

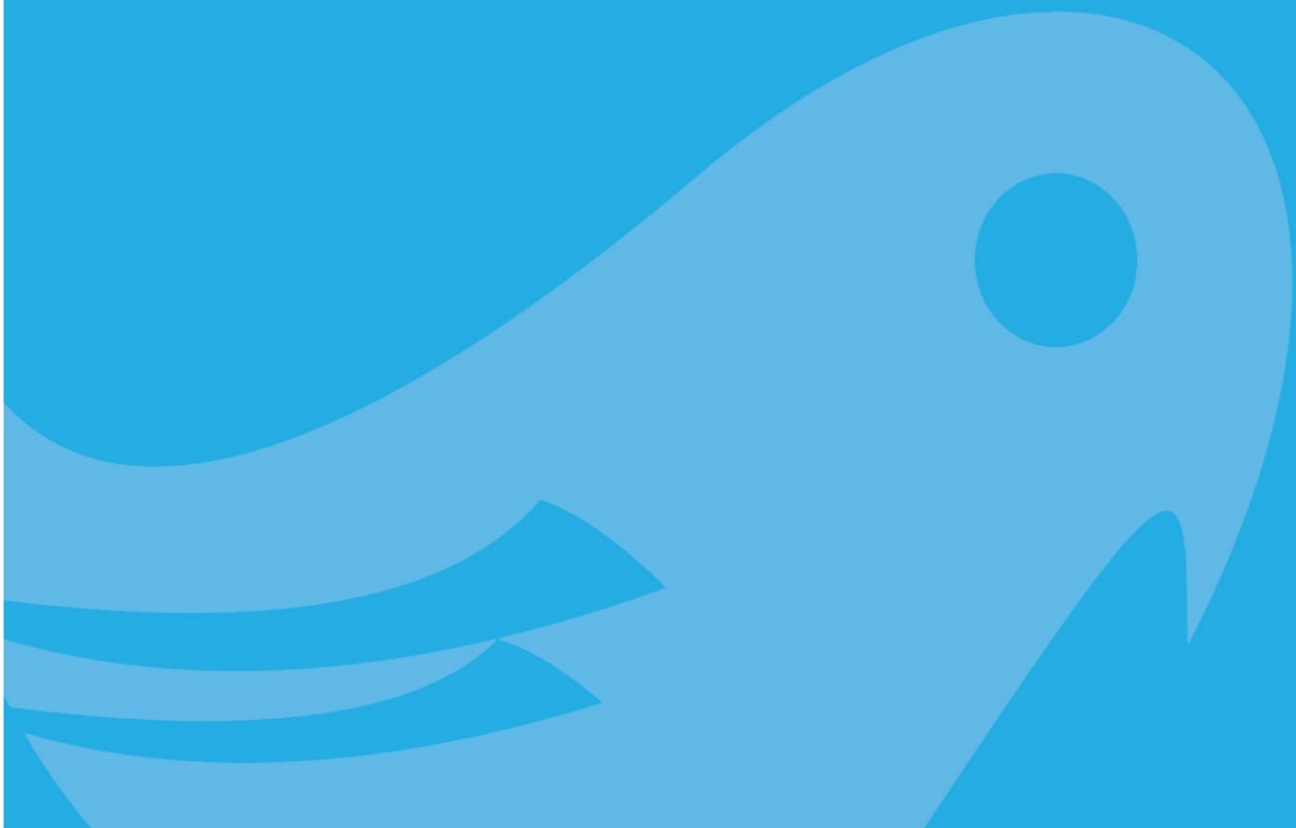


Centre for Conflict Management and Transformation

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# Now that we know...

A case for a community-driven national reconciliation process



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Centre for Conflict Management and Transformation  
P O Box A1755, Avondale  
Harare Zimbabwe.

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## Peace Pledge

From now on I shall be at peace with my neighbour.  
Together we shall banish political violence;  
Together we shall work for our common good;  
Together we shall help build our community;  
Together we shall raise our children in harmony so that  
Together we shall live in happiness.  
Never again shall we allow politics to make us enemies of each other.

*Samuel Maruta*  
2004

## Contents

Foreword

Acknowledgements

Map of Zimbabwe

Abbreviations

### CHAPTER 1: **Introduction.**

1.1	Background to the study.....	9
1.2	Reconciliation as a conflict resolution mechanism .....	9
1.3	Lessons from other countries .....	15
1.4	The research study.....	17

### CHAPTER 2: **Listening to our voices:** Popular perceptions of the major conflicts in Zimbabwe.

2.1	Introduction.....	22
2.2	Mashonaland Central Province .....	23
2.3	Mashonaland West Province .....	28
2.4	Matebeleland South Province .....	31
2.5	Midlands Province .....	33
2.6	Bulawayo .....	39
2.7	Gweru .....	44
2.8	Harare.....	48
2.9	Mutare .....	53

### CHAPTER 3: **Taking another look:** An overview of the conflict history of Zimbabwe.

3.1	Introduction.....	57
3.2	Pre-colonial tribal wars.....	58
3.3	Colonial subjugation and domination. ....	62
3.4	The liberation struggle and war.....	67
3.5	The Matebeleland gukurahundi war .....	77
3.6	The land redistribution .....	84
3.7	Inter-party struggles for power .....	90
3.8	Food shortages.....	98

### CHAPTER 4: **Sharing the peace in us:** Reflections on the proposed community-driven reconciliation process.

4.1	Context of the reconciliation process.....	103
4.2	Participants in the reconciliation process .....	105
4.3	Pillars of the reconciliation process.....	108
4.4	Outcomes of the reconciliation process .....	112

### CHAPTER 5: **Conclusions and recommendations.**

5.1	Major conflicts .....	115
5.2	Community action .....	116
5.3	Mis-perceptions.....	117
5.4	A political power game .....	117
5.5	Divisions in society.....	118
5.6	Prognosis .....	120
5.7	The role of the community.....	120
5.8	Further research .....	121

## Foreword

Since the end of the guerrilla war of the 1970s, but especially the 1980s Matebeleland gukurahundi war, Zimbabwe has been generally viewed as a peaceful and tranquil country. The government, especially, has actively nurtured and promoted this notion of peace and stability in the minds of the international community. But the generality of the people of Zimbabwe, regardless of their political affiliation or social standing, have a totally different view of the situation prevailing in the country.

For while there has been no military confrontation within the country since the end of the Matebeleland gukurahundi war, the people have not always had peace in their minds, in their families, nor in their communities. Not least because beginning with the independence elections in 1980, all elections have been characterised by violence, very often accompanied by deaths, especially whenever there is a strong opposition party challenging for political power. Over the years, the government has increasingly tightened its hold on the population through intimidation such that there is now an over-pervasive fear in the hearts and minds of the people of Zimbabwe to the extent that people choose to suffer in silence rather than risk life and limb by voicing alternative views, thereby creating a façade of peace in the country. Therefore while it is true that there is peace in Zimbabwe, the big question is what kind of peace – positive or negative.

The act of carrying out the study was a lesson of a lifetime for us at CCMT. When we began the research, our point of departure was that Zimbabwe was going through cycles of violence one after another because the previous conflicts had not been adequately resolved and the government had to revisit and resolve them to break the cycle. Thus according to this view the government had to act, and all that it needed was the evidence from the people. We were going to provide that evidence, by testing our thinking with the generality of Zimbabweans to see if they shared the same view and collect whatever else they had to say about the issue.

The above reasoning was based on the assumption that the blame for the conflicts lay 100% on some identifiable person or group of people out there. However, it so turned out that most of the blame lay with us, me and you. It was me and you that shaped and drove those conflicts. By the same token, it is me and you that can stop those conflicts. Now that we know where the problem lies, we should begin asking ourselves what we will do about it. From now on we should undertake to share the peace inherent in us with our neighbours, to help build just peace in our communities and, through them, our country.

We therefore hereby invite you, by reading this report, to begin to make a commitment to just peace in your community.

The CCMT Board of Trustees

## Acknowledgements

The Centre for Conflict Management and Transformation (CCMT) would like to acknowledge with thanks all those people that made the research and production of this report possible.

First, there were the 1 289 Zimbabweans from all walks of life throughout the country who agreed to be interviewed for the research.

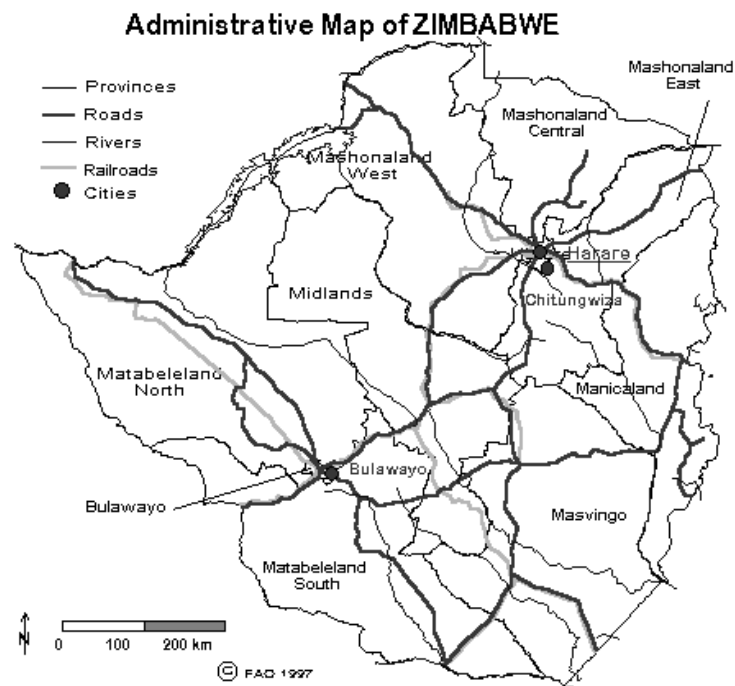
Second, there were the research assistants who braved the harsh political environment and the general insecurity situation in the country, especially in the rural areas, to collect the research data. These were Grace Chikodzi, Cosmas Dube, Macnorman Guduza, Moses Hatinahama, Takawira Kapikinyu, Martha Marawu, Blessing Marondedze, Juliet Mudzviti, Nomathemba Ncube and Nqobile Zulu.

Third, there were the members of the Research Advisory Committee who helped guide the research and documentation process. These were Simon Badza, (Political science), Caroline Cochrane (Clinical Psychology), Monila Kuchena (History), and Pinimidzai Sithole (Social science research).

And forth, there were Samuel Maruta and Stembile Mpofu who coordinated the research process and compiled this report.

Without the commitment and dedication of all these people this work would not have seen light of day.

## Map of Zimbabwe



## Abbreviations

ANC	African National Council
CCMT	Centre for Conflict Management and Transformation
CFU	Commercial Farmers' Union
CIO	Central Intelligence Organisation
FROLIZI	Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MP	Member of Parliament
NCA	National Constitutional Assembly
NDP	National Democratic Party
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
Zanla	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZanuPF	Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front)
Zapu	Zimbabwe African People's Union
Zipra	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army
ZJRI	Zimbabwe Joint Resettlement Initiative
ZUM	Zimbabwe Unity Movement



## CHAPTER 1: **Introduction.**

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### 1.1 Background to the study

*“If yesterday I fought you as an enemy, today you have become a friend and ally with the same national interest, 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. The wrongs of the past must now stand forgiven and forgotten.”<sup>i</sup>*

These were the words of the then prime minister of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, as he announced the government’s policy of reconciliation between blacks and whites at independence in 1980. A short 20 years later in 2000, Mugabe, now president, declared the policy of reconciliation dead and buried, charging that the whites, especially the white commercial farmers, had spurned the hand of reconciliation extended to them by the government in 1980.

The straw that broke the camel’s back in the stormy relationship between the government and the white farmers was the government’s defeat in the constitutional referendum of February 2000. Within two weeks after the referendum results were announced, so-called war veterans and land hungry villagers began to invade white commercial farms, marking the beginning of the often violent fast-track land redistribution programme which was to continue for the next four years and bring about famine and economic stagnation to the country.

At the same time, the government unleashed violence against the officials, supporters and suspected supporters of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), a newly formed opposition party. The violence intensified in the run up to the parliamentary elections held in June of the same year and continued in every election and by-election thereafter.

### 1.2 Reconciliation as a conflict resolution mechanism

The need for reconciliation

It was in this environment that, in 2001, we conceived of the reconciliation project whose beginning was the research study that is the subject of this report. The need for true reconciliation in Zimbabwe, present though it was ever since the country became independent in 1980, was now imperative. This was especially so judging by events and

developments at the time, as well as those throughout the 20 or so years of independence.

First, the use of violence for political ends had become part of the Zimbabwean culture and, instead of subsiding over the years, was increasing in intensity and frequency. All elections throughout the country's independence history were characterised by violence as supporters of competing political parties clashed. This was true of the 1980 independence election and every election thereafter. The intensity and extensiveness of the violence, especially from 1985 onwards, was a function of the strength of the opposition party challenging ZanuPF for power. In 1985, there was Zapu before it was swallowed up by ZanuPF in 1987. In the 1990 parliamentary and presidential elections there was the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM). The 1995 parliamentary and the 1996 presidential elections were relatively peaceful because there was no meaningful opposition, ZUM having fizzled out after the previous elections. Then came the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) which almost defeated ZanuPF in the 2000 parliamentary and 2002 presidential elections; the violence the country experienced then was unprecedented.

Second, previous conflicts were increasingly being used to threaten or justify new violence. Examples of these previous conflicts included colonialism during which the white settlers alienated most of the best land from the black people for their own use and benefit. Throughout the independence period, threats against the whites over land were used by the ruling party as an election gimmick to garner support from the electorate, culminating in the fast-track land redistribution programme of the early 2000s.

Another previous conflict in this category was the liberation war of the 1970s. It was used by ZanuPF in the 1980 election, threatening to go back to war if it lost. This threat has been used over and over again ever since. In fact, since the mid-1990s, liberation war politics came back to haunt the nation as exemplified by, inter alia, the prominence of the war veterans in national affairs, the emphasis on liberation war credentials for the post of president by the country's security chiefs in the 2002 presidential election, and the replay of liberation war stories and music in the media.

