented peacebuilding space where the probability of overlap, duplicity and lack of coordination is high.

The growth in peacebuilding initiatives in Zimbabwe has in large part been driven by the increasing awareness of the role that civil society can play in peacebuilding. Numerous studies have demonstrated that civil society can play important and effective roles in peacebuilding during all stages of conflict and has traditionally contributed positively to peacebuilding (Issifu 2016; Paffenholz 2016; Adetula, Bereketeab and Obi 2021). While the peacebuilding environment in Zimbabwe is very complex, there exists opportunities to further strengthen the role of women and civil society in peacebuilding. However, this requires collaboration between and among different peacebuilding actors, including donors, local communities and the state. In their book, Lederach *et al.* (2007: 9) define peacebuilding as the development of constructive personal, group and political relationships across ethnic, religious, class, national and racial boundaries. The aim of peacebuilding therefore is to restore injustice in non-violent ways and to transform structural conditions that generate deadly conflict. In this sense, conflict prevention, resolution and transformation and post-conflict reconstruction are all part of peacebuilding. Participants recommended the following strategies to enhance women and civil society's roles in peacebuilding.

Table 8.3: Enhancing women's role in peacebuilding

Category	Function
Monitoring	Documentation of human rights violations, tracking implementation of the constitution
Advocacy	Key messaging on peace and human rights campaigns
Socialisation	Peace education campaigns in schools and communities
Foster social cohesion	Help to bring together people from adversarial groups
Dialogue and mediation	Facilitating dialogue at community level between different actors

As shown in the table above, participants were of the view that providing gender sensitive training in conflict monitoring and advocacy will build women's capacity to enhance the

effectiveness of their work. This is because strengthening the role of women in conflict resolution and mediation is central to building sustainable and long-lasting peace. Lederach's peacebuilding pyramid identifies several phases at which peacebuilding has manifested globally and offers a stage-by-stage process in which peacebuilding has developed and the actors involved in the process of building peace. Lederach (1997) and Pearce (2005) further acknowledge that communities provide conditions where societies can thrive to create peaceful conditions. This point was reiterated by study participants who noted that community participation is a crucial element that supports local ownership of peace processes and promotes sustainable outcomes in the long-term, leading to improvements in social and community cohesion needed to address common challenges. The connection between peace and development as articulated by participants explain the growth and interest community driven peacebuilding interventions by scholars and researchers.

As correctly argued by Bereketeab (2021: 36), peacebuilding is intimately and dialectically connected to a people or society's culture, history, socioeconomic aspirations, structures and institutions, traditions and the anatomy of a society's moral and ethical imperatives. Seen this way, peacebuilding therefore is about integration, cohesion and developing commonalities and peaceful existence within a limited territory under the umbrella of a common state. In light of various funding constraints and the unpredictability of funding from traditional funders and donors, participants recommended need for new and adaptive models for funding peacebuilding initiatives that deviate from traditional funding approaches that donors and the international community often insist on as a precondition for funding. Some also alluded to the need for capacity building on the part of community leaders in areas of conflict resolution, gender sensitivity, conflict transformation and conflict management. For instance, as pointed out earlier, some participants indicated that a major concern with peacebuilding is its undervaluing and underutilisation of the competences of women in conflict resolution, mediation, and transformation. The phrase 'capacity building' is used here with great caution as some participants objected to its use noting that language has power to reinforce discriminatory and sometimes racist perceptions of non-white and non-Western populations. An academic noted that the use of words like "capacity building" imply that local communities are inadequate and lacking, therefore perpetuating images of the global South as deserving of Western intervention.

Some participants alluded to the strength and power that comes with creating community peacebuilding networks that become platforms for knowledge and experience sharing through

peer learning. One interviewee noted that although there is immense competition between and among community-based organisations working on a variety of peacebuilding activities, there is discussion among CSO leaders and donors of the need to create synergies between organisations to improve effectiveness of interventions. This point was reiterated by other participants indicating that peacebuilding associations and networks often have greater potential for peacebuilding than individual entities working alone. This they argued is because these networks often have the weight of numbers, provide a resource pool for members, enhance the capacity of weaker and smaller actors, improve the quality of training, encourage complementary action and, in volatile political situations, provide protection for members who are in danger of government harassment. This network model of peacebuilding intervention is growing fast, particularly among semi-formal peacebuilding organisations in other parts of the continent, particularly in East and West Africa.

8.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented, discussed, and analysed findings emerging from this study. In responding to key questions guiding the study (see Chapter 1), several themes were selected, and they subsequently informed analysis and discussion of findings. Examples of selected themes include justice, equality, reparations, empathy, motherhood, masculinity, resilience. The study's findings revealed how internationalist peacebuilding discourse is frequently viewed in terms of post conflict societal reconstruction with little attention paid to cultural contexts (the local) and its gendered dynamics at grassroots level. A discussion on gendered dynamics of peacebuilding showed how men and women experience conflict and peace even at the level of the community. Additionally, findings reveal how community-driven and informal peacebuilding initiatives in Zimbabwe are negatively affected by the harsh socioeconomic conditions in the country. Excessive reliance on donor funding who promote liberal values and interventions risks reinforcing existing national and local power disparities which can be harmful and counterproductive to peacebuilding. The chapter discussed the centrality of transformative and bottom-up approaches to peacebuilding whose role is to seek constructive change in the very structures of society that produce and breed violence and violent conflict.

In this light, transformation can occur across four levels: the personal, relational, structural, and cultural. The cultural part is the most resistant to transformation because of its deep roots in the patterns of social and political life organised around how we perceive the world around

us. As argued by de Coning (2016:29) and reiterated by research participants, peacebuilding is not so much about creating order and stability, as it is about stimulating change and facilitating constructive change. The transformation envisioned here must derive from local people and their customs. The conclusion is that despite the volatile political situation in the country that continues to complicate the peacebuilding, participants highlighted the need to rethink approaches to community driven peacebuilding and the role of women and civil society within the broader struggle to democratise peacebuilding away from a highly liberal and hierarchised orientation. The next chapter takes on board challenges raised during field work and recommendations arising from the findings above to present an intervention plan. The intervention process involved setting up a local peace infrastructure and evaluating it against its ability to achieve the following: its ability to facilitate inclusive community peacebuilding, the extent to which it can diffuse community tensions through early conflict detection and the extent to which it can address local needs and concerns.

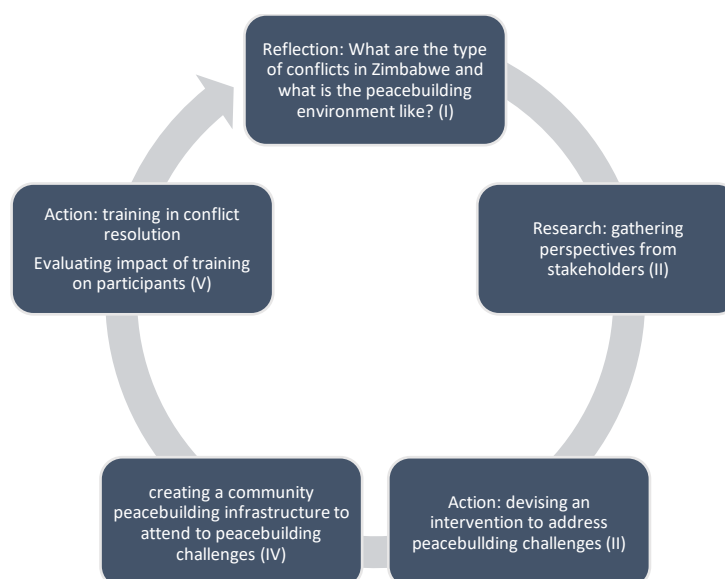
CHAPTER 9: ACTION INTERVENTION

Sustainable peace emerges from deep, structural transformation of violent conflict but also transformation of societal relationships into stable, non-violent social and political relationships (Lederach 2004)

9.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the intervention strategies that we designed for the purpose of this research. Creating an informal platform where men and women could interact and understand opportunities and constraints affecting each group, the local peace committee intended to achieve two aims: to create working partnerships between men and women that use dialogue to build trust across gender groups, helping them overcome traditional gender stereotypes and prejudices that are counterproductive for peace and peacebuilding more generally. Lederach (2003) avers that conflict transformation requires constructive change at three levels: relational, personal, structural, and cultural. He further argues that the greatest resource for sustaining peace in the long-term resides in local people and their cultures (1997). Secondly, to build capacity to strengthen and enhance community leaders' peacebuilding skills, especially conflict resolution, transformation, and mediation skills. De Coning (2016:29) warns that peacebuilding should not be so much about creating order and stability as it should be about stimulating change and facilitating constructive conflict transformation. We perceived the intervention as an appropriate vehicle to achieve these two aims. The following diagram outlines activities undertaken leading to the implementation of the intervention.

Figure 9.1: Reflection, research and action diagram of the study



As shown in the illustration above, the first and second stages of the intervention involved understanding the peacebuilding environment by undertaking a conflict mapping exercise to gather and collate perspectives from different sources and from multiple stakeholders. These activities informed our intervention through an analysis of peacebuilding gaps identified in the first and second stages. In the fourth stage, the action team underwent a three-day workshop organised in collaboration with the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) Network in Bulawayo to equip action team members with skills in conflict resolution, management, and conflict transformation. The AVP Network in Bulawayo functions as an umbrella organization that provides an infrastructure to support alternative to violence programs and projects. “AVP networks across the world offer trainings that enable participants to deal with conflict and violence in new and creative ways.”²⁴. The program draws from the shared experience of participants, using interactive exercises and activities, discussions, games and role plays to examine ways people respond to situations where injustice, prejudice, frustration and anger lead to anger and aggressive behavior. We conducted a short-term evaluation six months later to evaluate the impact of the training on the action team prior to a validation workshop designed to assess the impact of the intervention. In the fifth and last stage, we set up an informal peace network to operate as a peace infrastructure. The network is intended to serve as a network for informal grassroots activists and peace practitioners involved in everyday peace work such as early conflict detection and warning, timely conflict resolution and to facilitate inclusive bottom-up peace processes.

9.2 Participatory Peacebuilding

By using bottom-up and participatory methodology, this study employed a peacebuilding model that is demand-driven rather than supply-driven. A demand-driven peacebuilding model implies that programmes and initiatives originate from the needs and priorities of the local people or the beneficiaries of the programme rather than external influences or ambitions. Demand driven models are locally constituted, informal and participatory embracing local ways, needs and priorities. They seek to disrupt liberal approaches to peacebuilding that are supply-driven rather than demand driven (Hudson 2021). The intervention strategies were drawn from the gaps identified in literature and interview data on the roles, functions, and

²⁴ <https://avp.international/>

strategies that community-based organisations and leaders utilise in their peacebuilding work to bring about change and transform conflicts in their communities. As noted previously, most peacebuilding interventions in Zimbabwe, especially in NGOs that are heavily reliant on donor funding, are designed and steered by supply, that is, their founders and funders' agendas, rather than the demands that emanate from the local environment. To correct this anomaly, the action team identified priority areas to guide our interventions. First, we sought the assistance of the AVP Network in Bulawayo, a local peacebuilding network with a thorough understanding of the context to provide training on conflict transformation. The training aimed to capacitate the action team with skills in conflict resolution and management, team building and trauma healing. The three-day capacity building training laid the groundwork for the action team to begin the process of establishing an informal peace infrastructure (*Section 9.5*).