And yet another conflict that would not go away was the pre-colonial Ndebele raids on the Shona communities. It was used by the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade during the Matebeleland disturbances in the 1980s to justify atrocities against the Ndebele civilians, claiming

that they were retaliating for the Shona women, young men and cattle taken away by the Ndebele during those raids.

And third, previous attempts at reconciliation in the country had failed, largely because they were faulty in design. The white-black politics of reconciliation agreed at the Lancaster House constitutional conference and announced by government at independence in 1980 lacked a broad-based consultation and grassroots participation; it remained elitist and did not translate to tangible benefits for the people on the ground. So was the 1987 Unity Accord between Zapu and ZanuPF which was intended to 'unite' the Shona and Ndebele after the Matebeleland disturbances; to most of the Shona the conflict was some distant event that existed only in the media while most of the Ndebele felt betrayed by their former leaders through the Unity Accord. Thus these reconciliation attempts remained meaningless and non-existent to the people of Zimbabwe and therefore never really worked.

The benefits of true reconciliation

Thus in view of these developments, the need for true reconciliation in Zimbabwe could not be emphasised enough. True reconciliation is one that is collectively owned by all the stakeholders, and puts at the centre of the process community needs and participation. Reconciliation cannot be a preserve of the authorities; the authorities cannot impose trust and empathy by decree, neither can they forgive in the name of the victims. Nor can it be the preserve of the individuals otherwise it becomes haphazard and limited in scope. Rather, the process must encompass both the top-down and bottom-up approaches, pursued in a complementary fashion to each other while all the same time putting community interests and participation at the centre. To that extent, therefore, it becomes community-driven.

A community-driven reconciliation process prevents, once and for all, the use of the past as the seed of renewed conflict. Thus, for example, if the politics of reconciliation at independence had been properly designed and implemented, and led to true reconciliation, the land issue would have been resolved amicably over the years such that the farm invasions of 2000 would not have taken place. Similarly, the conflict in Matebeleland would have been nipped in the bud, sparing both lives and property, and enabling social and economic development to take place in that region, for the benefit of the whole country. This is because the reconciliation would have broken the cycle of violence, opened up the channels of communication between the various population groups, consolidated the peace that came with independence, and strengthened the

newly established democratic institutions through which any disagreements would have been dealt with peacefully without resort to violence.

Community-driven reconciliation is an all-encompassing process which includes the search for truth, justice, forgiveness and healing. 'At its simplest, it means finding a way to live alongside former enemies – not necessarily to love them, or forgive them, or forget the past in any way, but to co-exist with them, to develop the degree of cooperation necessary to share our society with them, so that we all have better lives together than we have had separately.'<sup>ii</sup> In the context of the land question, for example, both sides of the divide would have come to an amicable win-win situation that benefited both sides, rather than the lose-lose situation that the fast-track land redistribution turned out to be, at least during its implementation. In the context of the so-called distrust and resentment between the Shona and the Ndebele that distorted motive and justification of the Matebeleland gukurahundi war, both sides would have realised that there was no material basis for that distrust and resentment, and both would have benefited from peaceful co-existence and co-operation.

A community-driven reconciliation process looks at both the past and the future, thereby taking care of the needs of both periods. As a backward-looking operation, it 'brings about the personal healing of survivors, the reparation of past injustices, the building or rebuilding of non-violent relationships between individuals and communities, and the acceptance by the former parties to a conflict of a common vision and understanding of the past.'<sup>iii</sup> In this way, it clarifies the past to all stakeholders so that each side is clear as to exactly what happened and did not happen, assists them in accommodating themselves to it and to each other, and enables them to build a common future that is collectively owned and mutually beneficial. Thus in the context of the land question, for example, the people that lost their land during colonialism and still needed it for productive use that was beneficial to the nation as a whole would, in a spirit of true national reconciliation and a shared future, have got back their land and the affected white farmers compensated accordingly, in spite of the willing-seller-willing-buyer requirement of the Lancaster House agreed constitution.

In its forward-looking dimension, reconciliation means enabling victims and perpetrators to get on with life and, at the level of society, the establishment of a civilized political dialogue and an adequate sharing of power. This is predicated on the inescapable reality that once the conflict has ended and the past organised and placed where it belongs, both sides need each other to survive and live a fuller life

henceforward. In the context of the liberation war politics that sustains the inter-party violence, the parties concerned would have realised that they have to move on rather than continue to live in the past.

Last but not least a community-driven reconciliation process is not necessarily very expensive to implement. While paying reparations might involve huge sums of money, some aspects of the reconciliation process are not that expensive. Many reconciliation activities rely above all on one resource which is usually plentiful - ordinary people who are prepared to pay a personal rather than a financial price to achieve progress. Indeed, much reconciliation work is about small-scale human interaction at community level. Symbolic forms of apology, reparation and restitution - public ceremonies, awards, memorials and so on - can also be effective and low-cost (though certainly not sufficient on their own). These could also be organised at community level, though with national recognition. Reparations in the form of access to services - for instance, education or medical help on a free or subsidized basis - also reduce the real cost (of reconciliation) without reducing its value.<sup>iv</sup> These forms of reparation could apply to the Matebeleland gukurahundi war and the farm invasions and the fast-track land redistribution programme.

#### No alternative to reconciliation

Reconciliation is but one of a broad spectrum of conflict handling mechanisms which also includes force, adjudication, arbitration, negotiation and mediation. On a continuum of the level of mutual participation by the parties to a conflict in the search of a solution to the conflict,<sup>v</sup> force would be at the lower end of the spectrum while reconciliation would be at the higher end.

Where the use of force is involved, the more powerful party imposes its will on the weaker party to the conflict. This solution, however, only lasts until the weaker party becomes strong enough to challenge the other, and the conflict flares up again. This is what happened in the case of colonialism, when the black people, defeated by the superior arms of the settlers in the 1890s, waged a guerrilla war in the 1970s to dislodge themselves of a solution that had been imposed on them.

In adjudication, a third party, instead of an adversary, imposes a solution to the conflict. However, the mutual participation of the parties in the choice of the solution is comparatively higher here than in the first. In the adjudication process, at least the parties have an opportunity to present their cases, an opportunity to be heard, to

submit their arguments for why their preferred solution should be the basis upon which the decision is made. Nonetheless, the choice of the solution is made by a third party and the decision is backed by force (enforced) which ensures that the losing party complies. However, the solution requires the existence of an outside force strong enough to enforce it, and neither party feels morally bound to live by the solution which they feel imposed on them from outside and can challenge as soon as they are strong enough to.

In arbitration the parties have greater influence on the process. They choose the arbitrator and can sometimes identify the basis upon which their case will be decided and whether the outcome will be binding or not. However, the solution is still decided by an outsider and, depending on the type of arbitration, the outcome could be imposed by the power of the law. Thus there is room for a disgruntled party to question the whole process and renege on their commitment, leading to the resumption of the conflict.

In negotiation, the participation of all the parties in the search for a solution is very high. It is the parties themselves which have to formulate the issues, and find a resolution that is satisfactory to all of them. In this situation, however, the final choice of the solution might depend on the relative power position of the adversaries rather than on what might be the most satisfactory solution to everyone involved, where the party with the higher bargaining leverage might end up getting the most out of the negotiations. A case in point is the Unity Accord between Zapu and ZanuPF which, instead of coming up with a lasting solution to the 'problem', only resulted in Zapu being swallowed up by ZanuPF.

Mediation is a special type of negotiation where the parties' search for mutually satisfactory solutions is assisted by a third party. The third party's role is to minimize obstacles to the negotiation process including those that emanate from power imbalance. Unlike adjudication, however, in the final analysis it is the decision and agreement of the conflict parties that determines how the conflict will be resolved. However, key factors in this process are the position and interests of the mediator. In the Lancaster House negotiations, for example, Britain as the mediator was in an invidious position of being the colonial power keenly interested in washing its hands clean of the Rhodesian problem. This resulted in a solution of convenience in the form of the politics of reconciliation which only postponed the problem.

The most participatory of the conflict handling mechanisms is reconciliation. This approach not only tries to find solutions to the issues underlying the conflict but also works to alter the adversaries' relationships from that of resentment and hostility to friendship and harmony.<sup>vi</sup> Of course, for this to happen, both parties must be equally invested and participate intensively in the resolution process. But once the required level of commitment and participation is secured, the solution that emerges from the process is more durable than can be possible through any other conflict handling mechanism.

### **1.3 Lessons from other countries**

Some of the countries that have implemented reconciliation processes from which Zimbabwe could draw some lessons are Peru, El Salvador, Chile, Argentina, East Timor and South Africa.

#### **Peru<sup>vii</sup>**

In November 2000, interim president Valentín Paniagua set up a seven-member commission to investigate the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law that took place during a twenty-year conflict that had ended in the mid-1990s. The commission's tasks were to discover the root causes of the political violence; to aid the courts in clarifying crimes involving human rights abuse and determining criminal responsibility; to elaborate proposals for reparation for the victims and their families; to make recommendations for improving human rights protection; and to establish mechanisms to follow up implementation of its recommendations.

#### **El Salvador**

The Commission on the Truth owed its existence and authority to the El Salvador peace agreements that ended the conflict in 1992. The Commission was tasked to investigate serious acts of violence that had occurred since 1980 and whose impact on society urgently demanded that the public should know the truth. On the basis of this mandate, the Commission investigated two types of cases: individual cases or acts which, by their nature, outraged Salvadorian society and/or international opinion; and a series of individual cases with similar characteristics revealing a systematic pattern of violence or ill-treatment which, taken together, equally outraged Salvadorian society, especially since their aim was to intimidate certain sectors of that society.

In the process of doing their work, the Commission took the position that justice did not stop at punishment, but also demanded reparation, and that the victims and, in most cases, their families, were entitled to moral and material compensation. On moral compensation, the Commission recommended the construction of a national monument bearing the names of all the victims of the conflict and the institution of a national holiday in memory of the victims of the conflict to serve as symbols of national reconciliation.

#### Chile

Hundreds of former members of the armed forces were charged and faced trial. The Chilean courts convicted several former military officers of heinous crimes committed during the period covered by the country's amnesty decree, ruling that amnesty was inapplicable in those cases.

#### East Timor

The Commission was an independent statutory authority that inquired into human rights violations committed on all sides between April 1974 and October 1999, and facilitated community reconciliation with justice for those who committed less serious offences. The Commission would not give amnesty; rather, it facilitated community reconciliation by dealing with past cases of lesser crimes such as looting, burning and minor assault. In each case a panel which comprised of a Regional Commissioner and local community leaders mediated between victims and perpetrators to reach agreement on an act of reconciliation to be carried out by the perpetrator. The Commission would report on its findings and make recommendations to the government.

#### South Africa

By far the most prominent of reconciliation processes took place in South Africa under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC was established by an Act of Parliament whose provisions included the following:<sup>viii</sup> the investigation and the establishment of as complete a picture as possible of the nature, causes and extent of gross violations of human rights committed during the period from 1 March 1960 to the cut-off date contemplated in the Constitution, within or outside the Republic, emanating from the conflicts of the past, and the fate or whereabouts of the victims of such violations; the granting of amnesty to persons who make full disclosure of all the relevant facts relating to acts associated with a political objective committed in the course of the conflicts of the past during the said period; affording victims an opportunity to relate the violations they suffered; the taking of measures aimed at the



granting of reparation to, and the rehabilitation and the restoration of the human and civil dignity of victims of violations of human rights; and the making of recommendations aimed at the prevention of the commission of gross violations of human rights.

There are a few insights emerging from reconciliation processes in these countries:

- ❑ The authorities in those countries, having committed themselves to some form of reconciliation, set up commissions to spearhead the reconciliation processes, and provided them with clear and specific implementation and accountability parameters.
- ❑ The findings of the commissions would be reported to the state and used in the trial of perpetrators and the restitution and rehabilitation of the victims.
- ❑ Most of the commissions' mandates were generally silent about the participation of individuals and their communities in the reconciliation processes.
- ❑ The reconciliation processes in the countries studied came after the replacement of a culpable government with a new one which was keen on 'cleansing' the past and starting on a new leaf.
- ❑ The conflicts addressed by the commissions in the countries studied had specific cut off points in time.
- ❑ Amnesty laws put in place by culpable regimes to protect their members were nullified by successive governments, either through the courts or through parliament.

A community-driven reconciliation process in Zimbabwe could borrow the concept of truth-telling and incorporate strong community participation. It would also need to look carefully at the issue of amnesty laws and balance it out with the pillars of the reconciliation process. However, what will remain a real challenge is the government as currently constituted.

#### **1.4 The research study**

##### **Research purpose**

The primary purpose of the study was to confirm the need for reconciliation in the country and the conflicts that would be included in the reconciliation process. That is, we needed to find out whether or not the historical situation pointed to the need for

reconciliation as the best way forward. This necessitated reading the history of Zimbabwe to see if the country had experienced conflicts before and if those conflicts had been adequately resolved to the extent that previous conflicts were not coming back to cause or aggravate later ones.

We also needed to find out whether the generality of the people of Zimbabwe also saw reconciliation as the best way forward to bring about genuine peace and development in the country. This necessitated talking to the people of Zimbabwe to get their views as to any conflicts they were experiencing, had experienced or had heard about and whether these, in their opinion, had been adequately resolved to the extent that previous ones were not coming back to cause or aggravate subsequent ones.

The secondary purpose of the study was, having confirmed the need for reconciliation, to get broad insights into how the reconciliation process could be conducted. This necessitated looking at how, according to historical records and other writings, previous conflicts had ended and how current ones were playing themselves out, and enquiring from the people of Zimbabwe as to their views on possible solutions and the best way forward.

#### Research methodology

The study was divided into two components, the desk study and the field study. The desk study looked at the conflict history of the country. Zimbabwe became a political unit only a little over a hundred years ago with the arrival of Rhodes' Pioneer Column in 1890. However, most of the groups of people that made up the population of the country then were already here. The desk study therefore also covered the period immediately before the arrival of the white settlers, all the way up to the time of the study. The study took the form of reading and synthesising books and other materials on the history of the country, watching videos on historical events, and browsing the internet for materials written on the history of and events in the country.