The AVP training covered the following topics:

# of Days	Topics
I	Transforming power – introduction to transforming power, guides to transforming power, transforming power indicators, transforming power talks + open discussions + team exercises, role plays etc.
II	Gender – power dynamics in society, the politics of gender and power, gender theories + sexuality, group exercises and open discussions.
III	Team building – dealing with group dynamics and team conflict, coping with destructive behaviors in a team, action team self-selection process, team agenda and crafting agenda + group/team exercises

At the conclusion of the AVP training, and upon deliberation on the next steps in the intervention process, the action team created an informal peace infrastructure to function as a network of dedicated community peacebuilding activists and practitioners offering strategic advice and training to community-based organisations involved in peacebuilding work. In addition to the core topics, the training covered aspects of policy making and advocacy, policy dissemination and media engagement. Our team constituted eight members whose areas of expertise and specialization ranged from communication, policy engagement, advocacy and mobilisation, gender, and human rights. The team established in 2019, served for an initial two-year period. At the beginning of 2021, the action team was in the processes of registering the Network established as part of our intervention with the Trusts and Deeds Registry office in

Bulawayo. We observed a need to create platforms for the exchange of insights as well as to enhance the awareness and understanding of peacebuilding and reconciliation processes. The network will encourage interaction among different societal actors including CSO practitioners, analysts, academics, and donors working on issues that relate to peacebuilding, transitional justice, and reconciliation in the country.

9.3 The Concept of Peace Infrastructures

Sustainable peace emerges from deep, structural transformation of violent conflict but also transformation of societal relationships into stable, non-violent social and political relationships. Peace infrastructures therefore help to reconcile tensions (community and national) that can arise from simultaneously addressing the dynamics of political, social, and economic transformation, particularly in contexts where capacities to deal with violent conflict in a peaceful manner are weak or non-existent. Peace infrastructures can be broadly understood as dynamic networks of skills, capacities, resources, tools and institutions that can help to build constructive relationships by enhancing sustainable resiliencies of communities against the risks of relapse into violent conflict.

As a conceptual idea, peace infrastructures arose because of engagement in multiple peacekeeping and peacebuilding projects in societies making a transition from war to peace and from authoritarian regimes to participatory forms of governance and government (Berghof Foundation 2016). The concept is premised on the idea that relying on dysfunctional structures and pursuing peacebuilding objectives in an incoherent manner is likely to result in ineffective and unsustainable outcomes (Berghof Foundation 2016: 1). Therefore, sustainable peacebuilding is dependent not only on the existence of political will, but also on the availability of structural capacity for peace support in practice. Such access to structural capacity is most effective when based on coordinated planning, conscious design of institutions, individual and institutional empowerment as well as transparent implementation.

Lederach is rightly credited with coining the concept “infrastructures for peace” (I4P) in the early 1980s. His assumption at the time was that peace can only be the result of deep structural conflict transformation that includes a fundamental transformation of the socio-economic root causes and political drivers of conflict (Lederach 1997: 47). The concept later gained prominence when former UN chief, Kofi Annan repeatedly used it between 2001 and 2009. During this time, the concept gained scholarly and policy attention which helped to broaden

the concept, including how to harness it in practice. In Africa, LPCs came to prominence in the 1990s after the Cold War. They were promoted as tools for sustainable peacebuilding by the UN and its agencies including UNDP against the backdrop of changing conflict dynamics and a new peacebuilding discourse seeking to re-insert local agency in peacebuilding (Nganje 2021).

In terms of policy guidance, peace infrastructures gained wider policy and intellectual interest following the post-election period in Kenya (2007) and in Ghana (2008) when national governments and civil society began pioneering official implementation of national peace infrastructures in both countries (Wambua 2017; Berghof Foundation 2016). Internationally, discourse on the challenges of peacebuilding began to increasingly focus on what is needed to mitigate risks associated with crises of state failure and collapse, particularly in societies emerging from protracted war and violent conflict. In particular, the five peacebuilding and state building goals of the new deal provided frameworks to foster a deeper understanding of peace infrastructures as a supportive concept to reconcile the challenges of simultaneous political, social and economic stabilisation and conflict transformation in a nonviolent manner. Kumar, a senior Conflict Prevention Adviser at UNDP describes peace infrastructures as interdependent systems, resources, values and skills co-owned by governments, civil society and community institutions that promote dialogue and consultation, prevent conflict and enable peaceful mediation when violence occurs in society (Kumar. R 2011). On the other hand, van Tongeren, former Secretary General of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict describes peace infrastructures as cooperative, problem-solving approaches to conflict within societies, based on dialogue and nonviolence. He further emphasises the need for the development of institutional mechanisms appropriate to each society's culture to promote and manage the application of this approach at the local, district and national level (van Tongeren 2013: 44-55).

9.4 Infrastructures for Peace in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding after protracted armed and violent conflict often takes place under conditions that usually fall short of a fully established and functional state. In such contexts, peacebuilding efforts often face enormous challenges ranging from economic imbalances, insecurity, lack of rule of law and a disempowered civil society. Peace infrastructure in these contests are particularly supportive of transitional processes to buttress insufficiently developed institutional and operational capacity of both state and society at large. Peace infrastructures

also provide temporary platforms for inclusion, participation, collaboration and dialogue based on the mutual interests of the conflicting parties.

These platforms can be used to explore nonviolent alternatives to the use of force and to establish a roadmap for recreating legitimacy of governance and enforcing accountability of government. In Zimbabwe, such processes were created by the GNU that followed a violent plebiscite in June 2008. Peace infrastructure created during this period was mandated to provide frameworks for bringing people together and to work collectively to deal with threats to peace and stability in the post-conflict phase.

9.4.1 Infrastructures for Peace in Transitional Societies

The need for peaceful, participatory, and collaborative settlement of disputes is not only confined to peacebuilding initiatives in the post-conflict phase. Most societies, including some extremely resilient democracies are time and again confronted with challenges of dealing with crises and violent conflicts as evidenced by recent events in the United States following the November 3rd, 2020, election, pitting Donald Trump against Joseph Biden. The chaotic scenes at the Capitol on January 6th (2021) led critics to conclude that stability does not always provide a guarantee for resilience against violence. Similarly, although Zimbabwe cannot be strictly classified as a society in transition nor a post-conflict society (see Murambadoro 2020), peace infrastructures can help to complement the governance architecture of democracy and rule of law by preventing conflicts from escalating by fostering inclusion and collaboration through participatory forms of governance. Some of these instruments may originate in the preceding process of peacebuilding, while others may be inspired and influenced by the nature of the social fabric, the political culture, and traditions prevalent at a specific time (see Chapters 1, 3, 4).

Community peace infrastructures constitute what I call ‘society-based infrastructures for peace’. These are bottom-up peace initiatives with origins in society-based initiatives spearheaded by civil society through, for instance, women’s movements, insider mediation networks, advocacy groups, clerical organisations etc. In some instances, these society-based initiatives may evolve to include state actors. Examples include the Inter-Religious Council in Uganda, and the Public Affairs Committee in Malawi. Our peace infrastructure had a very narrow framework, and this was in large part a result of time constrictions and budgetary constraints on the part of the action team.

9.5 A Local Peace Committee: Case Study

The inspiration behind establishing a community peace infrastructure as part of this research project was motivated by two related factors. The first was my interactions with members of the community where I conducted my field work; I realised that variants of ‘peace infrastructures’ existed in different communities that could be deployed and applied at any stage of peacebuilding, even though communities did not explicitly refer to them as peace infrastructures. For example, in one community there was a neighbourhood community watch whose roles include gathering intelligence of possible crimes as well as monitoring incidents of crime and violence by working very closely with law enforcement agencies like the Zimbabwe Republic Police. The chairperson of the watch committee indicated that the committee had recorded over 30 cases of burglary in the months between November and December 2019 alone. The committee had also investigated numerous cases of theft and robbery, leading to at least eight successful criminal prosecutions by the courts.

Secondly, while numerous peace infrastructures exist, for example voluntary associations that deal with issues of drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, etc., most of these lacked the capacity to deal with community tensions and violence during periods of intense electioneering that often results in acts of vandalism and destruction of private and public property. It was evident to me that while skills and resources needed to lead sustainable peacebuilding initiatives existed, they were somewhat weak. To capacitate these important and crucial skills, I convened a three-day training workshop on conflict resolution, peacebuilding and conflict transformation facilitated by the AVP Network in Bulawayo. The training aimed to build community leaders’ capacities to resolve conflicts in a nonviolent manner through conflict resolution and positive relationship building and resilience in peacebuilding. Other areas broadly covered negotiating complex conflicts, entry points for low-level mediation, gender and peacebuilding. Peacebuilding literature shows that peace infrastructures contribute to peacebuilding in four basic ways, namely: dealing with violence and simmering tensions through conflict management, violence containment and de-escalation; facilitating inclusive peacebuilding; dealing with processes of conflict settlement through negotiation, mediation, and dialogue; and, lastly, addressing structural causes of conflict and facilitating systemic transformations.

We conceived our LPC as representing an organic, inclusive and participatory and non-threatening social space to facilitate dialogue and mutual understanding that allows for

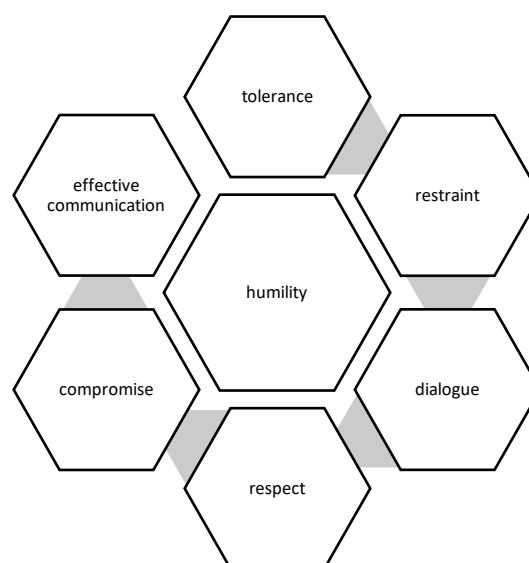
constructive problem-solving and joint action to prevent violent action as a response to challenges arising in the communities we worked. We aimed to strengthen social cohesion and communities' resilience to shun violence, promote peaceful co-existence and positively manage conflicts, thereby contributing to the search for sustainable peace in the different communities we worked. Below, I describe what issues we prioritised and why this was done.

9.6 Peace Infrastructures: Building Constructive Relationships

As previously noted, building sustainable peace depends in large part on creating and establishing functioning institutions as well as constructive and healthy social relationships. Strong and functional institutions serve little purpose if people working with them do not recognise them as peacebuilding assets or if they lack capacity to manage them properly. In peacebuilding, soft skills such as conflict sensitivity, cultural empathy and intercultural skills are crucial to building sustainable and self-sustaining peace.

To understand what structural components are required at moments in a conflict life cycle, and to transform relationships, we explored elements that are necessary to create daily social and political relationships that help prevent conflict from becoming violent. I divided participants into two groups, and each was tasked with identifying elements they deemed necessary in resolving and handling potentially violent conflicts. The diagram in Figure 10.1 lists 10 elements identified by the action team as crucial to building constructive relationships needed to resolve violent conflicts.

Table 9.2: Soft skills for conflict transformation and peacebuilding



Relationships between social actors often break down easily when conflicts turn violent, and in instances where the history of frosty relations is long and deep rooted, relationships can deteriorate even further with poor communication and poor cooperation. Therefore, rebuilding and restoring constructive relationships starts with creating mutual trust and experiencing the benefits of collaboration and cooperation. While building and rebuilding relationships depends on skills, cooperation, resources and supportive institutions, participants were unanimous in the belief that relationship building can only really unfold if elements identified in Figure 10.1 interact in a mutually reinforcing manner.

9.6.1 Enhancing Sustainable Resilience

Institutional capacity to respond to any emerging social and political crisis depends on the degree of social cohesion, public order and control and existence of a functioning government, leadership, and reliable mechanisms for peaceful dispute settlement. According to a report published by UNDP (2012), resilience is achieved when institutions can discharge the functions laid out in Text Box 9.1.

Text Box 9.1: Resilience

Text Box: Resilience

- Perform essential functions, i.e service delivery
- Rebuild public administrative capacity
- Improve service delivery
- Establish local government authority and functions
- Empower and engage civil society

9.6.2 Enacting a Peace Infrastructure

The starting point in designing our own peace infrastructure was premised on a firm understanding and belief that the structural groundwork for sustained peace exist in almost all societies and communities, even if such structures may not be referenced or branded as such. The following sections shed light on the different roles of peace infrastructures at different stages of the peacebuilding process, with a primary focus on how we designed ours to suit the context we worked in.

I must, however, indicate that our role in creating a peace infrastructure was not to replace government institutions but complement their efforts through subsidiary structures that support

existing community institutions. Our aim was to create a culture of dialogue and behaviour that promotes and prioritises constructive collaboration as a principled approach to social interaction, resilience and relationship building. A focus on resilience building is crucial throughout the conflict transformation cycle; but particularly relevant in violent and fragile contexts where conflict transformation depends on creating structures that can function in the absence of an effective state (see Chapters 1 and 3).

The action team was drawn from participants who participated in the four FGDs. Although initially we had 12 members, we lost four to attrition leaving the team with eight members in total. Positions left vacant by members who dropped out had to be filled, while some were dropped altogether. Table 10.2 lists the action team at the completion of the research and the positions occupied. Positions were created and filled through a self-selection process, with members nominating themselves to positions they felt most competent in. Group rules were enacted and members were encouraged to abide by them. An example was that members would attend group meetings without fail and in instances where a member could not attend, s/she had the responsibility to inform the Secretary General at their earliest convenience. Members served on the team voluntarily and it was agreed that Secretary General would arrange group meetings at least once a month and in case of an urgent meeting, members would be notified of the meeting ahead of time so that everyone would have time to adequately prepare for the meeting. The outbreak of COVID-19 and subsequent lockdowns necessitated a change in praxis, requiring us to convene virtual group meetings rather than in-person meetings. The shift from in-person meetings to virtual meetings presented its own challenges which necessitated revision of programme activities and action plans.

Table 9.1: Composition of the action team

Code	Position	Gender
C	Chairperson	M
DC	Deputy Chair	F
SG	Secretary General	M
DSG	Deputy Secretary General	F
LO	Liaison Officer	F
CM	Committee Members	M, M, F
	Total	8

As previously stated, our intervention was very narrow considering the time and budgetary constrictions but also the environment within which we sought to operationalise our work. The terms of reference for designing our peace infrastructure are listed in Table 10.3.

Table 9.2: Terms of reference for establishing community peace infrastructure

Type	Level	Mandate	Primary function
Community peace infrastructure	Local	Informal	Platform for inclusive problem solving, advocacy, capacity building, broadening local participation in governance processes

To find out what structural components are more relevant at a moment than others, we evaluated our peace infrastructure through its potential to create reinforcing effects based on the four primary scenarios outlined in the terms of reference. The following section analyses the impact and interaction of the four primary scenarios that build on core principles identified above (see Text Box 10.1). We also discussed the advantages and challenges of informal and bottom-up peace infrastructures compared to formal and top-down peace infrastructures, as reflected in Table 10.4.

Table 9.3: Advantages and disadvantages associated with bottom-up peace infrastructures

Advantages	Disadvantages
High legitimacy provided by the drivers and participants of the peace process	Dependence on local power structures, dynamics and balances
Sensitivity to local context due to limited scope	Marginalisation of minorities and undue influence of culturally inherited hierarchies
Limited influence by external actors	Limited outreach and impact
Large degree of independence in mobilising and allocating resources	Lack of sufficient resources and funding to implement projects
Tailor made approaches to conflict resolution and peacebuilding	Lack of appropriate and requisite skills and power to implement decisions and make binding recommendations
Effective and direct public oversight	Limited media coverage and public interest

9.6.3 Informal Community Peace Infrastructures

By creating a peace infrastructure, we intended to create a structure that would support ongoing peacebuilding work in the communities where the research was conducted. We also intended to create a network to support local grassroots and community-based organisations to strengthen local peacebuilding. For instance, we collaborated with two community organisations to support their peacebuilding advocacy work through a peacebuilding grant that the action team received from Peace Direct in the UK. We used the grant to support key resource personnel in the two organisations working on peacebuilding advocacy to undergo a 6-week free training in peacebuilding advocacy and global policy offered by Peace Direct. This training helped in coordinating and shaping our strategy for identifying and engaging organisations we wish to partner in our future work. Our findings complement several other studies that demonstrate strong evidence that informal peace infrastructures can enhance fragile's societies capacities and capabilities for peace (see for example Nganja 2021). For instance, according to Odendaal (2011), community peace infrastructures in Ghana played a crucial role in reconciling tensions brought about by the existence of two parallel systems of governance structures at the community level; traditional – state controlled by tribal chiefs with no formal political authority on one hand, and a more modern state controlled at the district level by a district chief executive on the other.

9.6.4 Promote Inclusive Dialogue

One of the chief aims of our peace infrastructure was to facilitate inclusive problem-solving through dialogue. Between June and December 2020, the action team convened three dialogues to discuss several community challenges and ways to overcome them. Dialogues are purposeful engagements mostly characterised by their scope and purpose. We aimed to use dialogue as a platform to address issues of community importance and relevance including local power dynamics, elections and electoral systems, governance, poverty, cultural and social issues. Table 9.5 provides a summation of what we were able to achieve through hosting several dialogic sessions.

Table 9.4: Dialogue toolbox

Purpose	Expectations	Process
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Resolve and restore broken relations and work on a viable social contract built on democratic practices that are both inclusive and participatory	Dialogue will provide minimum consensus among community members and stakeholders on resolving tensions, putting an end to social and political degeneration and paving the way for social cohesion and relationships built on mutual trust and sincerity	To achieve this, we resolved that our dialoging spaces must be participatory, inclusive and reflective of community dynamics with respect to demographics, political representation etc. We hosted three virtual dialogic sessions between June and December 2020 to tackle a range of issues affecting the community, from drug and substance abuse, political polarization, economic hardships, violence and building inclusive communities.
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In the long-term, the space we created through our intervention can only become a vehicle for peace and confidence building if local power asymmetries and security risks facing communities are adequately dealt with and addressed. Equally, the success of the peace infrastructure, in both the short and long term, depend on the degree to which it is interwoven with existing institutional processes and introduces management practices that complement rather than compete with existing systems. Hope-Nishanka (2012) concludes that for peace infrastructures to be effective, they must cut across the various levels of society and government, be inclusive, and have the necessary resources and legitimacy to perform their functions effectively and efficiently.

9.7 An Evaluation of Intervention

In offering an evaluation of our intervention, two key questions stand out which this section attempts to answer. The first question is: what is needed for an informal peace infrastructure like ours to work more effectively? The second question is: is it possible to determine success factors? To evaluate our intervention, we examined a variety of factors: environmental factors such as the political context, relational factors (relationships between different actors), and lastly the quality of the intervention itself. Important indicators for quality of peace infrastructure are levels of inclusion of different stakeholders, the establishment of clear objectives oriented towards real needs and interconnection and interdependence of different elements of peace infrastructures and their potential for connecting actors on different peacebuilding tracks. We constantly reminded ourselves that the strength of our intervention

should stem from its ability to create direct connections between participants, decision makers and community members. One way we were able to achieve this was through participation in a virtual stakeholder meeting organized by the NPRC in June 2020 where two members of the action team were invited alongside representatives of civil society organisations to share own experiences working on a range of peacebuilding initiatives in the country.

Through our intervention, we were able to demonstrate that local contexts, even those affected by extreme violence, have actors, capacities, and constituencies for peace where peacebuilding dynamics are already rooted. Some of these capacities are oriented towards peace whereas others are oriented towards social, political, and economic transformation. While these capacities exist, the main challenge is how these forces of change and transformation can be creatively combined to drive and foster more strategic peacebuilding dynamics from below. As argued previously, Conflict Transformation is rooted in a transformative paradigm that emphasizes relationship building and the need to transform oppressive and undemocratic systems into democratic and inclusive systems that lay a foundation for achieving positive peace. However, such processes normally take a long time and require increased investment in peacebuilding initiatives which many societies emerging from violent conflict may not have. Peacebuilding initiatives such as the one in this study that seek to rebuild relationships broken by protracted conflict are often relegated to the peripheries of post-conflict reconstruction – where focus is on rebuilding the economy, resuscitating basic social and public infrastructure and security sector reforms. Evaluating the success of peacebuilding using such matrices is problematic in the sense that they tend to overlook micro-successes that happen at community level.

Based on this, we considered our intervention a success if intended beneficiaries perceived it as having promoted some level of peace, directly and indirectly. As stated above, the definition of success used here is context specific and does not require that the intervention earn international praise. Our definition of success also does not claim that the intervention's contribution to the creation of peace assumes a specific form over another. Some efforts can directly reduce or prevent open violence, while others do so indirectly, by creating the broader conditions that facilitate peace, for instance strengthening local institutions that address conflict and promoting the use of dialogue as a conflict resolution tool.

It is impossible to assess our intervention without bearing in mind that our context is not a typical post-conflict phase, rather, we are during an ongoing political and economic crisis that

has been accompanied by a surge in human rights abuses and human rights violations which puts the security and safety of peacebuilders and human rights defenders at risk. According to the international human rights organisation Reporters Without Borders (2020), scores of activists and human rights defenders in Zimbabwe were unfairly arrested between 2019 and 2020. The report documents multiple attacks on human rights defenders and activists demonstrating government's limited capacity to prevent attacks and secure activists' safety. The unfolding situation has several implications for communities undertaking and participating in peacebuilding initiatives and the way political differences are resolved on the ground.

Firstly, while encountering an impressive level of resilience in many communities within Bulawayo, for some, the sustained use of force and violence has resulted in forced silences. Secondly, democratic participation remains suppressed and numerous activists, human rights defenders and peace activists have been arrested on spurious charges and their rights violated. This attests to continued use of force and violence to defend political interests on the part of the state and the ruling party.

Table 9.6 presents the results of a validation workshop conducted by the action team to evaluate and assess our intervention. As can be seen in the two tables, half of the action team members ranked the intervention highly, which translates to an approval rating of 50%. 25% ranked the intervention as moderate, while another 25% was split between very low and low. It is also significant to note that none of the action team members ranked the intervention as 'very high', a point I elaborate on in the conclusion. *Tables 9.6 and 9.7* illustrate how action team members perceived the intervention while participating in a validation workshop conducted in March 2021.

Table 9.5: Validation workshop: Participants' views on the intervention

Ratings	Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high	Total
How would you rate the intervention? (%)	12.5	12.5	25	50	0	100
Number of participants	1	1	2	4	0	8

Table 9.6: Validation workshop: Participants' perceptions of the intervention

Major descriptors of the intervention	Out of 8 people	% who rated the intervention positively
Ability of community peace infrastructures to facilitate inclusive peacebuilding	7	87.5
Extent to which community peace infrastructures can represent local needs and concerns;	8	100
Extent to which community peace infrastructures can be vehicles for diffusing community tensions and support early conflict warning and rapid response efforts	6	75

9.8 Reflections on the Action Research Process

The process of establishing a LPC was both enlightening and challenging. It gave me a behind-the-scenes experience of the world of peacebuilding alongside its multiple complications and opportunities. On reflection, I would not trade this experience for anything else. It enabled me to challenge long held assumptions but was equally an important learning experience where for the first time, I had the opportunity to test and experiment with some of my ideas. This section tells the story of the research process, which is basically my own story of discovery and learning as a researcher. It is tale of navigating unfamiliar and uncharted territory, steps taken, and lessons learned from the experience.

The first lesson is that LPCs are most suited in contexts characterized by low-key community conflicts that can be addressed using dialogue, mediation, and other problem-solving techniques. Seen in this way, LPCs are ill-suited for large scale conflicts requiring the enforcement of peace agreements, for example. This is particularly true for informal peace committees like ours whose informality meant it had to rely extensively on its moral authority for acceptance. Similarly, informal peace committees are limited peacebuilding tools to resolving conflicts that are deeply rooted in the socio-economic and political structure of the state as is the current case with Zimbabwe where the study was conducted. In contexts where authorities lack the political will for peace and are reluctant to address the underlying sources of conflicts, LPCs like ours can only play a limited role in mitigating micro-level violence and

conflicts within communities. This is because informal peace committees often lack legal power and authority to transform the dynamics of the conflicts.