In the field study, eight research areas were selected throughout the country. Four of these areas were rural (Mashonaland Central and West, Midlands and Matebeleland South provinces), while the other four were urban (cities of Harare, Bulawayo, Gweru, and Mutare). By random sampling, a local government ward was selected in each of the named provinces and cities. A team of researchers was assigned to each of these areas for a period of up to 10 days to gather the required information using a variety of tools.

The main thrust of the data collection process was open-ended and exploratory. The researchers opted against asking the people about specific pre-determined conflicts, preferring instead to elicit these from the people themselves. This, it was hoped, would not lead the interviewees in any particular direction; neither would it unnecessarily engender a block, resistance or antagonism in the interviewee. It was also decided to make the community the focal point of the interviews so that every interviewee would be able to relate personally to the issues. Thus the interviews revolved around conflicts that had affected or were affecting the interviewee's community at the time of the research.

The researchers also recognised the security risk associated with this kind of research in the country at that time, both for the interviewers and for the interviewees. For example, there was always the fear that the interviewee might turn around and accuse the interviewers of being 'sell outs' if he/she felt uncomfortable with the line of questioning (some of the interviewees were indeed hostile and threatening). For a respondent in a rural village, an over-zealous neighbour might sell out on him/her for giving out 'sensitive' information to the researchers. This put limits on the extent to which the interviewers could probe on some of the issues pertinent to the research.

#### Main observations

The following insights and observations emerged from the research study:

1. That the conflict map of Zimbabwe is multi-layered. We found out that Zimbabwe has experienced at least seven major conflicts, namely: pre-colonial tribal wars, colonial subjugation and domination, the liberation struggle & war, the Matebeleland gukurahundi war, the fast-track land redistribution, inter-party rivalries, and the unfair distribution of relief food.
2. That these conflicts had not been adequately resolved, as a result of which:
  - ❑ Earlier conflicts either cause or aggravate subsequent ones.
  - ❑ No population group in the country is completely innocent, each having been alternately a perpetrator and a victim at some point in time.
  - ❑ There is mistrust and resentment among the various population groups which make Zimbabweans easily manipulated by political leaders as they take advantage of these inherent divisions for their own political ends.

3. That while the conflicts were national in scope, they were driven and sustained by the communities, as they were acted out at community level. Thus to the extent that communities drive the conflicts, they can also drive the peace.
4. That people had misconceptions about previous and contemporary conflicts or parties thereto which influenced their responses to and extent of their participation in those conflicts.
5. That Zimbabwe is sitting on a time bomb of further conflicts as some victims of current or recent conflicts are waiting for an opportunity to revenge. The government's oppressive tendencies act as a lid over a population of victims agitating for revenge, thereby giving an appearance of peace in the country. Besides, most of the offenders are ZanuPF supporters or thugs masquerading as such who do it with impunity. The 'defenceless' victims are therefore waiting for the return of non-partisan rule of law for them to take out their revenge.
6. That dialogue and reconciliation between all the people involved in the various conflicts were the best way to resolve the conflicts.

#### Structure of the report

The report is in three main chapters. The first one, entitled 'Listening to our voices', requests the reader to listen to what his/her inner voice says about the conflicts that he/she has experienced or witnessed in the country. It does this by discussing people's perceptions of conflicts affecting or to have affected their communities as to how they affected them, what impact they have had, and whether the conflicts had causal/aggravating relationships among them.

The second chapter, entitled 'Taking another look', asks the reader to take a fresh look at the conflict history of Zimbabwe, especially having 'listened' to his/her voice in the earlier chapter, to see what new perspectives one might come up with. Thus it looks at some of the major conflicts to have taken place in Zimbabwe since just before the coming of the European settlers right up to the time of the study (2004).

The third chapter, entitled 'Sharing the peace in us', is a forward-looking synthesis of the two preceding chapters. It is forward looking because it looks at the possibilities for peace and harmony within communities and therefore the nation as a whole through a community-driven national reconciliation process.

The report ends with a short chapter on the way forward featuring some conclusions and recommendations.

#### Special use of terms

There are some terms that have been used in some specific ways in this report in line with the main thrust of the document. One of them is the Matebeleland gukurahundi war, otherwise known as the Matebeleland disturbances. We have preferred the former because it more aptly describes what, by the time the reader gets to the end of the document, emerges as the reality on the ground, that the episode was a war waged by the government's security agents but especially the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade (code named the Gukurahundi) on the people of the Matebeleland and Midlands provinces.

Another is the liberation struggle and war. In this document, we see those as two separate but related events. While the liberation struggle has been going on from the time Rhodes's Pioneer Column arrived up to today, the liberation war was much briefer, lasting only from about 1966 to the Lancaster House conference of 1979. And while the latter was waged mainly by Zipra and Zanla, the former saw the broad participation of the masses in various forms and ways. And while in hind sight the goal of the war was to replace the white government of Ian Smith with a black government, that of the struggle was and still is equal opportunity for all regardless of race, gender, colour or creed. During the life of the liberation war, however, the two ran concurrently and supported each other; both were equally instrumental to the achievement of majority rule.

## CHAPTER 2: **Listening to our voices:** Popular perceptions of the major conflicts in Zimbabwe.

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### 2.1 Introduction.

The purpose of the field study was to solicit the views of the people of Zimbabwe on the subject of conflicts in the country. As it was obviously not feasible for the researchers to involve every Zimbabwean in the study, while at the same time getting views broadly representative of all Zimbabweans, the question of who to involve became very important. A decision was taken (by the research team) to involve up to 2 000 Zimbabweans physically within the country during the time of the field research and in eight geographical areas spread throughout the country, four of them urban and the other four rural.

For the rural areas, sampling techniques were used for the selection process. Using this approach, four provinces were selected first, namely Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland West, Matebeleland South and Midlands. Next, a district was selected within each of the four provinces, then a ward within each of the four districts. Thereafter, with the help of the ward councillor concerned, one or more villages (depending on their population sizes) were selected. Using this approach, the researchers ended up with four rural villages (or groups thereof) in different parts of the country.

For the urban areas, the largest four cities were chosen on the basis of size on the understanding that the sum total of the views of their residents would be least influenced by the rural areas immediately surrounding them. The cities so selected were (in alphabetic order) Bulawayo, Gweru, Harare and Mutare. Then, like with districts in the rural areas, at least two wards were selected per city taking cognisance of the low-density/high-density divide, and the comparative population size of each city. Thus for Bulawayo, two high density and one low density wards were selected; in Harare two of each were selected while in Gweru and Mutare one of each was selected. However, the same minimum number of interviews applied in all the cities as in the rural areas. Within the urban wards, the streets were taken to be equivalent to the villages in the rural areas.

In each of the selected villages (rural) and streets (urban), the researchers approached everybody male or female of voting age (18+ years) for an interview, up to at least the required minimum number of interviewees. This approach took care of the gender, age and other demographic factors. They interviewed everybody that agreed to be interviewed guided by a set of pre-prepared questions, filling in their responses in the spaces provided on the guided interview sheets, and taking down extra notes in note books. Both the interview sheets and the entries in the note books were coded with an identification number for future reference (names of the interviewees were not taken).

This chapter will deal with each of the case areas separately, beginning with the rural areas and followed by the urban areas. In each case, the report will discuss the conflicts and other major social concerns identified by the people in that area, the root causes of those conflicts (if any) as seen by them, and how they thought the conflicts or problems could be resolved. Where an idea can be attributed to a particular interviewee, reference will be made accordingly, using a notation that includes the case area, the number of the interview sheet, the gender and the age group.<sup>ix</sup>

## **2.2 Mashonaland Central Province<sup>x</sup>**

In this case area, 157 people were interviewed out of a total of 176 that were approached by the researchers for the purpose. The conflicts and other social issues that were repeatedly mentioned by the interviewees in this area were inter-party rivalries, the 1970s liberation war, gold panning claims, fast-track land redistribution, problems with the local leadership (councillors), unfair distribution of relief food and colonial domination by the Europeans.

### The liberation war.

As many as 94 people or 60% of the 157 interviewees identified the liberation war as a conflict that affected their community and whose effects they still felt. They referred to their bitter suffering during the war, especially at the hands of the Rhodesian security forces. A middle aged woman said the war affected them so badly that she ran out of the right words to describe exactly how<sup>xi</sup>. The epitome of their torment by the Rhodesian government was being forced into the so-called protected villages (otherwise known as 'keeps' so that they would not provide the guerrillas with food.<sup>xii</sup>

One of the main bothers of living in the keeps was idleness. The keep system not only affected the people's social life but their economic life too. As rural families, most had crops and livestock to attend to. The more enterprising had shops at business centres to run. These economic activities became difficult to run, if not impossible, as some of them were far away from the keeps. As a result, some of the people spent most of the time idly despite the rampant shortages of food stuffs and other supplies. As one of the interviewees said, people were being forced to stay in the keeps so no one could do anything more productive than singing morale-boosting songs for the soldiers and cooking for them<sup>xiii</sup>.

For most of the people that dared speak, the only way to prevent the recurrence of the war was to keep away from opposition politics. In line with this view, one interviewee said 'Young people like you [the interviewer] should know about the struggle so that you know where you belong and the right direction. We don't want war again'<sup>xiv</sup>. By 'where you belong' here, she meant ZanuPF. Another concurred without shutting the door to change when she said that people should always know that there was bloodshed during the war and that such leadership does not change over night<sup>xv</sup>. Yet another was even more open-minded when she urged dialogue which, she said, also helped bring about independence – '...people should learn that only dialogue can bring a meaningful solution. We won our freedom through the war but dialogue also took place'<sup>xvi</sup>. However, some of the interviewees just focused on the need to sustain the current peace. They saw the threat to that peace lying in the young people who they viewed as being reckless and adventurous. Thus one elderly woman warned that 'children [meaning the young people] should be taught that we suffered for this peace which should be protected'<sup>xvii</sup>. To them, the only way to protect that peace was to continue to support ZanuPF.

#### Inter-party rivalries.

The conflict of major concern to the people of this area was the rivalry between political parties, especially ZanuPF and the MDC, where the latter was often referred to simply as 'the other side' as if for fear of being heard speaking the unspeakable. This conflict, identified as such by 126 people or 80% of the 157 people that were interviewed, was almost always inextricably tied up with the liberation war. Some of the latest events related to this conflict stemmed from the rural council elections held the previous year and hotly contested between ZanuPF and the MDC. When the elections ended, so did most of the violence, which led many people to think that the conflict had ended. One interviewee said that his side won the elections and since then the situation had calmed



down. On whether this rivalry was related to any events from the past, he said 'We had won the independence, [so] we [ZanuPF] had to be ready to protect it with all the means'<sup>xviii</sup>. According to this view, therefore, ZanuPF derived its mandate to rule from the fact of having participated in the liberation war and everybody else was supposed to stay off.

However, the event left a trail of anger and hate. Some people were bitter about how they had been treated, even by their fellow villagers, in the name of a political party, and vowed revenge when the opportunity would present itself. On this issue, one female interviewee said she was bitter that her children were beaten up by people from the same village who she knew personally, and vowed revenge<sup>xix</sup>. On how the issue could be resolved, she said that she would have to find a way to fight back. Thus she saw inter-party conflicts perpetuating themselves. She ended up saying, with reference to political parties' methods of campaigning, that people should not be forced into adopting a particular view, rather they should be allowed to exercise their right to choose.

Over and above the hate and anger, there was a pervasive fear. There was fear of victimisation by fellow villagers in the name of ZanuPF which bred suspicion among the people; nobody could trust anybody. As one interviewee said, the situation was untenable as people were scared to death; she also said that there was so much fear that people could not open up, or even admit that there was a problem<sup>xx</sup>. On whether this (inter-party) conflict had been resolved, one interviewee said that one could not say with certainty as it was 'difficult to see who [was] where' on the political divide. She went on to say: 'On the surface everyone is [with] the ruling party simply because in this area you can never stay here if you belong to the other side'<sup>xxi</sup>.

Another of the effects of the conflict was to make any association with the MDC a criminal offence with serious consequences. It was not uncommon for people to accuse each other of being MDC as a way of settling scores. A violent incident was reported of people who were accusing each other of being against the ruling party<sup>xxii</sup> and therefore pro-MDC by implication. Apparently in this area, there was a fine line between not supporting ZanuPF and being against it, at least in the minds of most of the people. Such deviants needed to be re-educated and brought back into the fold<sup>xxiii</sup>, or may be just reminded of where they came from so that they could understand themselves better<sup>xxiv</sup>.

The conflict was also having negative effects on development projects in the area. Some youths were <sup>xxv</sup>harassed and booted out of community youth activities and projects such as market gardening on allegation of being on the other side. Attendance at community meetings had slumped as people stayed away for fear of victimisation<sup>xxvi</sup>. And an electrification project failed to take off just because the organisers were of the other party (MDC) <sup>xxvii</sup>. However, a number of interviewees were of the opinion that development projects should be allowed to go on regardless of who initiates them as they benefit the community.

### Gold panning.

One of the major economic activities in the area was gold panning/ digging, which was sustaining most of the youths there. Unfortunately it was causing misunderstandings and disagreements in the communities. Sometimes people clashed to the extent that they would not want to see each other again. In one case, a clash occurred between two villages when 'people from the other village came for gold panning in the river that is in our village'<sup>xxviii</sup>. The matter was resolved when the two village heads concerned liaised.

Most of the clashes happened between registered and unregistered gold panners where the latter were seen as the source of the problem. On this issue, one of the panners/diggers who said was registered said that some unregistered diggers robbed his claim so they did not see eye to eye because of that<sup>xxix</sup>. These unregistered panners were also accused of causing environmental degradation, causing the community untold suffering. Unregistered gold panners were also said to have caused the drying up of rivers and streams such that it was becoming very difficult to water livestock.<sup>xxx</sup>

On how the problem could be resolved, one view was that it was difficult as gold panning/digging was the only source of income for the unregistered diggers. Another was that all the gold panners/diggers needed to be educated on the importance of registering and conducting their trade in a proper manner.<sup>xxxi</sup> Unfortunately, the registration process was so difficult and cumbersome that many people just preferred to dig without registering<sup>xxxii</sup>.

### Other conflicts

The other conflicts that were identified in this area were to do with the local leadership (councillor), unfair distribution of relief food, and anomalies in the implementation of the government's land redistribution programme. Colonial domination by the white settlers was also mentioned a few times, but more as a cause or justification for the

liberation war than as something that was bothering the people of the area at the time the research study was conducted.