The second lesson is that while informality comes with a certain level of flexibility and the ability not to be hamstrung by politicking that normally undermines the effectiveness and efficiency of formal peacebuilding, informality can also be a challenge on its own. In our case, informality meant that we were unable to access key government offices, and this affected our ability to correspond with those who wield formal power within government structures. Similarly, because most informal peace committees lack institutional recognition, they often lack accountability mechanisms, and this makes them reliant on principles of inclusiveness, participation, and transparency to safeguard the integrity of their activities and outcomes. However, challenges arise when these principles are trumped by unequal power relations which risks reinforcing existing local, national, and global power disparities.

Lastly, in principle while LPCs are intended to as inclusive and non-threatening spaces that aim to promote broad stakeholder participation in the common search for peace and harmony, LPCs, whether informal peace infrastructures like the one we created for purposes of this research or formal ones, if improperly constituted local peace committees can be sites of power contestation that mirrors the larger society within which local peace committees themselves are constituted. This is often the case when local actors with no vested interest in peace form part of the structures and use their power and influence to promote narrow political interests that go against the collective objective. Within these circumstances, women and less influential groups are forced to assume contradictory roles – being assertive and accommodative to accommodate and challenge ascribed gender roles.

9.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented and discussed the intervention carried out by an action team as part of this study. As correctly argued by Hopp-Nishanka (2012), peace infrastructures are crucial in peacebuilding because they are where local consensus is gathered, legitimated, consolidated and made material through naturally evolved peace constituencies. Peace infrastructures are not geographic spaces or formal institutions but are ‘discursive formations’ involving negotiations over rights, needs, security, representation and identity (Richmond 2013: 31). Similarly, peace infrastructures are by their nature vulnerable and imperfect tools, straining under the burden of helping societies transition from war to peace and from exclusive to

inclusive peacebuilding by creating shared democratic spaces with a promise of upholding and entrenching peace. As case studies from Nepal, Colombia and South Africa have shown, peace infrastructures constantly change as the needs of the peace process evolve and working relationships between conflicting parties mature. In Sri Lanka, peace infrastructures became self-serving and destructive of the very process they were supposed to sustain as relationships between stakeholders fragmented and eroded. This is a reminder that peace infrastructures are not immune and can be vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation by political interests and sometimes external influences. Having said this, it may be safe to conclude that our understanding of peacebuilding and their actual value and contribution to peacebuilding and conflict transformation is still at an embryonic stage, requiring further research.

The next chapter provides a reflection of the research processes, highlighting the lows and highs of the process and how I dealt with issues of validity, credibility, and scientific rigor in my study. The chapter basically tells the story of the research process which is my own story of discovery and learning as a researcher conducting an action research inquiry for the first time. It is a story about navigating unfamiliar territory, steps taken, and lessons learned from the experience. The chapter serves as a precursor to the concluding chapter of this research.

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSIONS, REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 Introduction

Peacebuilding refers to a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generate, and sustains an array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform violent conflict towards sustainable peaceful relationships. It is a process aimed at democratisation, inclusion, and management of social conflict and human needs to overcome structural causes that breed violent conflict and sustain inequities. Successful peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction must be anchored and supported by grassroots actors and must find resonance in local norms and values, what Schereinbeck (2015:1031) refers to as a local turn in peacebuilding. A local turn in peacebuilding as envisioned in this study implies giving voice to those on the margins of society as legitimate actors in peace processes. For this study, peacebuilding implied understanding the multiple activities and initiatives undertaken by grassroots and community peacebuilding groups in Bulawayo to build peace. We achieved this by identifying and supporting existing community structures designed to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid a relapse into violent conflict. By bringing together various societal actors in an open-ended process, we aimed to promote inclusive peacebuilding through dialogue and experience sharing. Our evaluation shows us that creating informal platforms for dialogue and engagement creates empathetic spaces where capacity to understand the feelings and perspectives of the other can be nurtured and developed.

For societies like Zimbabwe where women remain largely absent from national and local decision making and continue to struggle to make their voices heard in national politics and interests understood in peacebuilding, peace infrastructures can help to bridge these divides. For instance, women in Zimbabwe still represent less than 30% of the country's legislators and occupy less than 20% of senior positions in government. Women also face discrimination and violence, inadequate support, and resources that hinders their ability to participate in the political and civic life of their communities and societies. The inquiry's objectives were twofold: firstly, to identify and understand conditions that promote successful conflict intervention at grassroots level and secondly, determine the extent to which such interventions can facilitate inclusive peacebuilding. Strengthening women's civic and political rights and addressing barriers to political participation is critical to building sustainable peace and female empowerment.

Among other important findings, this study found that informal peace infrastructures are crucial tools for peacebuilding in that they provide a platform to tackle challenges that impact communities and that when properly constituted, local peace communities offer platforms for effective democratic engagement and collective problem solving through dialoguing and experience sharing.

10.2 Discussion of Study Objectives

The study assessed the efficacy of peace infrastructures to facilitate inclusive peacebuilding in Zimbabwe. This study was inspired by evidence pointing to persistent gender discrimination, inequality and marginalization of women and minorities in peacebuilding processes in the country. In her study of the mediation process of 2008/9 that culminated in the formation of a government of national unity in Zimbabwe, Hendricks (2015) found that women were entirely absent as signatories to the GNU and represented a paltry 16% of negotiators. Similar studies highlight the plight faced by female politicians and activists in the country (see Thomas, Masinjila and Bere 2013; Mshiri 2013 and Mutisi 2011; 2016 among others). Globally, a report by the UN (2012) shows that between 1992 and 2011 women made up just 2% of mediators, 4% of witnesses and signatories, and 9% of negotiators in formal post-conflict peace talks. Similarly, men's victimhood emanating from violent conflict and their participation in grassroots peacebuilding is missing because these processes are often dismissed as feminine and very little research has gone into understanding men's own experiences and vulnerabilities working on peacebuilding initiatives at community and grassroots level.

To understand the nature of the problem, this study created an informal peace infrastructure to serve as a platform for dialogue and deliberation but most importantly to create spaces where men and women can interact and understand opportunities and constraints affecting both genders in their own communities. This study was premised on an understanding that creating inter-group contact serves as a vehicle for challenging negative views and stereotypes held by one group about the other. Through interaction with grassroots and community leaders in four wards in Bulawayo, the action team was able to creatively mainstream gender into community building initiatives by bringing men and women to dialogue and engage with each other. Our understanding of mainstreaming meant being accommodative to difference and diversity, thereby challenging the assumption of 'sameness' by affirming the different and diverse ways in which both men and women build peace or experience violence and conflict. An action team was set up to spearhead the intervention but first underwent training in nonviolent conflict

resolution, mediation, and negotiation to enhance members' conflict handling skills and their ability to engage communities and community stakeholders. The training was offered in collaboration with the AVP Network in Bulawayo. An evaluation carried out after the both the training and intervention revealed great satisfaction with the training and an acknowledgement that the intervention had laid a strong foundation to build on for future engagement on related subjects.

While I believe our intervention may have gone some way in initiating difficult but necessary conversations and that we laid a firm foundation for future discussions and activities, research on informal peace infrastructures in Zimbabwe is currently still too nascent to draw clear conclusions on their true effect on peacebuilding. Consequently, an open question remains whether informal peace infrastructures can contribute to a deeper quality of peace that goes beyond the absence of violence. This component of the research could not be adequately explored, and we were unable to ascertain if our intervention is scalable. This was due to time and resource constraints. Additionally, the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020 presented its own challenges around mobility, requiring us to conduct much of our work virtually with limited physical contact.

Curiously, literature continues to pay disproportionate attention on peace infrastructures' contribution to peace operationalised as the absence of violence (negative peace) rather than a type of peace informed by principles of justice and fairness. On one hand, this "omission" is understandable when the immediate goal is to calm tensions and put an end to violence. And for societies like Zimbabwe which remain trapped in multiple cycles of violent conflict and human rights violations, it is expected that those working on multiple peacebuilding interventions will prioritize minimizing the risk of violent conflict and conflict relapse (negative peace) to achieve a harmonious, tolerant, and free society (positive peace). In addition to structural barriers, civil society in Zimbabwe faces multiple challenges ranging from divisions and factions, resource constraints and an unfavorable peacebuilding environment.

10.3 Summary of Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The research design used in this study was two-tiered. It combined exploration with validating findings from interviews and group discussions. The second part of the design was action research oriented to enhance a democratic way of collecting data, designing and implementing

and evaluating the intervention. This study used a qualitative methodology involving in-depth interviews, group discussions and an extant review of literature on peacebuilding. Thematic analysis was used to analyse research findings. To facilitate inclusive peacebuilding, I relied on Lederach's Conflict Transformation theory. Conflict Transformation is rooted in a transformative paradigm that puts emphasis on relationship building and the need to transform oppressive and undemocratic systems into democratic and inclusive systems that lay a foundation for achieving positive peace. Relationship building offers important insights into participatory techniques for sustainable peacebuilding. More importantly transformative peacebuilding theories – specifically, the work by Lederach – has enormously influenced the policy discourse and practice of supporting a 'local turn' in peacebuilding and the creation and establishment of peace infrastructures.

Conflict Transformation therefore encompasses a deeper understanding of the root causes of conflict with a view to positively transforming social structures that breed and sustain violent conflict. Conflict Transformation goes beyond conflict resolution and management by placing emphasis on process and culture, building ownership at all levels while simultaneously addressing the root causes of violent conflict through systemic change, integrating reconciliation, and building shared vision for living together (McCandles 2019: 29). According to Miall (2004), Conflict Transformation is a process of engaging with and transforming relationships, interests, discourses and, if necessary, the very constitution of society that supports the continuation of violent conflict.

10.4 A Summary of Discussions

This section summarises study findings in terms of the specific research objectives of this study as captured in Chapter One. I begin by recapping the research objectives and then summarising key findings per each of the objectives. The chapter then draws conclusions from the findings of this study, and I present my personal reflections on the dynamics of the study in terms of the challenges faced, strengths of the research design. I conclude by making suggestions for further research.

Across the world, peacebuilding practitioners, analysts and strategists are grappling with the question of where exactly decisions about building peace, dealing with violent and simmering conflict are made, by who and for whom. For instance, who do people call on when simmering tensions threaten to escalate into deadly conflict? Where are decisions about early warning

detection made, or decisions about when to intervene taken? In response to these and other questions, many societies have set up peace infrastructures to deal with the different phases and stages of conflict and to facilitate inclusive peacebuilding. I should note here that, conceptually, we regard peace infrastructures as tools and mechanisms that help us to understand the domestic and internal efforts in conflict and fragile contexts in order to build on existing mechanisms to reduce violent conflict and engage in collective problem solving. Similarly, establishing a peace infrastructure is a long-term process. For instance, Odendaal (2011) notes that the process to establish peace infrastructures in Ghana took eight years (2003-2011) and is still to be completed.

However, the establishment of peace infrastructures should not take place on the basis of hasty, superficial considerations and should be designed to respond to developments in a particular society without transplanting peacebuilding models. This is because transplanting ‘good models’ and ‘quick fixes’ often undermine and threaten peace processes because transplanted models are designed in different contexts and are intended to address different conflict dynamics.

This section is organised in such a way that the basic aspects of the research questions of this study are systematically outlined and analysed. This study sought to answer the following questions:

- i. What does peace mean to you?
- ii. What are your needs for sustainable peace?
- iii. What peace initiatives have you encountered where you live?
- iv. What are the challenges you are facing as a peacebuilder in your community?

The ensuing discussion therefore synthesises the main ideas emanating from the various research objectives of the thesis and draws conclusions in relation to the theory and practice contained herein. It concludes with a critical reflection on the way forward for building sustainable peace in Zimbabwe. In the introduction (Chapter 1) of the thesis, I set out the research objectives, whose overarching objective was to identify and understand conditions that promote successful conflict intervention at grassroots level and second, find out the extent to which such interventions can help to positively transform conflicts through inclusive peacebuilding. This is particularly important because most of women’s groups tend to have a voice in global fora more than at other levels and the gender equality/peacebuilding inclusion

regime in Zimbabwe specifically appears to have adopted a top-down character which may be good for global and universalist norm diffusion but not necessarily for bringing knowledge generated at the grassroots in informal and everyday settings – something this study intended to highlight.