On the issue of the councillor, the people of the ward concerned were divided over the incumbent councillor<sup>xxxiii</sup>. The reasons were varied. Some thought he was too young<sup>xxxiv</sup> for the job. Others alleged that he was previously supporting the other party [MDC], <sup>xxxv</sup> and only joined ZanuPF when the MDC lost the [presidential] election,<sup>xxxvi</sup> which seemed to be the main causal factor for all the resentment directed at him. As a result of this resentment, some of the villagers would not attend community meetings. However, others did not attend the meetings because they were held at a place that was deemed not suitable for the majority of the people of the area.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Opinions on a possible solution to the problem were varied. Some of the villagers wanted the councillor out of office and were going to vote against him in the next council elections four years away. Others suggested partitioning the ward so that they would have their own councillor resident in their side of the ward.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Others urged the leaders to listen to and respect the people's views, to the extent of compromising where there are disagreements.<sup>xxxix</sup> However, others urged their fellow villagers to support their leaders in order for their community to develop.<sup>xl</sup>

Unfair distribution of food was a major issue inextricably tied to the inter-party rivalry. The issue was political<sup>xli</sup> and therefore difficult to handle. Apparently, selection for inclusion on the food distribution list was based on one's participation in the party, whether the food came from the government or the donors<sup>xlii</sup>. This fact, coupled with unfair selection even from among the party faithful, meant that some deserving people were left out.<sup>xliii</sup> In some cases it was to do with grudges and settling scores whose origins could be traced back to the constitutional referendum of February 2000.<sup>xliv</sup> Those people who were left out of the food distribution process stopped attending community meetings and making the required contributions arguing that they saw no benefit accruing to them.<sup>xlv</sup> Some of them still held grudges against the people responsible for omitting their names. The solution to this problem was to keep politics out of food distribution and other programmes meant to benefit the whole community.<sup>xlvi</sup>

The unfairness that characterised the food distribution process was also experienced in the allocation of land during the fast-track land redistribution process. As a result of the unfair process, some deserving people lost out as many people from this area who were championing the farm invasions were not allocated any land.<sup>xlvii</sup>

### Observations.

From the fore-going discussion of the research findings from Mashonaland Central, the following are some of the pertinent observations that emerged:

- ❑ Liberation war politics hang over the people of the province like a menacing dark cloud; fear of a return to war governed their daily lives and determined their responses to all the other conflicts/ issues they identified as bothering them.
- ❑ Some of the people believed that since their party ZanuPF fought the liberation war it was entitled to rule this country to the exclusion of every other party.
- ❑ The MDC was a threat to the peace they were ‘enjoying’ and was therefore to be shunned.
- ❑ The villagers were settling their personal vendettas, including denying each other food, under cover of inter-party politics.
- ❑ Fear of victimisation by their neighbours forced people to toe the ZanuPF party line.
- ❑ The most active conflict in the province was the inter-party rivalry, especially between ZanuPF and the MDC. Most of the violence and victimisation, including unfair food distribution, that characterised inter-party rivalries within the communities in the province, were perpetrated by members of those communities against their fellow members. The same phenomenon had happened during the liberation war when members of a community would sell out on each other.

### **2.3 Mashonaland West Province<sup>xlviii</sup>**

The conflicts and other social issues that were repeatedly mentioned by the people in this area were inter-party rivalries, the 1970s liberation war, disputes over field boundaries/ shortage of land, unfair distribution of relief food and colonial domination by the Europeans. However, many people declined to be interviewed, hence only 87 (49%) people were interviewed in this case area out of a total of 178, and even those that were interviewed were generally reticent and guarded on what they could and could not say. It was therefore difficult to get much information on the people’s views of the conflicts in their area.

#### Inter-party rivalry.

Nevertheless, despite this general rigmarole during interviews, some of the villagers spoke. For most of the interviewees, conflicts between the main political parties active in the area (ZanuPF and MDC) overshadowed everything else. There was tension and apprehension in the area, and fear had cast a spell over the villagers, despite the fact that the elections had since ended. As a result of the election violence, some members of the community were not on talking terms while some others had emigrated from the area<sup>xix</sup>. On whether the conflict had ended, the general view was that it would not end unless political parties educated their members about peaceful campaigning, and the people in general were tolerant and forgiving.

#### Liberation war.

The people in this area made their contribution to the liberation war of the 1970s. Many remembered clashes between freedom fighters and soldiers of the Rhodesian government. During the liberation struggle, freedom fighters camped in the area. This attracted the attention of Rhodesian soldiers. Civilians were more often than not victims of the battles fought. One elderly man who had lived in the area for 63 years and witnessed some of the clashes said, in vivid recollection of one of the clashes: 'It was a fierce battle; they (the guerrillas) even had AK47 guns'<sup>i</sup>. However, he refused to elaborate on how he had felt at the time, probably because it was not a pleasant memory.

The people of the area also suffered from the war in other ways. Some of them were thoroughly beaten up by the guerrillas or the Rhodesian soldiers, while others were killed after having been accused of being sell-outs<sup>ii</sup>. A mother of one of the interviewees was one such victim, killed by the Rhodesian soldiers allegedly having been sold-out by an aunt living in the same village<sup>iii</sup>.

#### Shortage of land

There was a serious shortage of land in the area which manifested itself in the form of disputes over field boundaries where one farmer would encroach into the adjacent piece of land belonging to another farmer<sup>liii</sup>. These disputes were especially common during the farming season. On the causes of the problem, one view was that it was due to over-population in the area as the younger generation started families and required plots of land of their own<sup>liv</sup>. This problem of congestion was traced back to the colonial land laws, especially the Land Apportionment Act, which alienated most of the black land and reserved it for the whites. On how this problem could be resolved, the people were of the opinion that the problem could not be resolved. They did not look beyond

the case-by-case interventions by the village heads which were only temporary solutions as the disputes recurred again and again.

### Food distribution

Despite the generally hushed tones with which the people in the area spoke, the unfair handling of relief food emerged as a hot issue. Two factors were at play: inter-party rivalries and outright corruption among the officials responsible for the distribution of the food. The main complaint was that food meant for free distribution was sold<sup>lv</sup> by the councillor of the area sometimes even to people from areas outside the district. This applied to both government maize and maize donated by relief organisations.<sup>lvi</sup> As a result of this corruption, the donor organisation involved ceased to provide the food, and people died of hunger as a result.<sup>lvii</sup>

Of the maize that was distributed, it was denied to some people by those running the process. The selection of the would-be beneficiaries was done mainly on political grounds, with those not supporting the councillor's party (ZanuPF) being on the receiving end. One interviewee said they were denied free food; neither could they buy (from the councillor) because they were accused of being supporters of the opposition party. As a result, they had to buy from those people who had been given the maize, in secrecy for fear of further victimisation.<sup>lviii</sup>

### Observations.

From the fore-going discussion of the research findings from Mashonaland West, the following are some of the pertinent observations that emerged:

- ❑ Most of the conflicts bothering the people of this area were unresolved and, in their view, would remain unresolved.
- ❑ Deep-seated fear permeates the province and makes people prefer to suffer in silence than risk their lives by talking about their problems.
- ❑ Most of the violence and victimisation that characterise inter-party rivalries within communities are perpetrated by members of those communities against their fellow members. The same phenomenon happened during the liberation war when members of a community would sell out on each other.
- ❑ The people were generally uncomfortable discussing issues viewed as political, especially with strangers, despite the fact that they were reeling under severe food shortages while the councillor was misusing relief food meant for them.

- ❑ The people did not see themselves as part of the solution to their problems which they saw as being beyond them. Instead, they had so much 'faith' and trust in people in positions of authority to solve their problems as evidenced by their constant reference to the village head, the councillor and the chief.

## 2.4 Matebeleland South Province<sup>lix</sup>

The conflicts and other social issues that were repeatedly mentioned by the people in this area were, in order of frequency, the 1970s liberation war, the 1980s Matebeleland disturbances, pre-colonial tribal wars and unfair distribution of relief food. To a lesser extent, the people also identified colonialism mainly as a causal/ aggravating factor of such conflicts as the liberation war and the fast-track land redistribution programme, inter-party rivalries and the farm invasions.

### The civil wars<sup>lx</sup>

Most of the interviewees that identified the Matebeleland disturbances and the 1970s liberation war identified both and often talked about them in one breath. Especially during the liberation war, the people found it difficult to go to the fields<sup>lxi</sup> and do their farming activities, as a lot of time was spent running away from the fighters, especially the Rhodesian soldiers. Curfews were imposed on the area during these periods and as a result of these curfews, everything came to a stand still<sup>lxii</sup> making life very difficult for the people. With specific reference to the Matebeleland disturbances, curfews imposed a considerable limit on freedom of movement and gatherings were seen as illegal.<sup>lxiii</sup>

A lot of victimisation occurred in this area during these times. With specific reference to the Matebeleland disturbances, people were frequently beaten up<sup>lxiv</sup> and many died.<sup>lxv</sup> For women, not only death and beatings awaited them during the Matebeleland gukurahundi war, but rape too. The women would be forcibly taken away from their homes to go and be raped.<sup>lxvi</sup>

Unfortunately members of the community facilitated the victimisation of their fellow villagers during both wars. People began to spy<sup>lxvii</sup> on each other and sell each other out to the different sides<sup>lxviii</sup> in the fighting. As a result, especially during the liberation war, some people were forced to flee for their lives and take refuge in urban areas<sup>lxix</sup> to escape torture and possible death.

The community had varied views on how the conflicts ended. Most of those that identified the liberation war said that it ended with independence in 1980. The variations were prevalent with respect to the Matebeleland disturbances. Some said it ended with the Unity Accord of 1987. Others were not sure if it had really ended, although they might be tempted to think so since there was now peace. However, they did not think that the underlying issues had been resolved. The more common view, however, was expressed in such terms as: it 'just ended'<sup>lxx</sup> on its own, it 'just died down without any of our input'<sup>lxxi</sup>, 'we did not do anything; they just left'<sup>lxxii</sup> (referring to the Gukurahundi soldiers) and 'they stopped killing people'.

The community also had varied views as to what historical factors caused or at least contributed to these conflicts. Colonialism and the related land issue were cited as the main causes of the liberation war. On the Matebeleland disturbances, while many said they did not know what could have caused the conflict, others traced its roots to the pre-colonial tribal wars, particularly the Ndebele raids on the Shona states where the Ndebele were said to have killed a lot of people while walking away with their women, grain and cattle. These people viewed the Gukurahundi as a revenge mission by the Shona for those pre-colonial events. However, another group of interviewees was of the opinion that it was to do with 'fighting for power' by trying to 'subdue the other tribe'<sup>lxxiii</sup>, referring to the Ndebele. The implication here was that the Shona who made the government during the disturbances were trying to enhance their hold onto power by liquidating their Ndebele rival tribe.

On what could be done to resolve the conflicts, most of the responses zeroed in on the Matebeleland gukurahundi war. The general feeling was that there was need for compensation for the victims, and pleas for mercy and forgiveness by the perpetrators. However, the more elderly felt that it was too late to do anything about it more than just helping the remaining people to survive, especially in the context of the prevailing food shortages - all they needed now was food to survive as they had since grown too old to worry about a lot of other things.<sup>lxxiv</sup>

#### Unfair distribution of relief food

Relief food was being distributed selectively depending on how well-connected one was to those in charge of the operation, causing misunderstandings among the community members.<sup>lxxv</sup> Some were not happy with the criteria used for selecting beneficiaries, where those who were seen as gainfully employed and those with cattle which they could use as their safety net in case of need were excluded.<sup>lxxvi</sup> What irked some of the



people most was the betrayal by their own neighbours who influenced those in charge of the distribution process to exclude them from the process.<sup>lxxvii</sup>

#### Inter-party rivalries.

Not many people were too concerned about inter-party rivalries in the area. They said it was not an issue then as they had tactfully dealt with it during the 2000 parliamentary and the 2002 rural council elections. As a solution, while most of them belonged to the MDC (Movement for Democratic Change) and voted for an MDC member of parliament in 2000, come 2002 council elections they voted for a ZanuPF councillor. This was a deliberate ploy to ensure that they would not be denied relief food; they had learnt their lesson from the 1980s where they were denied development funds because they had voted ZAPU in both the Member of Parliament and the councillor.<sup>lxxviii</sup>

#### Observations.

From the fore-going discussion of the research findings from Matebeleland South, the following are some of the pertinent observations that emerged:

- ❑ The people of Matebeleland South view the liberation war and the 1980s Matebeleland gukurahundi war as one and the same event, suggesting that there was no closure to the liberation war.
- ❑ For the people of Matebeleland South, the Matebeleland gukurahundi war just came, took its toll and went away unbeknown to them as if they were not significant in the scheme of things that brought it about. This seems to suggest that it was not their war; rather they were mere pawns in somebody else's war.
- ❑ That in trying to come to terms with the mystery that the Matebeleland gukurahundi war was to them, the people of Matebeleland South came to think and accept the notion that it was a Shona-on-Ndebele tribally-motivated war, a replay of the pre-colonial tribal wars in reverse.
- ❑ However, some of the people saw it for what it really was, a power game between rival political parties using their tribal power bases as their instruments.
- ❑ During both wars, but especially during the liberation war, the victimisation was worsened at community level as members of the communities sold out on each other.

## **2.5 Midlands Province<sup>lxxix</sup>**

A total of ten areas of conflict and other social concerns were identified. Those most commonly identified were the 1980s Matebeleland gukurahundi war which was

identified by 125 (75%) interviewees, followed by the inter-party rivalries which was identified by 121 (72%) interviewees, and the 1970s liberation war which was identified by 83 (50%) people. Of special note was the pre-colonial wars<sup>lxxx</sup> which was identified by 115 (67%) people as the root cause of the tribalism bed on which lay most (if not all) of the conflicts that the community was experiencing then. The other issues of concern also identified were problems with the local leadership (especially the councillor), unfair handling of issues of relief food and general development work.

#### The liberation war.

Like most other parts of the country, this part of the Midlands province also witnessed the 1970s liberation war, with fighting taking place between the Rhodesian soldiers on the one hand and the guerrillas supported by the local people on the other. Thus the two tribes would unite and 'fight' their common enemy together. However, there were struggles within the struggle as the two tribes would also occasionally fight against each other. It is this 'in-fighting', rather than the war against the common enemy, that had more negative implications for them: it had the effect of turning the resentment each side had of the other resulting from how the Shona had been settled on Ndebele land into deep seated animosity, hatred and suspicion.

At the national level, the cause of the liberation war was colonialism, and the enemy was the Rhodesian government in the form of its army which operated in the area. However, of greater concern to the people of the area were the internal struggles on tribal lines which used the war as their milieu for self-expression. These struggles were caused by the fact of the proximity of the two tribes, but especially the fact that the Shona had just<sup>lxxxi</sup> been imposed on the local (Ndebele) community by the Rhodesian government, and settled on land the locals had traditionally used as grazing land for their cattle.

#### The Matebeleland disturbances.

The Shona and the Ndebele of this area experienced the war differently. The Shona seemed to be on the side of the army in its war against the Ndebele. The general Shona opinion was that the Ndebele were 'dissidents' and took every opportunity to ill-treat them. For example, they would not allow them to pass through the Shona area, which sliced the Ndebele community through the middle, as they moved from one Ndebele village to another. The Shona part of the community would allow no 'dissident'<sup>lxxxii</sup> to pass through their village.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Sometimes just to settle their personal scores, some

Shona people would sell-out on some Ndebele to the soldiers by accusing them of being dissidents, leading to the victimisation of the 'accused'.

Like in the other parts of Matebeleland and Midlands provinces, the war affected the development of this area. Development projects that had been started collapsed and new ones were halted. The general feeling is that even today the area lags behind in terms of development.<sup>lxxxiv</sup> Another effect of the war in this area was that the people of the area could not work together across the ethnic divide<sup>lxxxv</sup> and the two sub-communities have developed jealousies against each other in development projects.<sup>lxxxvi</sup>

On whether the war had ended, the general view was that while the guns fell silent with the Unity Accord, the underlying issues, especially to do with the effects of the war, were not adequately resolved. Thus while the accord was of great help in ending the violence, the victims were still hurting,<sup>lxxxvii</sup> and sometimes there were conflicts between the ethnic groups in the area over shared resources,<sup>lxxxviii</sup> which should not be the case if true reconciliation had taken place.

There were two related perspectives to the causal and aggravating factors of the conflict at the level of this community. One was the fact of the conflict itself just as in other affected provinces of the country. The general view was that the conflict was caused by the pre-colonial tribal wars between the Shona and the Ndebele, and aggravated by the 1970s liberation war when Zipra and Zanla guerrillas often fought each other; thus the people of this area believed that this war was a continuation of the liberation war in-fighting. The other perspective was how it was acted out within the community given the co-location of the two tribal groupings. This co-location of two linguistically different groups with a history of conflict and resentment between them, and with no attempts at integration,<sup>lxxxix</sup> aggravated the war within the community.<sup>xc</sup>

There were different views as to how the conflict could be adequately resolved. Some advocated for a review of the Unity Accord so as to come up with a true unity accord,<sup>xc</sup> but especially compensation for their suffering and the loss of their children during the war<sup>xcii</sup>. Others said that the government should treat everybody equally, that the government should make laws that bind it to the people<sup>xciii</sup> as well as laws that bind the people, and that the leadership should respect the views of the people they lead.<sup>xciv</sup> And yet others said that people should listen to each other's views<sup>xcv</sup> and that they should forgive each other and cooperate in their development efforts.<sup>xcvi</sup>

Unfair distribution of relief food.

Like in other parts of the country, the general food shortage obtaining then was also a source of conflict in this area, as unfairness crept into the distribution of relief food. The local leadership who were responsible for the distribution of the food tended to favour certain people or groups over others.<sup>xcvii</sup> The Ndebele also accused the Shona of having prevented some relief organisations from supplying them with food which showed that they did not care about them<sup>xcviii</sup>. As a result, the NGOs concerned just withdrew leaving the Ndebele to starve as they did not have an alternative source of food unlike the Shona who had an irrigation scheme.<sup>xcix</sup> This had the effect of re-enforcing the existing divisions between the two tribal groupings.<sup>c</sup>

The problems with the food distribution were attributed to three conflicts, all of them related among them. One was the inter-party rivalries which, as said elsewhere, had the tribal flavour since the political divide followed the tribal fault line. Then there was the Matebeleland gukurahundi war which was fought on tribal lines. And the pre-colonial tribal wars which seemed to be the source of all tribal ill feelings. Thus the tribal dimension seemed to be the linking factor between all the four conflicts.

There were two main possible solutions to the problem. One was fairness in the distribution of food by those responsible;<sup>ci</sup> that they should not discriminate against anybody or any group of people.<sup>cii</sup> The other one, especially for the Ndebele people, was to secede from the Shona-led ward so that they would stand on their own as a ward,<sup>ciii</sup> in which case the district would have to give them ward status so that they could have their own councillor.<sup>civ</sup>

### Development projects

There were development projects that caused conflicts among the people in this area. These were the irrigation scheme, the clinic, boreholes and adult literacy classes. The Shona monopolised the irrigation scheme which happened to be located in their section of the community, while the Ndebele argued that they should have exclusive access to it since it was located on their traditional grazing land.<sup>cv</sup> On the issue of the boreholes, the people could not agree on the siting of the boreholes as some wanted them to be sited at places convenient to them.<sup>cvi</sup> As a result, the project was abandoned and relocated to another ward. Similarly, adult literacy classes that were supposed to start in the area were abandoned after the people could not agree on where they would be conducted from. Above all, however, was the issue of the further development of the local high school. The chief of the area conceded that because of the intense tribal

conflicts in the area, the people were finding it difficult to cooperate on the development of the school so that it would be granted 'A' Level status.<sup>cvii</sup>

These problems were generally attributed to power struggles among the local leadership.<sup>cviii</sup> They were also linked to the Matebeleland gukurahundi war and the pre-colonial tribal wars. This was especially so since the development of the area seemed to follow the tribal fault line, with the Shona areas more developed than the Ndebele areas. For example, a shopping centre in the Shona area was electrified while that in the Ndebele area did not have even a diesel-powered grinding mill.<sup>cix</sup>

Political/ tribal conflicts.

Political/tribal divisions in this area were a daily fact of life, a fact acknowledged by both sides. As a result of these divisions, the ward was not a 'community' at all as the people were sworn enemies and would not work together. The two sides would not cooperate on anything as they were always at loggerheads<sup>cx</sup> and they really didn't like each other.<sup>cxii</sup> This mutual dislike was not limited to any one age group; rather both old and young participated in this hatred<sup>cxiii</sup>. As to who was at fault, each side accused the other, with the Ndebele saying that the Shona did not want them to have any developmental projects<sup>cxiii</sup>, while the Shona would say that the Ndebele did not want to cooperate with them claiming that they were being discriminated against.<sup>cxiv</sup>

Three previous conflicts were identified as having a causal/ aggravating effect on the political/ tribal conflicts in the area. One was the pre-colonial tribal wars between the Shona and the Ndebele where the Shona begrudged the Ndebele invasions of the Shona communities. Related to this was the liberation war where Zanla (Shona-based) and Zipra (Ndebele-based) would clash in the operational zones. And the unresolved Zanla-Zipra clashes gave rise to the third causal factor, Matebeleland gukurahundi war. In all these conflicts, a common tribal/ political thread could be identified, hence the ongoing political/ tribal clashes. Thus the solution to the on-going conflict lay in the resolution of the related previous conflicts.

Local leadership.

Both the Shona and Ndebele were critical of the incumbent councillor<sup>cxv</sup> who was Shona. Both complained about the councillor's favouritism and lack of transparency especially in development issues. The councillor also seemed to be biased against the Ndebele section of his ward, deliberately frustrating development efforts in the area, such that it lagged behind other areas in the ward.<sup>cxvi</sup>

Suggested solutions to this problem varied with tribal grouping and their view of the cause of the problem. The general Shona view was for the councillor to improve his education or, alternatively, the need to elect an educated and informed councillor who would be able to spearhead development in the area. The Ndebele, on the other hand, viewed the problem as tribal/ political, and were agitating for the division of the ward into two along tribal lines so that they would have one of their number as their councillor, who would champion the development of their area.

#### Observations.

From the fore-going discussion of the research findings from the Midlands Province, the following are some of the pertinent observations that emerged:

- ❑ The Midlands province is a typical example of a situation where a nationally defined and instigated conflict is fought viciously at the community level, sometimes long after the national conflict has been 'resolved'.
- ❑ The major conflicts that were of concern to the community were the pre-colonial tribal wars, the Zanla-Zipra in-fighting during the liberation war, and the Matebeleland gukurahundi war, all of them with one common tribal thread.
- ❑ After the pre-colonial tribal wars, all subsequent national conflicts followed tribal lines at the community level in this area such that the two tribal groups were almost always on opposing sides.
- ❑ Tribalism was deep-rooted in the area and dominated the thinking and actions of all the people on either side of the divide, making it the most crucial element in their self-definition in relation to each other.
- ❑ Development in the area followed ethnic lines as the Shona areas were more developed than the Ndebele areas.
- ❑ The people of the area believed that there was need for tolerance of each other among the people in their communities and for the government to treat everybody equally.

## 2.6 Bulawayo<sup>cxvii</sup>

A total of 222 people in the city as a whole participated in the study. The interviewees identified ten conflicts and other social issues of concern to them in the city and their rural homes or other places of residence. The most commonly identified conflicts were inter-party rivalries which was identified by 184 (83%) interviewees, the liberation war by 146 (66%) interviewees<sup>cxviii</sup>, and the Matebeleland gukurahundi war *by* 142 (64%) interviewees. The pre-colonial tribal wars was identified by 61 (27%) interviewees, mainly as the underlying causal factor for most of the conflicts identified. The other conflicts and/or social issues identified were stay-aways, tribal misunderstandings, unfair distribution of relief food, the farm invasions, colonialism and problems with the local leadership.

### The liberation war.

As a historical event, the 1970s liberation war is long gone, having ended with the independence elections in 1980. So perhaps it is for the majority of the people of Zimbabwe. For some, however, the scars of injuries sustained during or as a result of that war were a constant reminder of the suffering they endured then. This was particularly so for those people of Bulawayo who were old enough then. For most of those that identified this conflict, it was the first one they mentioned before they named any other, an indication of how strongly they perceived its role in their lives. Related to this is the fact that rarely was the conflict mentioned in isolation, but almost always in conjunction with the Matebeleland disturbances and rivalries between political parties, an indication of the perceived relationship between the three.

On the causes of the war, many identified colonial domination and therefore the need for the people to free themselves as the cause. Others talked about the land question as the reason for the black people to take up arms against the colonial government. However there was a general agreement that the war ended with independence in 1980.

### The Matebeleland gukurahundi war.

Like with the liberation war, the Matebeleland disturbances, otherwise known as the Gukurahundi, was already a historical event at the time of the research, having ended 15 years earlier in 1988 after the 1987 Unity Accord between the warring sides, ZanuPF and Zapu. Yet the wounds that it left, especially among the Ndebele, seemed as fresh as if they had been inflicted yesterday. The popular view in this area was that the disturbances began with the Entumbane clashes between the ex-Zipra and ex-Zanla guerrillas that took place in November 1980. This phase of the disturbances was a

harrowing experience to some of the eye-witnesses who had to abandon their homes nearest to the scenes of the most violent clashes.

Views on the possible causes of this conflict were generally convergent. Most of the interviewees attributed the root cause of the conflict to the pre-colonial tribal wars between the Shona and the Ndebele, as well as the liberation war. The pre-colonial tribal wars were referred to as generational sins<sup>cxxix</sup>, tribal clashes which had always been there since time immemorial<sup>cxx</sup>, that the indigenous people of Zimbabwe had to accept as fact and live with. On the other hand, the liberation war brought about differences between the nationalists on both the political and the military front which remained unresolved after the end of the war. (Clashes between Zanla and Zipra in the operational zones has already been discussed elsewhere.) Thus the Matebeleland gukurahundi war was seen as a continuation of the strife for power started during the liberation war but not resolved then.

While the general view seemed to be that the conflict had ended, there were differences as to whether the underlying issues had been resolved. On this subject, most of the interviewees said that the conflict ended following the 1987 Zapu-ZanuPF Unity Accord. Others said that the conflict ended as a result of unity between the warring sides,<sup>cxxi</sup> thus pointing to the exclusion of the people from the accord.

Others were of the opinion that while the fighting ended, the conflict itself was not resolved as the victimised individuals and communities had not forgotten<sup>cxxii</sup> despite the Unity Accord, and the scars were still there.<sup>cxxiii</sup> The people were generally not happy with the situation.<sup>cxxiv</sup> On how the issues could be resolved, the general cry was for compensation for the victims, both individuals and communities.

However, there were those that rejected the notion that the conflict had ended after all. They acknowledged the existence of the Unity Accord but insisted that the people were not happy with it as they were still hurting.<sup>cxxv</sup> Another view was that the conflict had not ended as there still were tribal divisions between the Shona and the Ndebele, a problem which the government needed to resolve. Yet another view differed by placing the blame on the government, saying that the government leadership should accept responsibility for the massacres and take urgent steps to rectify the problem<sup>cxxvi</sup> so that the conflict would cease to haunt them.



Several suggestions were put forward as possible solutions to the problem. One was that the government needed to recognise all tribal groups in the country as equal<sup>cxxvii</sup> rather than discriminate and victimize some of them. Another was dialogue between opposing sides. Then there were those opposed to talking about the past as it opened old wounds,<sup>cxxviii</sup> preferring to just forget. Others suggested the setting up of a truth commission, comprising all stakeholders, so that people who were involved on either side of the conflict could forgive each other.<sup>cxxix</sup>

#### Inter-party rivalries.

The leading conflict in the area was the rivalries between political parties, identified as such by 184 people, 83% of the total number of people interviewed. Over the years, this conflict was a permanent feature of election time, be they parliamentary or local government elections. In the nineteen eighties, the main protagonists were ZanuPF and Zapu, right up until the latter merged with the former. Thereafter, a few other parties came onto the scene in opposition to ZanuPF, such as Edgar Tekere's Zimbabwe Unity Movement in the 1990 general elections, and the Forum Party of Zimbabwe led by Enoch Dumutshena during the 1995 parliamentary and the 1996 presidential elections. However, never since the demise of Zapu in 1987 was Bulawayo solidly supportive of any other political party as it did with the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), formed in 1999.