One of this study's most fundamental finding is that when women are mainstreamed into peacebuilding processes on equal footing with men but in ways that allow them to bring their femininity and the relational values they represent, this can fundamentally transform the nature of peacebuilding practice. This finding dovetails with Isike (2017) who argues that women in general and African women have a rich and long history of playing pivotal roles in governance and peacebuilding that dates to the precolonial period and notes that despite the disruptive impact of colonialism, women remain crucial peacebuilding cogs in their communities. The women who participated in this study described the values of tolerance, empathy, forgiveness, accommodation, love, accountability, and truth telling as fundamental for long-term peace. In this sense, peacebuilding entails processes of normalizing relations and reconciling differences between disputants. However, peacebuilding does not happen in vacuums, it involves dealing with the hard subjects of good leadership, restorative justice, trauma healing and development.

Another important revelation by this study is the need to promote the concept of community peace infrastructures since such fora provide avenues where real and tangible transformation can occur. We found that through participatory and bottom-up approaches, peace committees can empower marginalized groups and those lacking voice to be active agents of change who partake in the design and implementation of peacebuilding interventions as defined by themselves. Relatedly, in a country like Zimbabwe where peacebuilding processes remain largely male dominated and where peacebuilding processes are to a large extent implemented by well-meaning and educated professionals inclined towards liberal values, such interventions have proven to be harmful and discriminatory against women, especially in post-conflict settings. Liberal values in post-conflict risks worsening the socioeconomic conditions of women who are expected to compete on an equal footing with better resourced men in imagined “free and liberalised” markets.

Finally, this research aimed to contribute to post-conflict sustainable peacebuilding recommendations. The research design and methodology of the study placed emphasis on a qualitative methodology qualitative since the emotionally laden experiences of violence and violent conflict were better suited to qualitative capturing. Further, some of the strong insights

that came out of this chapter have to do with the practice of action research methodology as experienced in fieldwork. There are ethical challenges highlighted around conducting research in conflict-ridden spaces, specifically relating to fear and silencing, amongst others. Reflections are made throughout this study in this regard.

Purposive and snowballing sampling was used to identify interview participants for this study. Ethical considerations that guided and informed the study included signing of informed consent forms as well as interview release forms. Throughout the interviews, participants communicated their fears about their information leading back to them and putting them in harm's way. Thus, the confidentiality aspect of the research study largely had to do with keeping the anonymity of participants and finding other ways to ensure that the knowledge shared by them was not compromised. Chapter 2 included a section dedicated to the limitations of the research design and methodology, the limitations of the sample, as well as the limitations of self, in which discussion I have noted my positionality and vested interest in this research. As demonstrated in Chapter 6, my reflections and observations on the fieldwork experience were initially about my struggle to be accepted by communities. This resulted in a protracted fieldwork period filled with the processes of negotiation, gaining trust, and finding participants, as well as having to deal with not only the fears and anxieties of interview participants, but also of my own about conducting the research. Morten Bøås (2020) work on conducting fieldwork in violent and dangerous contexts offered many insightful insights when conducting my fieldwork. Additionally, my topic of research itself is also emotionally laden, and thus I realised that I had overestimated the willingness of people to open themselves up to sharing their past experiences of violence, and that I was not even psychologically equipped to deal with the after-effects of their outpourings.

During the research process, I was confronted with the gendered and demographic dynamics of the 'field' alongside being a relatively young male researcher researching the gendered dynamics of peacebuilding and interacting with participants who are relatively older than me. These dynamics created own opportunities and challenges once in the field and therefore had to navigate the field carefully. Lastly, I reflected on being a Ndebele-speaking person living in the diaspora and conducting research in a predominantly "Ndebele" community and the insider/outsider dynamics associated with this. While these intersecting positionalities created both opportunities and challenges, advice from my supervisor and reading widely from literature and learning from others' experiences helped me to navigate these complex realities.

Another key finding of this study is that violence, especially state sponsored violence, is told as a story in continuum – a common occurrence emanating out of storytelling – where the telling of the event oscillates between the past and the present, as well as the future, thus removing it from its exact occurrence. For instance, references about Gukurahundi which happened between 1982 and 1987 were retold frequently with the state constantly implicated as chief perpetrator of all human rights violations since independence. The memories of post-independence human rights violations were often conflated and non-linear, and they lacked chronology, following a different temporal logic. These temporal logics vary from chronological and non-chronological logics. This was evident in the way memories of Gukurahundi were shared with others, in the way the liberation struggle and Gukurahundi were spoken of synonymously as if they were one incidence sometimes in the absence of dates or years and without cumulative coherence of time.

Yet for others, the continuity of Gukurahundi is evident through socioeconomic hardships, where today's present socioeconomic hardships have roots dating as far back as the height of the Gukurahundi massacres. For instance, a participant said explicitly that grievances about poor socioeconomic conditions and opportunities in Matabeleland are understood in relation to Gukurahundi. The implication here is that there is a direct correlation between socioeconomic deprivation and hardships in Matabeleland on the one hand and Gukurahundi on the other. Consequently, socioeconomic hardships in Matabeleland are understood as consequences of the state's institutionalised marginalisation and persecution of the Ndebele population. The result of this conflation is that often current affairs and events are infused into Gukurahundi memory, even when they happened long after Gukurahundi.

Another key finding is that political violence targeting women and girls, and domestic and other forms of gender violence revolve around often complex economic, social and cultural issues, some of which are an indication of weak internationalisation of equality rights enshrined in the country's constitution and other international human rights instruments. Cases of politically motivated violence have increased in recent years while domestic and gender-based violence remain endemic. Women who participated in this study noted that they disproportionately face violence, but this has not deterred their resolve to demand inclusion in peace processes. Women and young people's participation in decision making and political processes in the country remains marginal while their involvement in transitional justice continues to be peripheral, often reflecting the intransigence of old power systems built on patriarchy and gerontocracy. To highlight these dynamics, Paffenholz (2020:165) introduces

the concept of ‘gendered responsibilities for peace’ to demonstrate the contradictions of peacebuilding processes in the sense that, a greater involvement of women can be empowering but can also be disempowering in the face of structural constraints as the ones described above. An awareness of these contractions is crucial to increasing our understanding of the spaces that women shape through their peace work in the face of barriers and constraints.

10.5 Reflection: An insider’s perspective

Used within this context, reflexivity here expresses my awareness of my connection to the research situation and my effects upon it, and the need to recognize my own self-interest. Studies are rarely perfect. During this research I encountered numerous obstacles, particularly during the data collection period. Concerns around safety of participants and indeed my own safety hampered aspects of the research implementation phase. Similarly, owing to unforeseen and unexpected developments, I was forced on numerous occasions to reschedule meetings with participants while some could not take place at all. Persistent power outages presented difficulties in reporting and communicating, particularly when arranging Skype meetings with IDIs who were key to my research. Similarly, the action team and I also experienced budgetary constraints which did not permit for travel as I had envisioned. We ended up with additional costs that further strained the budget. We encountered serious challenges in scheduling group discussions. Bringing participants together in one location and at a particular time proved a challenge. Two group meetings had to be rescheduled for January 2020 when only three participants showed up at the meeting venue. Although facilitating group discussions was a challenge, prior training in an AVP training session offered by the KwaZulu Natal AVP Network improved my facilitation skills and helped me deal with extremely difficult situations throughout the research process. I also found myself constantly referring to the AVP trainings when confronted with challenging and unexpected developments – and this was quite useful in helping to manage anxiety-driving experiences.

The outbreak of the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) at the start of 2020 led to temporary suspension of international travel as countries implemented a raft of measures to stem the spread of the virus. I was unable to undertake my third pre-arranged field trip to Bulawayo (Zimbabwe) in March 2020 after South Africa imposed a hard lockdown. We paused the research for a while and suspended in-person meetings and contact. This created numerous challenges for me and the action team. Numerous attempts to convene the team virtually proved ineffective owing to high data costs in Zimbabwe. Some members of the action team did not have devices to

participate in Skype meetings while incessant power outages in both South Africa and Zimbabwe made it even harder to convene virtually. While we ended up creating a WhatsApp group as a last ditch at maintaining constant communication, this too came with its own challenges.

There are multiple pressures that researchers encounter in both the field and in our attempts to produce 'perfect field results'. These pressures often force us to want to under-report the challenges we encounter in the field research by giving the impression that everything went as previously planned and that the research design worked as intended. The need to present perfect research leads us to under report our experiences in the field, especially those that we fear could be deemed to have violated ethical guidelines. There is also the fear that writing and reporting about our experiences could compromise the robustness and reliability of our research findings.

However, this is far from the truth. In this section, I report on my own challenges undertaking research in an environment that could be categorised as politically risky and sensitive. This is important to mention because it serves as a reminder that doing research is by its very nature complex and sometimes extremely challenging.

My experience in the field was met with multiple challenges, ranging from my phone battery depleting in the middle of an interview and not being able to power it back because of incessant power shortages in Zimbabwe, to having to re-arrange meetings because interviewees did not show up, rising political tensions in Zimbabwe and a risky political environment which often carried the burden of assuming (rightly or wrongly) that I was under state surveillance. For example, in December 2019, I visited a councilor in Bulawayo to arrange a meeting with a community that falls under his jurisdiction. I explained to him the purpose of the research and emphasised that I was conducting scholarly research in fulfillment of the requirements for the conferment of a doctoral degree. Before the meeting ended, the councilor politely asked me to provide personal information including my identity number, home address and cellphone number.

In the meeting, I had indicated that I intended to speak to the community about peacebuilding initiatives as stated in my research objectives. A few days after our meeting, I received a call from an anonymous number inviting me to the police station to explain the purpose of my research. I complied and visited the police station where the investigating officer took exceptional interest in my research. During the 'interrogation', the officer searched through random files lined up on his desk. He also did random searches on the internet using his mobile

phone. When (I assume) he found nothing of interest about me, he ordered me to leave, and I did not encounter similar occurrences thereafter.

However, this encounter with the intelligence arm of state security made me anxious such that I would constantly look over my shoulder every time I met with interviewees in town or organised a group meeting in the communities. An incident that I still remember vividly is when I had arranged to meet a prominent civil society leader in Bulawayo. We chose to meet at a secluded but popular venue in the city centre. Although I had obtained a once-in-a-life time opportunity to interview this person, I had to scale down my research and, in the process, self-censor by avoiding asking what I imagined would be politically sensitive questions out of fear that I may be under surveillance and therefore I needed to take precautionary measures not to endanger my interviewees or put their lives or my own life in harm's way.

These encounters taught me very early on that the research experience and its outcomes is heavily dependent on several factors including the quality of relationships created with interviewees, and their perceptions of the researcher which may or may not be informed by multiple identity markers such as gender, race, ethnicity, age and social status. I later appreciated that these factors informed the types of relationships I established in the field and the type of information people were prepared to share with me. During my field research, I developed and created a very strong bond with members of my action team and some interviewees, with whom I remain in constant touch. Because I had created a strong bond with my action team, I was sometimes too skeptical that I may be violating ethics especially when confronted with difficult situations involving my research collaborators' personal lives. At one point, one of the interviewees asked how I intended to 'give back' to them. I had not anticipated that this question would arise especially after I had clarified that I was conducting scholarly research whose outcome was intended to benefit communities where the research was being conducted.