The conflict took many forms, including open violence, beginning with the constitutional referendum of February 2000 and ever since, mainly in line with the cycles of elections, both national and local. At the time of this research, there was relative calm as there were no elections. Thus some of the interviewees were under the impression that the conflict had ended. On how it had ended, they said that because there were no elections going on then, an admission of the fact that the conflict was cyclical and would probably return come election time.

A contrary view, however, was that the conflict had not ended. This view was based on the fact that while there was relative calm, the conflict was now being acted out in law courts as there were pending court cases<sup>cxxx</sup> instituted by the losing candidates unhappy with the conduct of the elections or their rivals. The view, however, was largely based on the fact that the violence had recurred with each election before and would (therefore) almost certainly return come another election.

One way in which the inter-party rivalries manifested themselves was the manner in which the community responded to the food shortages in the city then, especially how relief food was being distributed. Many interviewees said that often access to relief food depended on whether one belonged to ZanuPF in which case one would stand a better chance of getting the food, or did not in which case one would not get the food. It was a view widely held that ‘cheap maize from the government’<sup>cxxxix</sup> was being sold to supporters of the ruling party to the exclusion of supporters of the other parties as well as those that did not support any party.

Many people in the area also saw stay-aways<sup>cxxxii</sup> and other national strikes as politically motivated, an expression of rivalries between political parties, especially the governing party ZanuPF and the opposition MDC. As the cause of these stay-aways, the people cited the disgruntlement with the political situation and the poor standards of living, the political and economic crisis<sup>cxxxiii</sup> prevailing in the country at the time. Thus the stay-aways were a political statement. In their view, the government responded to this ‘statement’ with some harsh laws’<sup>cxxxiv</sup> specifically designed to control the stay-aways. However, while the stay-aways had stopped, the underlying issues had not been resolved. The people thought that they could only be resolved through the improvement in the livelihoods of the people<sup>cxxxv</sup> and good governance<sup>cxxxvi</sup>.

The tribal<sup>cxxxvii</sup> element was generally perceived as the predominant underlying factor in inter-party conflicts occurring in this area. According to this view the conflict was more a tribal conflict, a manifestation of the hatred between the Ndebele and the Shona<sup>cxxxviii</sup>, rather than a political conflict, as had always been the case since independence in 1980<sup>cxxxix</sup>. Thus while the identity of the protagonists had changed, the bottom line remained the same, with the implication that the rival parties then as before were supported on tribal lines. The roots of this tribal element were seen as lying in the tribal wars that occurred between the Shona and Ndebele in the mid-1800s before the advent of colonialism.

Another view was that these conflicts were a consequence or continuation of the previous wars: the 1970s liberation war and the 1980s Matebeleland gukurahundi war<sup>cxl</sup>. It has been noted elsewhere that while the two liberation movements (ZanuPF and Zapu) were fighting to ‘liberate’ the country, which war they both fought against the Rhodesian army, they were also fighting to rule it, which war they fought against each other. While the first war ended with the Lancaster House agreement in 1979, the

second (side-war) only ended with the defeat of Zapu as signalled by the 1987 Unity Accord.

On how the conflict could be resolved, opinions varied, with many interviewees suggesting interventions directed at the parties and leadership. One view advocated for educating the election candidates<sup>cxli</sup> and their supporters to be tolerant of each other. Another encouraged political leaders<sup>cxlii</sup> in the area to come to an understanding to reduce the violent activities of their supporters. And yet another urged communication and dialogue between the two leading political parties<sup>cxliii</sup>, ZanuPF and the MDC.

However, some interviewees suggested interventions directed at the people. One view was that the people should sit down and talk and forgive.<sup>cxliv</sup> This view necessitated bringing the people together at the same table to resolve their disputes through dialogue.<sup>cxlv</sup> This line of thinking seemed to imply that the fault in violence or any other form of discrimination based on political affiliation lay with the ordinary people that perpetrate that violence against fellow ordinary people, not the leaders of the parties, nor the election candidates on either side, nor the parties themselves.

### Tribalism

Tribal divisions between the Shona and Ndebele in the city seemed so entrenched that their manifestations were a daily fact of life for the people in this area. For example, a Shona would insist on speaking and being spoken to in Shona, and vice versa. Even in sport, support for some football teams was on tribal lines.

On how to resolve this problem, some people thought that nothing could be done about it as it had been inherited from past generations. One view was that it could not be stopped as it was passed on from one generation to another.<sup>cxlvi</sup> Thus, it had become the way of life for the people in this area according to which they defined their identities and existence and should therefore be left to go on. However, others thought that the government had a role to play to end this problem, by protecting rather than victimising the people.<sup>cxlvii</sup>

### Land redistribution

Some of the people in this city, especially the former white farm owners, were directly affected by the fast-track land redistribution exercise. These viewed the exercise as racially-motivated, and hoped that someone would be sane enough to see the

consequences and stop the process. One problem they noted in the conduct of the exercise was the lack of transparency. They saw the root cause of the conflict as the racial practices of the colonial governments and the failure of the post-independence government<sup>cxlviii</sup> to rectify the anomalies created by the colonial governments. The black people concurred with the whites, and pointed out that there were farm invasions since people had not got the land at independence, yet the liberation war was for the land.

### Observations.

From the fore-going discussion of the research findings from Bulawayo, the following are some of the pertinent observations that emerged:

- ❑ There were varying perceptions as to the causes of the Matebeleland gukurahundi war. On the one hand, it was viewed as a tribal war by the Shona on the Ndebele as revenge for the raids that their ancestors suffered at the hands of the Ndebele before colonialism. On the other, it was seen as a power struggle between ZanuPF and Zapu, a continuation of the pre-independence struggles for supremacy between the two parties.
- ❑ There was general agreement that the Matebeleland gukurahundi war had not been resolved despite the unity accord as the people who were the prime victims of the war, were left out of the equation and were therefore still hurting.
- ❑ Dialogue between opposing sides was seen as the best solution to most of the conflicts. On the Matebeleland gukurahundi war, suggestions were made for the setting up of a truth commission comprising all stakeholders, so that people who were involved on either side of the conflict could forgive each other.
- ❑ On inter-party rivalries, while part of the problem lay with the leadership of the political parties, the greater part of the problem lay with the people at the community level as it was they that perpetrated the violence on each other.

## **2.7 Gweru<sup>cxlix</sup>**

In the Midlands city of Gweru, a total of 153 people were interviewed who identified nine major conflicts and other social issues of concern to their communities. The main issues identified were inter-party power rivalries which was identified by 97 people or 63% of the participating interviewees, land redistribution (25%), unfair food distribution

(10%), gold panning (10%) and the liberation war (10%) which was mentioned as a causal/ aggravating factor for some of the conflicts. Other issues raised were prostitution, stay-aways and the Matebeleland disturbances. While most of the conflicts identified pertained to the city of Gweru itself, others were with respect to the rural homes of the interviewees and other areas known to them.

#### Inter-party rivalries.

Most of the events of this conflict as reported by the people in this area pertained to elections since 2000, especially the 2000 parliamentary and the 2002 presidential elections. The main contending parties in these elections were ZanuPF and the MDC; therefore most of the conflicts reported were between these two parties, with supporters of both sides exchanging accusations and counter-accusations. ZanuPF supporters saw the problem as being due to the MDC youths trying to harass the people.<sup>cl</sup> The youths were in turn beaten by soldiers and police officers, which gave the impression that the police and the army were being used against supporters of the MDC, even as recently as the urban council elections held in early 2003.<sup>cli</sup>

The same scenario also obtained in other parts of the country. The residents of Kuwadzana in Harare, especially supporters of parties other than ZanuPF<sup>clii</sup>, were beaten by the army and police<sup>cliii</sup> during a parliamentary by-election held earlier in 2003. In Bindura, opposition party supporters were being systematically hunted down and beaten and/or arrested<sup>cliv</sup> to the extent that 'no other parties were still active<sup>clv</sup> in that area and therefore the area was now calm and 'peaceful'.

But whether the conflict had really ended was another matter, as the general opinion was that while it had died down, one could not take that to be the end since it was a characteristic of election time.<sup>clvi</sup> In Chinhoyi in the Mashonaland West province, for example, the conflicts were actually continuing due 'to the heavy presence of war veterans'<sup>clvii</sup> in the town who were angered by the success of the MDC in the council and mayoral elections.

On the possible causes of the inter-party conflicts, the general view was that these power rivalries were a self-contained conflict which could not be linked to any previous conflict or event. Some of the events were seen as retaliation for earlier ones when victim-perpetrator roles were reversed. However, the conflict could be traced back to the constitutional referendum of February 2000 when warning shots of the impending confrontation between ZanuPF and the MDC party were fired.

On how the issues underlying the conflict could be resolved, the most widely held view was that ZanuPF should change its mind set and mode of operation and begin to accept others<sup>clviii</sup> and be prepared to give others the chance<sup>clix</sup> to operate and be voted for.

Another view laid the blame for the conflicts on the people themselves who should be the focus of any strategy to solve the problem. All the people needed to be taught procedures for settling disputes in a non-violent way<sup>clx</sup> so that they do not resort to violence, while those who indulged in violence during elections should be brought to book. There was also need for unity among the people, in contrast with unity between political parties.

### Gold panning

One issue that was constantly raised by the people in this area was the gold digging that was going on especially in the gold mining areas of Kadoma and Kwekwe. The main problem was that these gold diggers, popularly known as *Makorokoza*, were digging anywhere and everywhere. In one area the diggers dug a tunnel onto a homestead on a farm and under the farm house.<sup>clxi</sup> At another place they dug right through the school yard in full view of the school authorities.

The main cause of the problem that was constantly cited was the economic hardships that were affecting the whole country. Gold yielded quick and high returns,<sup>clxii</sup> which made it attractive in comparison with other income generating projects. Thus the gold diggers would rather continue digging.

One possible solution to the problem was to arrest the diggers and fine them heavily. Alternatively, they would be trained to do it properly and safely as many diggers were dying in collapsed mines.<sup>clxiii</sup>

### The land redistribution.

In the opinion of the people of Gweru, there seemed to be two phases to the land redistribution process: first, the black-on-white conflict over land and second, the black-on-black struggle for that land. The first phase was still going on as the former owners of the farms were returning to repossess their farms.<sup>clxiv</sup> There were complaints about the manner in which the exercise was carried out which lacked transparency. Some of the farms that were repossessed were given to the top people<sup>clxv</sup> in the party and various arms of government, which might cause problems down the road as other blacks

vie for the same land. However, an alternative view was that the problem had been laid to rest since most if not all the acquired farms were now inhabited by the indigenous people.<sup>clxvi</sup>

On the causes of the conflict, the general view was that it was due to the liberation war and the shortage of land and colonialism. There was, however, a divergent view, that the inter-party rivalries had something to do with it, in so far as some of the white farm owners were alleged to be supporters of the opposition MDC and therefore had to be economically dis-empowered as a way of pulling the rug from under the feet of the MDC<sup>clxvii</sup> thereby crippling its challenge for power.

On whether the underlying issues had been resolved, the general opinion was in the negative, especially as the implementing officials were corrupt,<sup>clxviii</sup> thereby sowing the seeds of the second phase of the conflict when blacks dispossess each other.

#### Other conflicts/ issues

Other conflicts/ issues that were identified included the issue of prostitution, the unfair distribution of food which was being done on party lines and stay-aways when 'people were thoroughly beaten by the army'.<sup>clxix</sup>

Prostitution. There were two dimensions to the problem of prostitution. The generality of the people of the area was complaining about the prevalence of the practice in the area, with the younger women worried that their husbands would be hi-jacked. On the other hand the resident prostitutes of the area complained of a drop in business as their traditional clients were then running after students at local tertiary institutions who had taken to prostitution to supplement their finances given the tough economic environment prevailing in the country. The general opinion was that the practice could not be stopped therefore, given the Aids pandemic, condoms should be made available freely.

Matebeleland disturbances. The people were agreed that while the fighting ended, the conflict itself did not end. On the causes of the conflict, there was a general agreement that the disturbances had their roots in the 1970s liberation war when Zanla and Zipra clashed in the operational zones. The pre-colonial tribal wars between the Shona and the Ndebele were also cited as having contributed to the conflict.

As a way of resolving the conflict, the interviewees suggested that the people concerned should pardon each other although it would be difficult for most of the Ndebele-

speaking people to do so.<sup>clxx</sup> A related view urged unity amongst the people and that what happened in the past be told and those responsible made to suffer the consequences.<sup>clxxi</sup>

## Observations

From the fore-going discussion of the research findings from Gweru, the following are some of the pertinent observations that emerged:

- ❑ The main conflicts of concern in the city of Gweru were inter-party rivalries, land redistribution and the Matebeleland gukurahundi war.
- ❑ The inter-party violence had become a feature of the elections when political parties and their election candidates use it for their own political ends.
- ❑ Since the people at community level were to blame for inter-party violence, they should be taught peaceful dispute resolution techniques while culprits are brought to book.
- ❑ Inter-party violence had assumed a life of its own at the community level as victims sought every opportunity for revenge.
- ❑ State security agents were being used as instruments of violence in the inter-party conflicts.
- ❑ The fast-track land redistribution programme was in two phases: the black-on-white which was almost over, and the black-on-black which would stem from the haphazard and unfair nature of the first phase.
- ❑ The Matebeleland gukurahundi war had not been resolved and there was need for a reconciliation process where the truth will be told and perpetrators brought to justice.

## 2.8 Harare<sup>clxxii</sup>

Altogether six major conflicts were identified in Harare, top among them being inter-party rivalries which was identified by 223 people representing 72% of the people interviewed and the liberation war (37%), mainly as a causal/ aggravating factor for some of those conflicts that came thereafter. To a lesser extent, the people also identified the land invasions (8%), and the pre-colonial tribal wars (8%), the latter mainly as a causal/ aggravating factor. Others identified were the Matebeleland



gukurahundi war, unfair distribution of relief food, colonialism and problems related to urban transport, service delivery by the city council and domestic violence.

#### Inter-party rivalries

Like in many other parts of the country, the rivalries pitted the ruling ZanuPF and the opposition MDC. On many occasions, people were beaten by ZanuPF supporters and state security agents on suspicion that they were MDC supporters. For example, people were beaten up just for wearing red clothes<sup>clxxiii</sup> on the assumption that they were MDC members trying to make a statement.<sup>clxxiv</sup> To make matters worse, the victims of the beatings would not dare report the matter to the police<sup>clxxv</sup> for fear of further victimisation<sup>clxxvi</sup> as the police often arrested political victims accusing them of disturbing the peace.

Prominent among the possible causal and/or aggravating factors of the rivalries were the liberation war and the Matebeleland gukurahundi War. The view was that ZanuPF thought that the MDC had no legitimate claim to govern because it did not have liberation war credentials. For the people from Matebeleland, another possible causal factor was the Matebeleland gukurahundi war,<sup>clxxvii</sup> in which case ZanuPF seemed to be continuing from where it had left off.

Another view was that the current inter-party conflicts were a function of the constitutional referendum of February and the parliamentary elections of June 2000.

And yet another view was that the government had got too used to the culture of rigging elections<sup>clxxviii</sup> without anyone complaining<sup>clxxix</sup> such that it wanted that good life to continue undisturbed, hence the over-reaction to any fickle threat. Related to this was the view that the 2002 presidential elections were not free and therefore the current government was not legitimate,<sup>clxxx</sup> a sting on its pride to which it was reacting very viciously.

A few voices blamed the violence on the government's principal tool for that violence, the war veterans.<sup>clxxxi</sup> The view was that the gratuities and monthly pensions given to the war veterans in 1997 'motivated' them<sup>clxxxii</sup> to carry out the violence against the people of Zimbabwe in the service of their paymaster.

On possible solutions to the problem, some of the suggested interventions were inward looking focusing on the role that the ordinary members of society could perform both individually and collectively. One voice appealed to the people's sense of reasoning for them to reconcile for the sake of 'the future of our country and our children'.<sup>clxxxiii</sup> Another implored them to open their eyes and confront the reality of their situation today, especially their powerlessness to make an impact in their current mode of operation, that the ordinary people should stop fighting each other as they did not hold any positions of influence in 'their' political parties to make meaningful decisions about this problem.<sup>clxxxiv</sup> Then there was a long term view as to what to do after the current chaos passed so that it would not recur, that people should not allow any ruling party to carry on for more than ten years because it becomes dictatorial.<sup>clxxxv</sup>

Others of the suggested interventions were outward looking where some of the interviewees appealed to outside forces to come to their rescue. One such appeal was to opposition parties and civil society organisations to organise mass action akin to the march on state house, dubbed the 'final push' once organised by the MDC, as there was no hope that the president would resign from office.<sup>clxxxvi</sup> Another implored the major political parties to start talking 'peace' to pave way for a broader participation by all; that peace dialogue should start from the top so that it can trickle down to the ordinary people.<sup>clxxxvii</sup>

### Land redistribution

The main causal factor cited for the farm invasions was the 1970s liberation war. Part of the mobilising message of the guerrillas was the return of the land to its rightful owners, the black people, which was why they were fighting the war. This message had not been lost on the interviewees despite the passage of more than 23 years since the war ended. Thus the view was that people had always wanted their land since it was what led them to waging the liberation war,<sup>clxxxviii</sup> thus the land invasions was a process of getting what they should have got long before.

While this was generally accepted as true indeed, others picked on the twist that had been the fast-track land redistribution programme, which seemed to be self-serving on the part of those behind it. Thus while there certainly was need for land redistribution, it had come late and tended to be a campaigning strategy.<sup>clxxxix</sup>

The interviewees generally seemed to suggest that the conflict had ended since the former white farm owners had moved away once the farms had been taken away from

them.<sup>cxc</sup> Thus the land question had already been settled and what was left was the full and proper utilisation of the land by the new owners. This was especially imperative given the state of the agricultural industry in the country as one of the fallout of the fast-track programme. Now the onus was on the new farmers to utilise the land fully and productively for the development of the agricultural system that had virtually collapsed.<sup>cxc</sup>

The Matebeleland gukurahundi war<sup>cxcii</sup>

The people of this area generally viewed, and seemed to have come to accept, the gukurahundi war as having been inspired by tribalism. The Ndebele were viewed as being bitter because of that war and resentful of the Shona to the extent that they called them *matsvina* (dirt).<sup>cxciii</sup> On the other hand, the war was seen as a fitting Shona-on-Ndebele 'tit for tat'<sup>cxciv</sup> since during the pre-colonial wars, the Ndebele were taking away Shona women, cattle and grain.

Thus, the pre-colonial wars were a major factor of the conflict. It was these pre-colonial tribal wars that created the tribalism<sup>cxcv</sup> that was exploited to justify the Gukurahundi war. However a different view was that while the Shona and Ndebele were obviously two tribal groupings, it was colonialism that emphasised these tribal differences and made the Shona and Ndebele hate each other.<sup>cxcvi</sup>

A more recent cause of the conflict was that the Ndebele wanted one of their own to become president.<sup>cxcvii</sup> And when that did not happen, they sought extra-legal means to that end, thereby provoking the Gukurahundi war unto themselves.

As to whether the conflict ended or not, there were three different but related views. One view was that while the conflict had ended, the issues were not resolved as the Ndebele were not happy with how it ended and were still bitter.<sup>cxcviii</sup> Another view was that the conflict was not over yet since the Ndebele were still in pain.<sup>cxcix</sup> And yet another view was that the conflict was not going to end as the Ndebele would not forgive<sup>cc</sup> the perpetrators of the atrocities.

The suggested interventions were varied. The preponderant view was that there was urgent need for a process of reconciliation and forgiveness among the people concerned so that the matter could begin to be put to rest. To this end, the people were supposed to forgive each other; 'after all the president had said that there would be compensation for the victims.'<sup>cci</sup>

One position was dismissive of the idea of healing the affected communities as an exercise in futility. The Ndebele were intransigent, so the idea was a waste of time which had to be abandoned completely.<sup>ccii</sup> However there was another voice of reason that called on everybody involved to know that we were all Zimbabweans regardless of our tribal groupings; even tribal-based provincial names, such as Mashonaland and Matebeleland, should be replaced as they cause divisions.<sup>cciii</sup>

#### Unfair distribution of relief food

Interviewees in Harare talked of unfair distribution of relief food both in different parts of the country as well as within the city itself. In the rural areas, the local leadership, most of who were pro-ZanuPF, often featured prominently in such practices, regardless of whether the relief food came from the state or non-governmental organisations. Thus oftentimes village heads would de-list people they suspected of not belonging to their political party ZanuPF<sup>cciv</sup> and people would be denied food for being suspected of belonging to the MDC.<sup>ccv</sup> Sometimes these local officials would victimise staff of the donor organisations accusing them of being pro-MDC. In the southern province of Masvingo, for example, staff of one such donor organisation were chased away by party officials.<sup>ccvi</sup> A similar incident was also reported on from the Mashonaland East province where ‘the councillor chased away people who had brought food aid accusing them of being MDC.’<sup>ccvii</sup> Sometimes these local leaders took for their own use the relief food donated to the community, usually selling it at inflated black market prices.

On what factors accounted for the unfair distribution of relief food, the general consensus was that it was because of the economic hardships biting the country at the time. However, the conflict had ‘ended’ since the donor organisations were no longer bringing the food. As a solution to the problem, the responsibility of distributing the food would need to be given to outsiders to prevent favouritism.<sup>ccviii</sup>

#### Observations

From the fore-going discussion of the research findings from Harare, the following are some of the pertinent observations that emerged:

- ❑ Inter-party violence was the main conflict affecting the people of Harare where ZanuPF was seen as wanting to maintain its hold on power.
- ❑ Political party activists acted under the false impression that they were powerful and important enough to hold positions of influence in ‘their’ political

parties and make meaningful decisions about their party's policies towards other parties.

- ❑ Liberation war politics was seen as justification for the inter-party rivalry as ZanuPF based its claim for the undisputed right to rule on being the only party to have participated in the liberation war.
- ❑ The land redistribution programme was seen more as a political gimmick rather than a genuine attempt at redressing the land imbalances.
- ❑ The Matebeleland gukurahundi war was seen by the Shona as a welcome but long overdue revenge mission on the Ndebele for the pre-colonial raids by their ancestors on Shona communities.
- ❑ Distribution of relief food followed party lines, with opposition party supporters being denied the food.

## 2.9 Mutare<sup>ccix</sup>

Altogether, 145 people were interviewed in the city of Mutare. Nearly every one of the people interviewed (114 or 79%) identified inter-party rivalries. The other conflicts identified were the liberation struggle (11%) as a causal/ aggravating factor for the inter-party rivalries, the fast-track land re-distribution programme (9%) as something happening in their rural areas and unfair food distribution (8%) as part of the inter-party rivalries.

### The inter-party rivalries.

During the urban council elections, as in other elections especially since the 2000 referendum, the city saw a lot of violence and a general increase in crime and thefts.<sup>ccx</sup> A lot of property was destroyed and normal life came to a stand still. Especially in the high density areas, tuckshops<sup>ccxi</sup> were destroyed and looted, roads leading to the city were blocked and commuter buses attacked precipitating a serious shortage of public transport such that people could not go to work<sup>ccxii</sup> and schools were forced to close temporarily<sup>ccxiii</sup>. Houses were destroyed and vandalised<sup>ccxiv</sup>, school buildings were attacked and glasses broken<sup>ccxv</sup> and other public facilities such as electric cables were vandalised and/or stolen.<sup>ccxvi</sup> Some houses were petrol-bombed and dwelling shacks burnt down, killing a number of people.<sup>ccxvii</sup>

As a result of the rampant violence and political intimidation, business generally came to a standstill. People were not going to work due to transport problems and fear of victimisation<sup>ccxviii</sup> forcing businesses to suspend operations. Sometimes companies were forced to close and workers told to go and attend rallies.<sup>ccxix</sup> Thus little or no business was conducted throughout the city during this period.<sup>ccxx</sup>

Even within their neighbourhoods, people's movements were severely curtailed. They were afraid to move around 'aimlessly' for fear of victimisation by the violent gangs as well as the police.<sup>ccxxi</sup> Unfortunately it was mainly people of the productive age groups that were being beaten and injured<sup>ccxxii</sup> and hospitals were often full of casualties,<sup>ccxxiii</sup> most of them people who were supposed to be at work or school. Thus for the sake of their peace and safety, they resorted to staying indoors.<sup>ccxxiv</sup>

On whether the conflict had ended, most of the people were of the opinion that these conflicts ended especially since the situation was generally quiet. However others were doubtful that it had really ended since the violence had just stopped on its own after the elections.<sup>ccxxv</sup> Thus the general opinion was that the violence had only subsided and would resurface in the following elections.

On what the causal or aggravating factors of these disturbances could be, there were varied positions. The major view was that the conflict just occurred spontaneously and could not be attributed to any specific factors. Others thought that it had a lot to do with the emergence of a strong opposition party (the MDC) in the country. Others, however, traced its roots back to the liberation war of the 1970s on which ZanuPF based its legitimacy and claims to power ahead of other 'non-revolutionary' parties such as the MDC.<sup>ccxxvi</sup>

On what could be done to resolve the problem, some suggestions focussed on the system while others focussed on changing the mind-set of the participants. In line with improving the system, one suggestion was that a law be passed preventing unnecessary beatings by the law enforcement agents<sup>ccxxvii</sup> while another was that a 'neutral party'<sup>ccxxviii</sup> be set up to counter-balance the two opposing parties. And on re-orienting the perpetrators of the violence, the suggestion was to educate those that fight each other in the name of political parties to realise that they had nothing to gain out of it.<sup>ccxxix</sup> However some interviewees thought that it was impossible to resolve the issue as one can never reconcile with their enemy.<sup>ccxxx</sup> As a strategy the warring parties would need

to resort to mediation by prominent people from other countries, especially their leaders<sup>ccxxxi</sup>, so that the two sides could talk it over and unite.<sup>ccxxxii</sup>

### Other conflicts

The residents of the city also identified other conflicts which seemed related to the inter-party rivalries.

The general economic hardships. The people in the area talked at length about the general economic hardships prevailing in the country at the time which were also affecting them. These, they said, caused a lot of misunderstandings among the people. Basic goods were no longer available in the shops while they were abundant on the black market forcing people to buy them at exorbitant prices that were generally unaffordable.<sup>ccxxxiii</sup>

On what factors could have caused or at least aggravated the situation, the people interviewed were generally agreed that these hardships were linked to the rivalries between political parties with specific reference to ZanuPF and the MDC. And on what could be done to resolve the situation, the general suggestion was that the government would have to stipulate prices that should be charged for the commodities<sup>ccxxxiv</sup> so that traders would not take advantage of desperate consumers.

Unfair distribution of food. Like in the rest of the country at the time, Mutare was experiencing serious food shortages, thereby necessitating the distribution of relief food to the population there. Some of the interviewees complained about unfair distribution of the relief food which was done on party lines.<sup>ccxxxv</sup> The problem was rife during the urban council elections and had ended with the end of those elections. On the causal/aggravating factors of the problem, some of the interviewees were of the opinion that it was caused by rivalry between the parties contesting the elections. Others, while acknowledging that the inter-party rivalries were an aggravating factor in the unfair distribution of food, traced the root causes back to the liberation war of the 1970s. And on how the problem could be solved, the general opinion was that it was difficult as people in positions of leadership were party to the problem.<sup>ccxxxvi</sup>

Land redistribution. The people also spoke about the land redistribution process that was going on country-wide at the time of the research. One of the major effects for the people of the city was that there were no more fruits from Nyanga because the farms had been invaded by the war veterans.

The general view was that the conflict had not ended and the issue could only be resolved if the government intervened.

### Observations

From the fore-going discussion of the research findings from Mutare, the following are some of the pertinent observations that emerged:

- ❑ Violence between political parties was the main conflict of concern to the people of this city.
- ❑ The unfair distribution of relief food was seen as a manifestation of inter-party rivalry.
- ❑ The perpetrators of inter-party violence were local people who needed to be educated and made aware that they had nothing to gain out of it.
- ❑ Members of opposition political parties were viewed as enemies that one could never reconcile with.
- ❑ The liberation war of the 1970s was seen as having a hand in the inter-party rivalry in the city, as well as the unfair distribution of relief food.