This question lingered in my mind for a very long time and prompted me to think about practical ways I could show my appreciation to my research collaborators. We discussed the issue at length, and in the end, I offered to host a workshop on grant and report writing skills. This was welcomed by the team, and I was deeply impressed when two members of the action team reached out to inform me that they had been awarded peacebuilding grants by Peace Direct – an international NGO in the United Kingdom. They expressed deep appreciation to me for having hosted that workshop. The WhatsApp group that we created at the start of the

project has now become a platform for robust discussion and engagement. Numerous opportunities for professional and personal development are also shared on the platform demonstrating the team's flexibility. This experience has somehow taught me fundamental things about field research, principally that 'giving back' has different interpretations and that sometimes as researchers we want to shy away from 'giving back' because in most instances we assume that it is always about financial rewards. These experiences were very rewarding for me, and I hope to take them forward in life.

10.6 Recommendations And Areas for Future Research

Localised peacebuilding processes that aim to facilitate inclusive peacebuilding require investment and capacity building from international actors and donor partners through hybrid processes and systems. Further, the hybridisation of peacebuilding²⁵ can help improve the interactions between communities, donors and power holders. Despite considerable funding and great effort that donor countries and peacebuilding partners have put into peacebuilding in the country, they are not the most suitable actors to drive local peacebuilding. Furthermore, the benefit of focusing on local peacebuilding and development is that it allows for a context-specific approach to tackling local issues that have an impact on the local community.

Nonetheless, a key aspect should be partnership and local ownership. Moreover, investment should not involve making local organisations follow the priorities of international actors. It should instead enable them to have the freedom to use their local knowledge to meet the needs of the local population. If donor countries and international partners can actively support informal peacebuilding proposals and redirect their focus to supporting local peacebuilding efforts and initiatives, they would be better placed to contribute to peace in both the medium and long term through win/win collaborations and partnerships.

Future research on this topic needs to bring other parameters of this subject to the fore. For example, while it is clear, based on interviews with experts, academic and practitioners that external support (technical, financial, and logistical) is crucial for sustained peacebuilding, a

²⁵ As a concept, hybridisation of peacebuilding encourages us to look beyond state- and institution-centric analyses, focusing instead on a fuller cohort of actors and examining contexts shaped from the bottom up that resonate with local norms and values.

lingering challenge is how to ensure that external support does not compromise the indigeneity of organic community peace infrastructures. In this respect, there is need for more empirical research that seeks to better understand the implications of external support for the autonomy and effectiveness of informal community peace infrastructures like the one contained in this piece of work.

I conclude this section by highlighting key recommendations for actors working on a range of peacebuilding related issues in Zimbabwe. The first recommendation is to the government of Zimbabwe, the second and third are directed to regional institutions, the international community and partners, the last recommendation to members of the academic community and other stakeholders in the field.

Government of Zimbabwe: The government in Zimbabwe must strive to create an enabling legal and policy framework for the existence of local peace committees – broadly defined. To achieve this, the government can work to put in place appropriate legal and policy frameworks that clearly define the role and mandate of local peace committees in relation to existing peacebuilding institutions like the NPRC. While history continues to teach us that formalization isn't always a guarantee for effectiveness (see Nganje 2021), formalisation helps with institutional recognition which often comes with state protection; something we lacked in our own instance. State recognition will not only help with institutional support for local peace endeavors but could also potentially eliminate overlap between the state and local peace committees, which often results in confusion and duplication of efforts. In the same vein, enacting appropriate legal and policy frameworks for the operationalisation of LPCs can go a long way in addressing accountability deficits that our team encountered – and a problem that afflicts many local peace committees.

Regional institutions: Incorporate local peace committees into future UN/AU post-conflict peacebuilding initiatives. Future UN/AU post-conflict peacebuilding missions should be encouraged to enact mandates to support and integrate local peace committees into national/regional peacebuilding strategies. Recognizing local peace committees as an integral component of the post-conflict peacebuilding frameworks while simultaneously respecting their autonomy and uniqueness will assure that local structure have the financial and institutional legitimacy and support needed to make meaningful contributions to Africa's efforts to create a peaceful and prosperous continent for all.

Institutions and partners: Establish a national network of local peace committees in Zimbabwe. In collaboration with community leaders, the international and business community, partners and donors can contribute financial, logistical and technical knowhow to develop a national network of local peace committees to serve as a platform for peer learning, experience sharing and best practice. Constituted appropriately, these networks and platforms can be used to strengthen the capacity and performance of individual local peace committees without directly interfering with operations or making them overly dependent on external help.

While the role of peace infrastructures, specifically informal infrastructures in facilitating inclusive peacebuilding is well documented, policy support for such processes remains weak and fragmented particularly among donor partners and agencies. Ideas and knowledge from studies such as this one are found mainly in thesis submissions, books, journal articles, and the like, which are only really for the consumption of the intellectual community. In this regard, I propose that findings and analyses pertaining to peace infrastructures be simplified and made accessible to a wider variety of stakeholders, government and community representatives, donor partners and the media through easily accessible platforms.

10.7 Chapter Summary

In sum, emerging research on peace infrastructures as tools for peacebuilding indicates that dealing with the past through transitional mechanisms like peace infrastructures limits the risk of renewed violence. Assessments of country-specific cases show that peace infrastructures are often effective in fostering peace, and when used as conflict prevention tools, can diffuse tensions early on before conflict escalates into full blown violence. Preliminary evidence on the positive effects of informal peace infrastructures on peacebuilding exists, but these findings need to be corroborated with longitudinal research covering different community peace infrastructures across various parts of the country. For instance, recent patterns indicate a change to the dynamics of violence in Zimbabwe, but not its motive. From around 2012 to the by-elections in 2015, violence committed against civilians decreased to 35% of total occurrences although majority of acts of violence still target opposition supporters. Furthermore, since 2013, violence has largely been limited to intra-political violence although stability and power dynamics within the ruling party will likely shape present and future violence patterns, locations, and intensity.

Finally, research on informal peace infrastructures in Zimbabwe is currently still too nascent to draw clear conclusions on their effect on peacebuilding. Similarly, the effects of international support for peace infrastructures warrants further analysis. Two further open questions remain. First, it is not yet clear whether informal peace infrastructures can contribute to a deeper quality of peace that goes beyond the absence of violence. For instance, can informal peace infrastructures help to foster social cohesion in societies that have experienced severe and protracted violence? So far, the academic literature has focused on peace infrastructures' contribution to peace operationalised as the absence of violence (negative peace).

However, many assume that peace infrastructures, specifically informal peace infrastructures, can contribute to a more comprehensive peace by addressing the structural causes of conflict and mend broken societal relationships (referred to as positive peace). These effects have, however, not been studied yet, probably due to data constraints. A second open question is how to combine various peacebuilding instruments. In the guidance note of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Approach to Peacebuilding, one of the guiding principles is that donors should "encourage a comprehensive approach integrating an appropriate combination of processes and mechanisms". A 2016 study by the Berghof Foundation shows that the combination of formal and informal peace infrastructures may be particularly effective, but more systematic analyses of successful combinations of peace infrastructures are necessary.

Furthermore, this study has underscored two important points: firstly, building lasting peace must begin with a recognition and an acknowledgement that there are no quick fixes, short cuts nor prescribed solutions for reconciling and healing communities and societies emerging from protracted and sustained periods of violent conflict. This is because by nature, positive relationship building and creating mutual trust between former enemies is a difficult task, which nonetheless remains crucial to building lasting peace. Secondly, building a shared future from a divided past is probably one of the most difficult and challenging tasks for peace practitioners the world over. Our intervention has sought to demonstrate that where peacebuilding interventions are applied with a greater degree of success; communities have had to develop and discover own routes and paths to peacebuilding, reconciliation and healing. In some instances, this has involved the use of informal peace infrastructures to sustain peacebuilding gains in the aftermath of violent conflict and war. In the end, successful peace intervention is one that is implemented to the 'satisfaction' of conflicting parties. Evidence from this study show that outside interventions and impositions often do not work. Not only do they lack local ownership but may risk relapse into violent conflict and war. Because

peacebuilding is not about the imposition of solutions but the creation of opportunities, I hold the view that decolonising peacebuilding through localised interventions marks an important starting point to developing sensitive peacebuilding interventions that can facilitate inclusive peacebuilding through elimination of barriers to sustainable peacebuilding.

Over and above, the research process contributed to new ways of doing peacebuilding by highlighting the role and place of ordinary people in building peace. I believe that involving and seeking the active participation of ordinary people in peacebuilding and transitional justice processes built their self-esteem and their capacity to achieve common understanding of shared problems as well as how to plan for and implement suitable interventions and solutions. In this way, I believe this research process may have helped to rescue and free peacebuilding from over professionalisation by experts and specialists by redistributing the power to create and co-create knowledge and its interpretation. While I cannot claim to have fundamentally shifted unequal power dynamics to challenge extractivism, I believe distributing power and affording marginalised people an opportunity to communicate and tell their own stories constitutes a genuine attempt to shift asymmetrical power relationships.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Letter of Information and Consent Form



LETTERS OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study:

Bridging the gender gap through a local peace committee in Zimbabwe: A participatory action research.

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: (Darlington Tshuma)

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s: (Dr. S. Kaye/G. Harris)

My name is Darlington Tshuma, a Ph.D. candidate in the Peacebuilding Programme at Durban University of Technology (DUT) in South Africa. I am conducting research seeking to address gender disparities in Zimbabwe's peacebuilding processes. My research is motivated by the realisation that despite growing evidence of a direct correlation between equality and empowerment of women and a nation's political stability and socioeconomic development, women remain critically under-represented in conflict prevention, conflict-resolution, and post-conflict peace building efforts in the country. The voices and concerns of women affected by violence during conflict who ironically also carry much of the burden for healing and rebuilding their communities in peacetime are routinely absent from, or simply overlooked during processes for negotiating peace. Despite numerous examples of women who have provided leadership to prevent and resolve conflict at local, national, and regional levels, persistent inequality and marginalisation prevents women from realising their potential and capacity as negotiators, mediators, and decision makers. My research is participatory; implying that it works collaboratively with the people and communities it seeks to empower. To this end, I will work with an 'action team' who will direct and drive the research process with the ultimate intention of establishing a Local Peace Committee (LPC) as part of an enduring peace infrastructure. My principal supervisor is Dr. S. Kaye and co-supervisor is Prof. G. Harris.

As a participant in this study, you are required to go through an interview with me and participate in group discussions that may involve numerous group exercises and activities. Pre and post training evaluations forms will be used at various stages of the research process. Participation is entirely voluntary, and it is important to understand that you can pull out at any stage of the research when you feel you're no longer comfortable to continue. All material will be edited for presentation, and you will be availed an opportunity to preview the material and raise any discomfort you may feel or raise any suggestions or changes if there are any. At any point of the research, as a participant/s, you have a right to disapprove or stop the use of any audio and video material made about you. Research outputs arising from this research process will include academic and policy papers, presentations at regional and international conferences and public interviews.

Please note that you're not required to pay anything for this research. Also, if for any reason you feel that the research might put you at risk and you do not want to be referred by your name, you're obliged to say so and your anonymity is assured and I endeavour to maintain high levels of confidentiality.

Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:

Please contact the researcher (tel no +263 773 784 873), my supervisor Dr. S. Kaye (tel no. +27-31-373-6860) or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on +27 -31-373-2375.



CONSENT FORM

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher(name of Researcher), about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: _____.

- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerized system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had enough opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

Full Name of Participant Date Time Signature / Right Thumbprint

I..... herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully
 ..(name of researcher)

Informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Full Name of Researcher Date Signature

Full Name of Witness (If applicable) Date Signature

Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable) Date Signature

Appendix 2: Focus Group Discussion Guide

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FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

- Each discussion had between 8-10 participants from diverse backgrounds drawn from across Bulawayo.

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:

My name is Darlington Tshuma. I am studying towards a Ph.D. degree in Public Administration – Peace Studies with Durban University of Technology (DUT). I am undertaking an action research study titled: **‘Bridging the gender gap through a local peace committee in Zimbabwe: A Participatory Action Research’**. The study is being conducted in Bulawayo but will also incorporate key informants from elsewhere around Zimbabwe.

Ethical Note

Should you agree to take part in the focus group discussion (FGD), the FGD will take approximately one hour. Participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving reasons, and without prejudice or any adverse consequences. The information you give will only be used for research purposes and will be aggregated with other responses and only the overall or average information will be used. Your identity and individual answers will be kept totally confidential. Should you wish to discuss this further please feel free to contact me or my supervisor Professor Sylvia Kaye, telephone: 031 201 4079 or SylviaK@dut.ac.za.

Instructions

- I. Group members to introduce themselves
- II. Introduce the purpose of the group discussion
- III. Respect each other and allow everyone to contribute

Number of participants

Females	Males

Focus Group Discussion Guide

- What is your understanding of peacebuilding?
 - Participants will be required to draw visual representation of their understanding of peacebuilding accompanied by a short description of the picture.
- What are some of the peace indicators you use to measure the presence/absence of peace in your community/country?
 - Participants can list up to five each.
- Who in your view are key players in supporting peace efforts in your community and why?

- How are you an as individual/organisation support peace efforts in your community/organisation?
- I. How are you supporting peace initiatives by marginalised groups – i.e women, youth, disabled etc?
- What are some of the challenges you face as a peace champion/advocate/activist/builder?
 - How can they be overcome?

Appendix 3: Interview Guide for Peacebuilding experts/Practitioners

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Key Interview Guide for Peacebuilding Experts/Practitioners

- What is your understanding of peacebuilding within the Zimbabwean context?
- What factors were important in promoting your original commitment to peace work?
- What factors have sustained your work for peace over time? Are the original motivations still important?
- What have been the main obstacles and challenges you have faced in your work for peace? To what extent are these specific to marginalised groups i.e women, youth and disabled persons working on peace initiatives?
- How are you supporting peace initiatives by marginalised groups mentioned above – particularly women?
- Thinking about the peace work and your involvement in peace work over the years - are there conspicuous successes and conspicuous failures? How do you perceive the overall effectiveness of your work?
- What is your main vision of peace for your Zimbabwe/Organisation/Community?

Appendix 4: AVP Snapshot Survey

Dear AVP Participant

The purpose of this snapshot survey is to understand how the AVP workshops (Level I, II, III) you attended have helped you in your leadership journey both at a personal and professional level. Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible and to your best ability bearing in mind that all responses will be treated with the highest levels of confidentiality. All responses from this snapshot survey will be used solely for research purposes.

I. How did you find the AVP workshop?

xi.
.....
.....
.....

II. Which aspects of the workshops stood out for you and why?

a).....
b).....
c).....

III. Did the workshop enhance your leadership skills? If yes, please explain

xii.
.....
.....

IV. What aspects of the workshop have you put into practice since you attained the qualification?

xiii.
.....
.....

V. How did the workshop impact you on a personal level?

xiv.
.....
.....

VI. On a scale of 1-5, please rate your leadership skills before participating in the workshop?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

VII. How would you rate them after participating in the workshop?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

VIII. Would you recommend AVP workshops to friends, family, colleagues etc?

☐ Y ☐ N/A ☐ N

xv. Please explain your answer above:

xvi.
.....
.....

Appendix 5: Action Team Pre-Workshop Survey

Action Team

Short Pre-Workshop Survey

I. What are your expectations for this workshop?

a)
.....
.....
.....

b)
.....
.....
.....

II. Why do you think people conduct research?

a)
.....

b)
.....

c)
.....

III. In your view, what would a researcher look like?

xvii.
.....
.....
.....

IV. Please rate your research competencies by ticking the appropriate box

☐ Very strong ☐ Strong ☐ Average ☐ Very weak ☐ Weak

V. What is your understanding of Action Research?

xviii.
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

VI. Have you used Action Research before?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

VII. If you answered yes, what was the outcome?

xix.
.....
.....
.....
.....

Appendix 6: Action Team Post-Workshop Survey

Action Team Short Post-Workshop Survey

I. Did the workshop meet your expectations? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure

II. What were your four key take-ways from the workshop?

- a)
.....
- b)
.....
- c)
.....
- d)
.....

III. Rate your research competencies after attending the workshop?

☐ Very strong ☐ Strong ☐ Average ☐ Weak ☐ Very Weak

IV. Did your understanding of Action Research improve? State how?

.....
.....
.....

IV. How confident are you with implementing action research projects? Please tick appropriate box.

☐ Very confident ☐ Confident ☐ Partially confident ☐ Not confident ☐ N/A

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Register of Attendees for Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

235

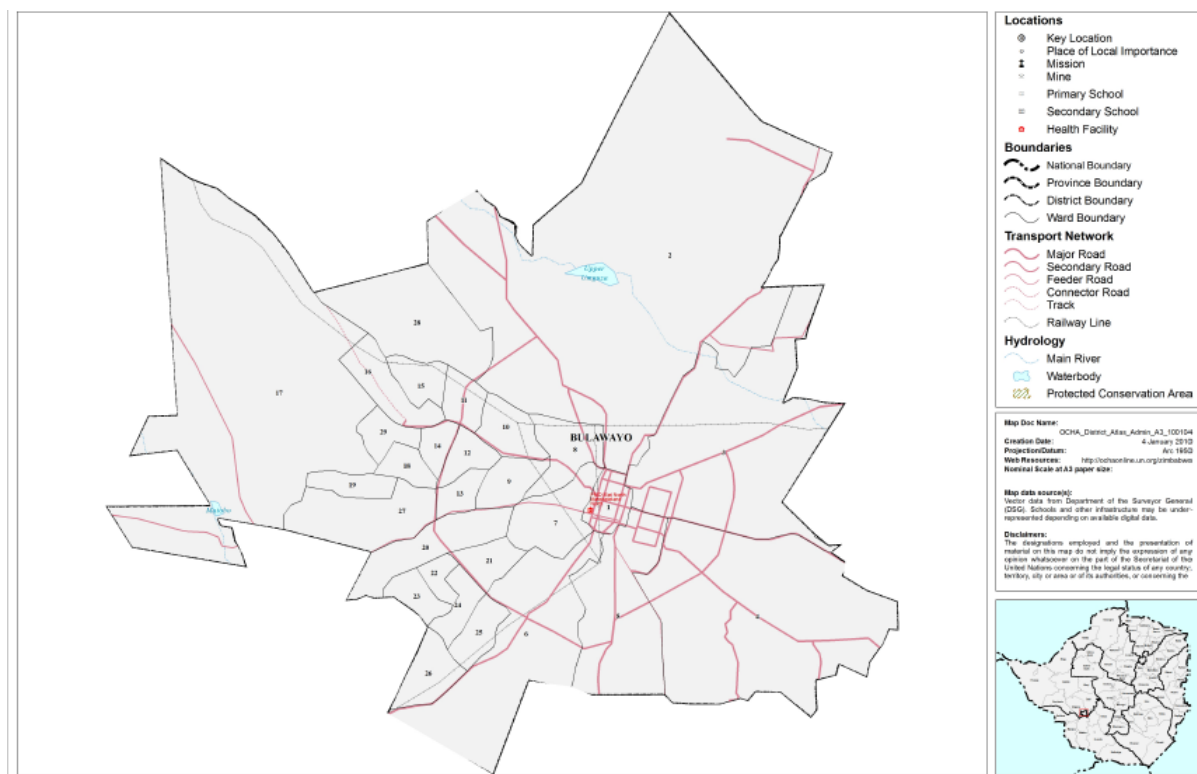
Appendix 8: Map of Zimbabwe

Map of Zimbabwe



Source: www.accord.org.za

Appendix 9: Administrative map of the City of Bulawayo

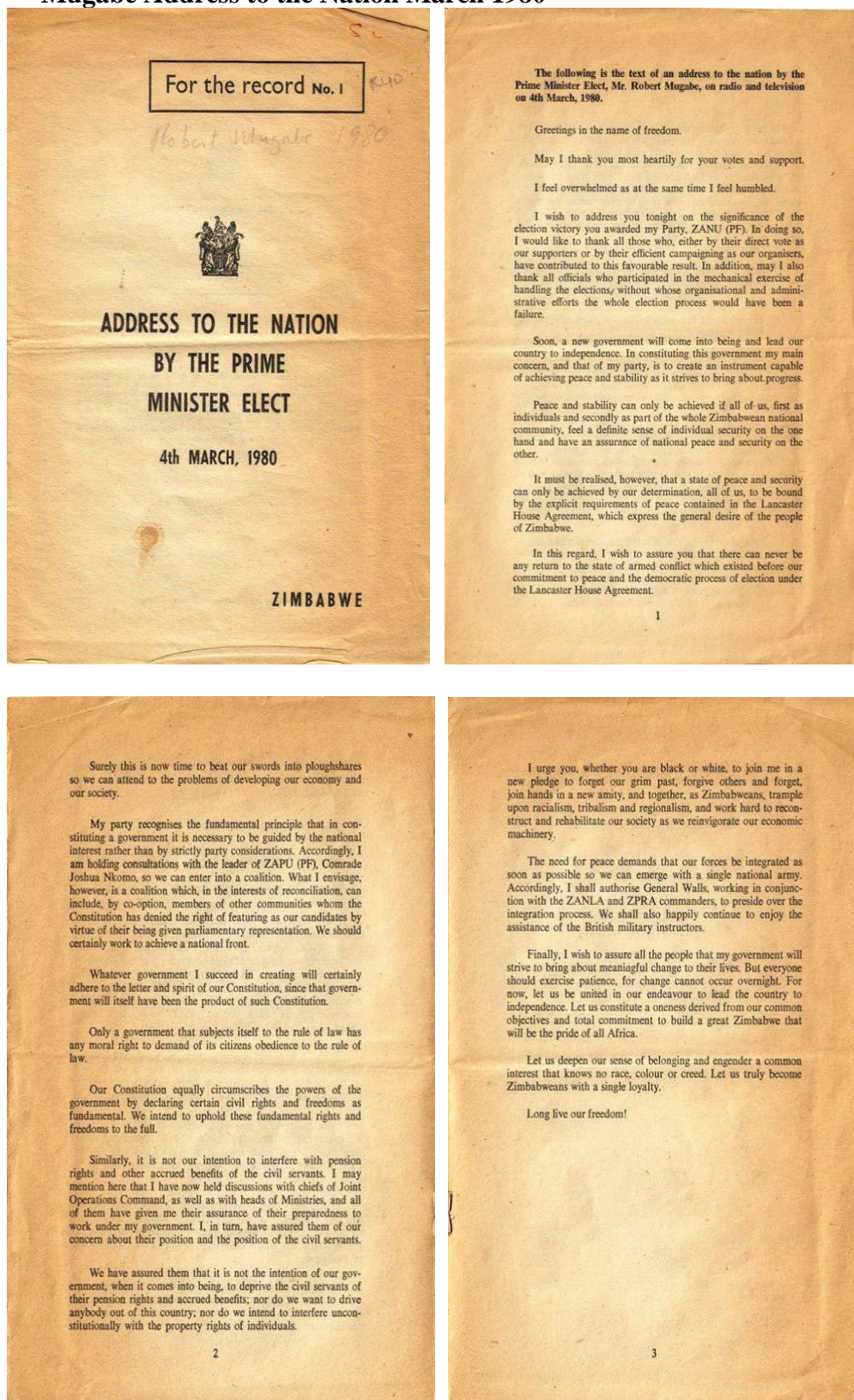


Adapted from

https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A3_districts_Bulawayo.pdf

Appendix 10: Mugabe's Address to the Nation March 1980

Mugabe Address to the Nation March 1980



Full text of historic unity agreement

AGREEMENT OF UNITY BETWEEN THE ZIMBABWE AFRICAN NATIONAL UNION (PATRIOTIC FRONT) AND PATRIOTIC FRONT (ZAPU)

PREAMBLE

CONSIDERING the historical links between Zanu (PF) and (PF) Zapu in the struggle for national independence and democracy through the strategy of the armed struggle and their alliance under the banner of the Patriotic Front;

Cognisant of the fact that the two parties jointly command the support of the overwhelming majority of the people of Zimbabwe as evidenced by the general election results of 1980 and 1985 respectively;

Notwithstanding that Zanu (PF) commands a greater percentage of the said overwhelming majority of the people of Zimbabwe;

Desirous to unite our nation, establish peace, law and order and so guarantee social and economic development and political stability;

Determined to eliminate and end the insecurity and violence caused by dissidents in Matabeleland;

Convinced that national unity, political stability, peace, law and order, social and economic development can only be achieved to their fullest under conditions of peace and the unity primarily of Zanu (PF) and (PF) Zapu;

WE, the two leaders of

Zanu to explain unity

Zanu (PF) and (PF) Zanu, that is to say, Comrade Robert Gabriel Mugabe, First Secretary and President of Zanu (PF), and Comrade Joshua Nkomo, President of (PF) Zapu, assisted by a sub-committee of equal members of Zanu (PF) and (PF) Zapu, held 10 meetings to discuss the possible unity of our two parties as follows:

1st meeting: 2nd October, 1985 — Parliament Buildings.

2nd meeting: 28th November, 1985 — Parliament Buildings.

3rd meeting: 4th April, 1986 — Parliament Buildings.

4th meeting: 22nd July, 1986 — Parliament Buildings.

5th meeting: 29th December, 1986 — Parliament Buildings.

6th meeting: 23rd February, 1987 — Parliament Buildings.

7th meeting: 3rd August, 1987 — Mufumbiro Building.

8th meeting: 10th August, 1987 — Parliament Buildings.

9th meeting: 23rd October, 1987 — Parliament Buildings.

10th meeting: 10th December, 1987 — Parliament Buildings.

Consequent upon these meetings, and paying due regard to all the principal issues raised thereat, we have agreed as follows:

THE AGREEMENT

1. That Zanu (PF) and (PF) Zapu have irrevocably committed themselves to unite under one political party.

2. That the unity of the two political parties shall be achieved under the name Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front), in short Zanu (PF).

3. That Comrade Robert Gabriel Mugabe shall be the First Secretary and President of Zanu (PF).

4. That Zanu (PF) shall have two Second Secretaries and Vice-Presidents who shall be appointed by the First Secretary and President of the Party.

5. That Zanu (PF) shall seek to establish a socialist society in Zimbabwe on the guidance of Marxist-Leninist principles.

6. That Zanu (PF) shall seek to establish a one party state in Zimbabwe.

7. That the leadership of Zanu (PF) shall abide by the Leadership Code.

8. That the existing structures of Zanu (PF) and (PF) Zapu shall be merged in accordance with the letter and spirit of this Agreement.

9. That both parties shall, in the interim, take immediate vigorous steps to eliminate and end the insecurity and violence prevalent in Matabeleland.

10. That Zanu (PF) and (PF) Zapu shall convene their respective congresses to give effect to this Agreement within the shortest possible time.

11. That in the interim, Comrade Robert Gabriel Mugabe is vested with full powers to prepare for the implementation of this Agreement and to act in the name and authority of Zanu (PF).

Signed at State House this 22nd day of December 1987.

Joshua Nkomo Nkomo, President, (PF) ZAPU.
Robert Gabriel Mugabe, First Secretary and President of Zanu (PF).

Signed at State House, this 22nd day of December, 1987

JOSHUA NKOMO NKOMO
President, (PF) ZAPU

First Secretary and President of ZANU(PF)

Govt to facilitate Gukurahundi exhumations, reburials

BY NOBANI KLODZU

PRESIDENT Emmerson Mnangagwa yesterday pledged to facilitate the exhumation and reburial of Gukurahundi victims, provision of counselling and medical assistance to victims and survivors as well as issuance of identity documents to the affected.

This comes as government has begun the process of finding redress to the 1980's mass killings, which claimed over 30 000 lives in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces.

Mnangagwa last month met clergy and civic groups from Matabeleland region under the banner, Matabeleland Collective (MC). The CSOs pressed him to shed light on what his administration was doing to attend to mounting calls for closure to the emotive issue where over 30 000 civilians were killed in the southern region by the North Korean-trained army unit, Fifth Brigade.

The meeting was held at the Bulawayo State House.

Among some of the demands by the MC at the State House meeting was for Mnangagwa to decriminalise Gukurahundi as well as allowing victims and survivors to discuss about their experiences without fear of arrest. They also pushed for the facilitation of exhumations and documentation for victims and survivors, as part of short-term deliverables on the issue.

MC convenor Trevor Masuku said government had formally responded to their concerns "in the form of an implementation matrix" that was announced by Justice ministry secretary Virginia Mahira yesterday.

"Government will (immediately) device protection mechanisms for those affected by Gukurahundi to be free to discuss their experiences, facilitate birth certificates for victims affected by Gukurahundi, provide death certificates to dependants of Gukurahundi, allow exhumation and reburial of victims in an orderly manner, provide a special provision for medical attention to victims of Gukurahundi," Mahira told journalists after the closed-door meeting.

She said line ministries such as Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage, Health and Child Care, Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare and Finance will implement

and co-ordinate government's implementation matrix to find redress to the Gukurahundi issue.

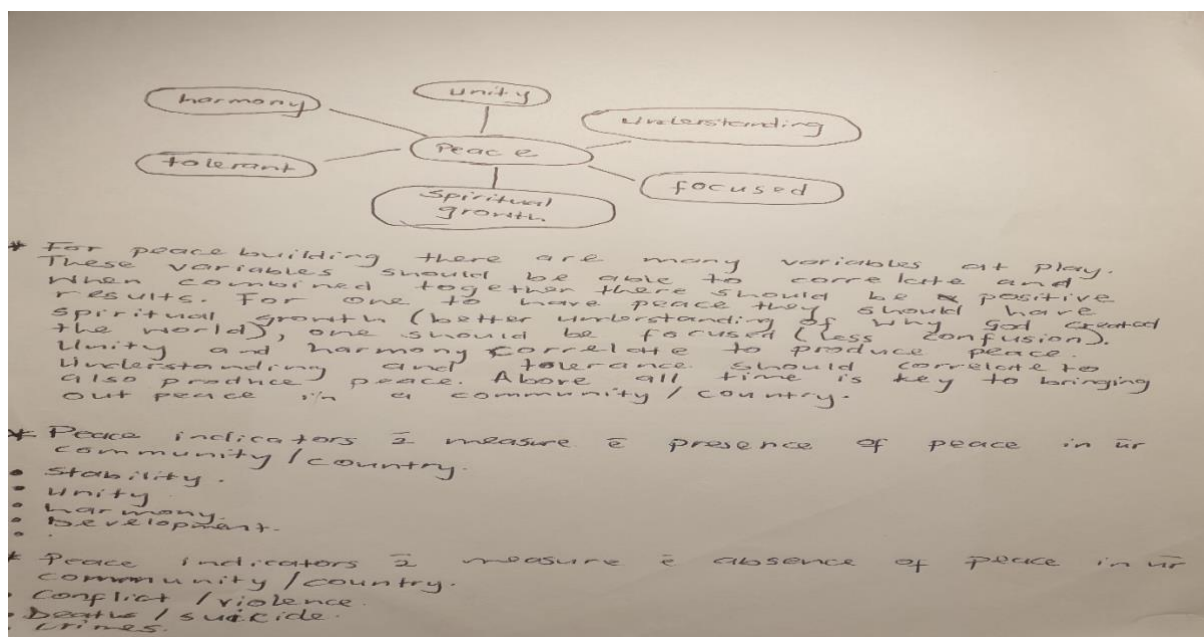
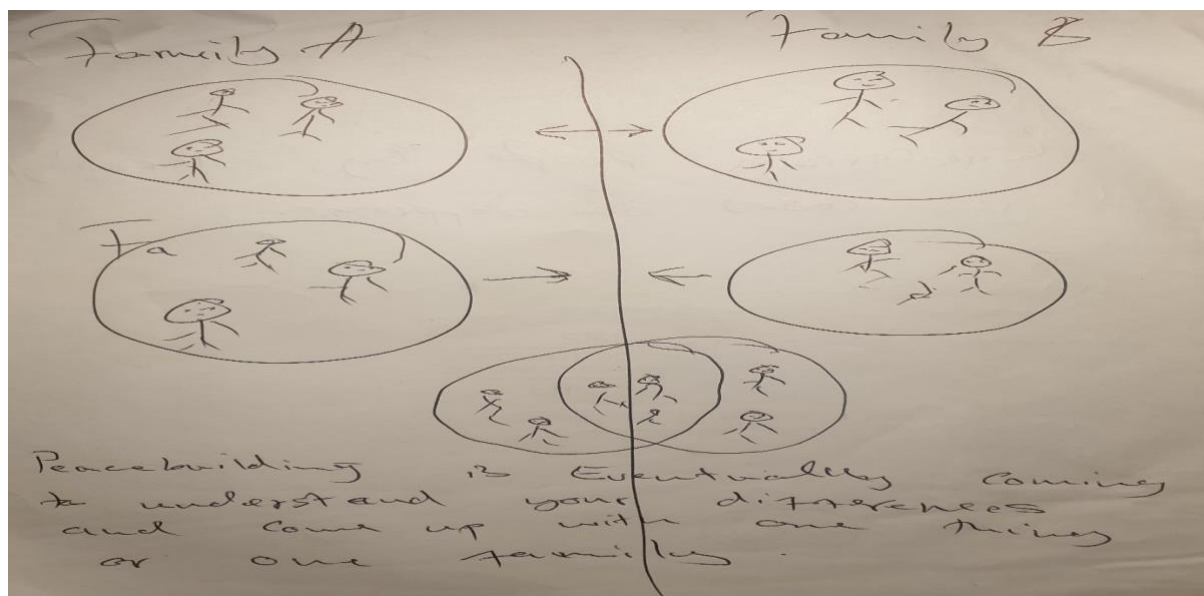
Thousands of Gukurahundi survivors do not have identity documents after losing their parents and relatives during the mass killings. This has resulted in, among other things, some pupils dropping out of school after failing to write public examinations because they had no birth certificates.

However, Mahira was non-committal on how much money government had set aside for exercises such as exhumations and reburials, preferring to only say "the issue of budget, reburials and so forth, you notice the Finance ministry is also part of the enable of the process, so we are assured that the ministry will assist."

Mahira also said government will attend to issues of social service delivery through provision of schools and clinics in Matabeleland, devolve government processes by prioritising local businesses in the awarding of tenders and giving locals first preference in jobs, extend the lifespan of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) and to continue engaging the MC for sustained dialogue.

Appendix 11: Fieldwork

Selected drawings



Appendix 11: Editing Certificate

DR RICHARD STEELE

BA, HDE, MTech(Hom)

HOMEOPATH

Registration No. A07309 HM

Practice No. 0807524

Freelance academic editor

Associate member: Professional Editors'

Guild, South Africa

110 Cato Road

Glenwood, Durban 4001

031-201-6508/082-928-6208

Postal: P.O. Box 30043, Mayville 4058

Email: rsteele@vodamail.co.za

EDITING CERTIFICATE

Re: Darlington Tshuma

PhD thesis: **BRIDGING GENDER GAPS THROUGH LOCAL PEACE
COMMITTEES IN ZIMBABWE: A PARTICIPATORY ACTION
RESEARCH**

I confirm that I have edited this thesis for clarity, language and layout. I checked the matching of citations and references in the List of References, but did not check the accuracy of reference content or conformity with the appropriate reference style. I returned the document to the author with track changes so correct implementation of the changes and clarifications requested in the text and the citations is the responsibility of the author. I am a freelance editor specialising in proofreading and editing academic documents. My original tertiary degree which I obtained at the University of Cape Town was a B.A. with English as a major and I went on to complete an H.D.E. (P.G.) Sec. with English as my teaching subject. I obtained a distinction for my M.Tech. dissertation in the Department of Homoeopathy at Technikon Natal in 1999 (now the Durban University of Technology). I was a part-time lecturer in the Department of Homoeopathy at the Durban University of Technology for 13 years and supervised many master's degree dissertations during that period.

Dr Richard Steele

15 June 2021

per email