### 3.1 Introduction.

A glance at the history of the part of the world occupied by the country now called Zimbabwe reveals a plethora of conflicts. Most of these conflicts were characterized by violence, some of them dated back to long before the country got its present boundaries and name, and some of them were overlapping both in terms of time and events. Notable among these conflicts are the conflicts and wars among and between the various tribes of African people that populated the area before the coming of the Europeans, the subjugation and domination (otherwise known as colonialism) of these African peoples by the Europeans, the struggles by the African peoples to rid themselves of this colonialism, the inter-fighting among the various groups of the African peoples especially as represented by their political parties, and the fight over the land hitherto in the hands of the white farmers (most of them) of European origin.

This chapter is not intended as a rigorous account of the history of this country. Rather, it is meant as an overview of the conflict flashpoints that characterized the history of this country dating from before the coming of the European settlers. In the process, the chapter attempts to:

- highlight some of the major conflicts that the people of this country have gone through and the opportunities to resolve them that went begging;
- offer an alternative interpretation of some of the historical events from a conflict resolution perspective;
- highlight some of the misperceptions that people had about some of the events and how they acted on the basis of those misperceptions to aggravate the conflicts; and
- show how ordinary people throughout the history of the country are also culpable for some of the conflicts.

The hope is that, by taking this fresh look, the nation dispels some of the myths associated with these events today as a way of coming to terms with those conflicts and finding a lasting solution, both at individual and collective levels.

### 3.2 Pre-colonial tribal wars

The country called Zimbabwe is located in southern Africa between the Zambezi River to the north and the Limpopo to the south. To the east and west, most of it lies between the 25 and 33 degree longitudes. The population is made up of black people who are in the majority, a sprinkling of white people most of them of European descent and a few others in between, mainly of Asian origin. The black inhabitants are not as homogenous as their colour might suggest as they belong to various tribal groupings, largely on linguistic lines, the major ones being Shona and Ndebele - from the languages they speak, namely Shona and Ndebele respectively. Within each linguistic grouping are sub-groups that are still distinguishable even today despite the more than a century of inter-mingling and co-existence as a result of colonial domination by the Europeans.

When the Europeans first arrived in the area of the present day Zimbabwe, they found the Shona and Ndebele already here. However, these were not the first Africans on the scene. 'For untold millennia, the Bushmen or San people occupied most of southern Africa, including Zimbabwe, living in a lush, well-watered but isolated Eden where game was plentiful and the trees were heavy with fruit.'<sup>ccxxxvii</sup> The San were nomadic people, hunter-gatherers who neither raised cattle nor grew crops. They lived in caves where they would paint the pictures of some of the animals they hunted. Some of these paintings can still be seen today in thousands of sites across most of the Southern African countries, for example Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana and South Africa.

#### The arrival of the Shona

While the San were enjoying the fruits of this Eden, little did they know that visitors were on the way. During the first millennium AD, some African tribes had begun moving downwards from their original homelands in the great lakes region of central Africa. By 1000 AD, some of these groups had crossed the Zambezi River and began to build settlements in the area marked by the present-day Zimbabwe. The Shona people had arrived, disturbing the San's peace and harmony with nature. For unlike the latter, the former built shelter, planted fields and raised cattle. By the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Shona were building in stone, creating the stone walls known today as the Great Zimbabwe. By 1400 AD, they had colonized most of the present day Zimbabwe, and '400 years later the San were all but extinct'<sup>ccxxxviii</sup>. Today, all that remains to tell the San story are their rock paintings in various parts of the country, and a few of their descendants in parts of Matebeleland North.

During their tenure as undisputed rulers of this part of the continent, which lasted until about 1840, the Shona established a number of 'states', sometimes one after another, sometimes in competition with each other. The first and by far the greatest of these states was what came to be known as the Great Zimbabwe, from the great stone structures by that name situated near the present day city of Masvingo in the southern part of the country (from which the country and the city derive their names). The Great Zimbabwe state was established in the early part of the second millennium lasting until the 15<sup>th</sup> century. During its life time, some sub-groups of the ruling dynasty left the state in search of 'better land for grazing, agriculture and ivory hunting, control of gold regions and trade routes and, in some cases, political independence from the Great Zimbabwe state'.<sup>ccxxxix</sup>

One of these successor states was the Torwa state with its first great capital at Khami near present day Bulawayo, then at Danangombe (known today as Dhlodhlo, near Shangani) which was later to be overrun and taken over by the Rozvi people under their ruler known as the Changamire. In the tradition of the Great Zimbabwe, the Torwa state also built stone capitals, remains of which can still be seen at both Khami and Danangombe. The other and more well-known successor state was the Mutapa situated in the north of the country. 'By about 1500 the Mutapa dynasty had gained control of a large wedge of gold-rich plateau country, suitable for agriculture and a section of the Zambezi valley dry lands, which also commanded parts of the trade routes.'<sup>ccxli</sup> The other Shona groups contemporary to these states were 'Barwe, Manyika, Teve, Gambe and Danda ... and possibly Maungwe, Bocha and Buhera as well'.<sup>ccxli</sup>

#### The rise and fall of the Rozvi

A new force to reckon with on the plateau was soon to be the Rozvi people under the Changamire. Originating from the north-east corner of the country, the Rozvi, otherwise known as the destroyers, became powerful enough to eject the Portuguese from the Manyika area and to make two major raids into the Mutapa state. Moving westwards they overran the Torwa state and captured their capital, Danangombe, and erected a new state on the foundations laid by the Torwa. At about the same time, 'the Hiya, a group of emigrants from the middle Sabi valley and the south-eastern highlands ... set off in an astonishing career of raiding' spanning over a long thirty years before they were crushed by the Rozvi and finally settled near the Gweru river.

While the Changamire was moving westwards, some of his people remained behind in the central parts of the country, others moved into the south-eastern highlands; still

more moved into Teve territory after the Changamire campaigns against the Portuguese and took over the territory from its previous rulers who they drove up into the eastern slopes of the mountains in what is Mozambique today. As a result of these movements away from the centre by the Rozvi, a vacuum was created which attracted other Shona groups to come in, which perhaps accounts for the present location of some chiefdoms, e.g. Njanja from the lower Zambezi valley and now in 'traditional' Buhera territory; and Duma from the Teve territory in Mozambique now lodged in the Bikita highlands.

Meanwhile, some groups broke away from the Rozvi state to form new states in non-Shona speaking areas. One such group 'migrated through the Mafingabusi plateau to the Deka-Gwaai river area where they settled and turned a largely Leya-speaking area into a Shona-speaking one'.<sup>ccxlii</sup> Another broke away and crossed the south-eastern lowlands to conquer the Venda-speakers of the Zoutpansberg, although the Rozvi culture was absorbed by the Venda-speakers in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

As signified by the movements of the Rozvi, the Shona seemed poised to continue their southward and westward movements. However, these movements were effectively halted by the arrival on the scene of the Nguni in the form of the Ndebele to the west and the Gaza to the east as they ran northwards away from Tshaka in a massive population movement popularly known as the *mfecane*. These were not the first Nguni to arrive, though. First were the Ngoni people in the east under Nxaba who would have wanted to settle but were forced to cross the Zambezi by the second group, the Gaza Nguni under Soshangana. Meanwhile on the western front, the Rozvi were fighting another Nguni group under Zwangendaba which, although they defeated it and forced it to cross the Zambezi into present day Zambia, left them too weakened to face the Ndebele who followed soon after under Mzilikazi.

#### The arrival of the Ndebele

The Ndebele arrived in the Changamire state in about 1840 and 'took it over, complete with most of its population, and remained there until their conquest by the Rhodesians in the 1890s'.<sup>ccxliii</sup> The first Shona chief to fall victim to the Ndebele was named Hwange who lived in the present day Hwange area. 'The defeat of Hwange's people was perhaps the first destruction of a Shona village by the Matabele in what would later become wholesale slaughter'.<sup>ccxliv</sup> Thereafter Mzilikazi, who had arrived in Hwange's area through Botswana leading one group of the Ndebele, turned back to join the other that had already set itself up at Bulawayo under his son Nkulumana. Thereafter the Ndebele

began to establish themselves in the area, raiding the surrounding Shona groups for cattle and grain, and exacting tribute from those that submitted to their rule.

One popularly held view is that the Ndebele were a warlike and ruthless people in terms of their relations with the Shona. Their king, Mzilikazi, 'regarded all the land between the Limpopo and the Zambezi as his domain and all the people living in it as his subjects. Over the next half century the Shona were hunted relentlessly, and all the other tribes had to pay the Matabele a tax just to stay alive'.<sup>ccxlv</sup> White hunters, traders and missionaries who visited the king often returned to South Africa with tales of how the other tribes had been persecuted and were now starving in subjugation. The Shona population dwindled significantly, and the survivors took to living on high ground and hills from where they could see the approach of the Ndebele. There they remained 'crouched behind rough defensive walls until colonialism arrived to release them'.<sup>ccxlv</sup>

Another popular but contradictory view is that while the raids took place, they were not to the extent normally thought, nor were their effects on the Shona communities as devastating. 'It used to be thought that raiding caused widespread depopulation, with a sort of scorched earth zone around at least the Ndebele state. This simply was not so'.<sup>ccxlvii</sup> While on the one hand some communities suffered heavily, like the Changamire Rozvi whose state was taken over and most of its people absorbed into the Ndebele society, others, especially in the central and northern parts of the country, were beyond the reach of the Ndebele and were therefore never raided at all. Even when they could carry out their raids, 'the Ndebele had a simple policy towards their Shona neighbours: those who submitted to them and paid a small tribute were exempt from raiding'.<sup>ccxlviii</sup> Some of the states that submitted and paid tribute and were therefore not raided were Mutekedza, Hwata, Nemakonde and Shangwe in the central and western parts of present day Zimbabwe. Others, like Chivi, successfully resisted the raids and therefore maintained their independence throughout this period.

## Observations

From the above discussion of the pre-colonial wars, a few observations emerge:

- ❑ The Shona were not the original inhabitants of the part of the sub-continent they now call their own; rather they took it away from the San people who they displaced.
- ❑ The Shona were not a homogenous group having as they did different and competing states that were raiding each other before the Ndebele came into the

area, and probably continued to do so even after, despite their shared fear of the latter. Thus when the Ndebele came, they did no more than the Shona were already doing to each other and others, only better and more effectively.

- ❑ Because the Ndebele absorbed a lot of the Shona people, especially the Rozvi, there is a lot of Shona blood in the Ndebele people of today, making them and the Shona basically one people, to the extent that some families across the linguistic divide probably belong to the same family tree.
- ❑ The Ndebele never occupied more land than they required for their own use, preferring to leave their neighbouring Shona states to their own devices apart from occasional raids to collect or re-enforce the payment of tribute. Thus they were not an occupying force but just a group of people trying to survive and perpetuate their own kind as well, just like the Torwa and the Rozvi before them, in response to the natural instinct of self-preservation.

But while the Ndebele were enjoying their tenure as the rulers of most of present day Zimbabwe, a storm was gathering over the horizon.

### **3.3 Colonial subjugation and domination.**

At the time the Ndebele arrived into present day Zimbabwe, the scramble for Africa by the various imperialistic European nations was well under way. Their nationals were criss-crossing Africa in search of personal wealth as well as tracts of land to occupy in the name of their countries of origin. Soon, several of them were knocking at Lobengula's (now king of the Ndebele after Mzilikazi's death in 1868) door for his signature. The Portuguese, who had already staked a claim to present day Mozambique, were pressing from the east. The Afrikaners under Paul Kruger were pressing from the south as they sought alliances in their fight against the British in the Cape. And the British, driven by Cecil John Rhodes of the famous Cape-to-Cairo dream, were pressing even harder from the Cape. In the Moffat Treaty of 1887 signed with Lobengula, the British recognized all Shona land as being part of the Matabele kingdom in return for Lobengula's commitment not to negotiate with any other country without the knowledge of the British high commissioner in the Cape, thereby effectively shutting the Portuguese out of the race for Mashonaland. Soon after, the British secured protectorate status for Bechuanaland (Botswana) in a treaty with Kgama the Tswana king (thereby isolating the Ndebele), and warned Kruger off Matabeleland.

‘Lobengula was now alone ...He needed someone on his side, and Rhodes seized the moment.’<sup>ccxlix</sup> On 29 October 1888, the Rudd Concession was signed giving the British prospecting rights in Mashonaland. Using this treaty, Rhodes secured from the British government (on 29 October 1889) a Royal Charter authorizing him to occupy Mashonaland; the colonial occupation of Zimbabwe had begun. Rhodes formed the British South Africa Company (BSAC) to manage the occupation and administration of the new territory. On 11 July 1890, the Pioneer Column crossed into Zimbabwe; on 12 September 1890, they raised the British flag at present day Harare. The colonization of Zimbabwe had become a reality, marking the beginning of what turned out to be 90 years of colonial domination of the indigenous peoples by the British settlers.

Immediately ‘the pioneers took off in all directions, each determined to peg the best claims around old mining ruins, and the lushest farmland’,<sup>ccl</sup> occupying huge tracts of traditional Shona lands, much to the disappointment of the Shona. The occupation of Mashonaland also had the effect of cutting off Lobengula’s annual supply of cattle and crops in tribute, much to his chagrin. When he tried to reclaim the territory from the BSAC, the latter responded by attacking; with Lobengula’s defeat, Matebeleland was also occupied. The occupation of Zimbabwe was finally ‘complete in 1897 after the superior weapons of the settlers, assisted by British troops, had subdued the combined resistance of the Shona- and the Ndebele-speaking peoples’<sup>ccli</sup> in what are popularly known as the Matebele and Mashona uprisings.

Having been defeated, the Africans lost any self-determination, and the settlers began to rule the country, named Rhodesia after their chief sponsor Cecil John Rhodes, in a manner as to protect and entrench their interests. Over the years, the race relations stance of successive settler governments passed through three distinguishable phases: assimilation (1899-1923), separate development (1923-1969), and ‘apartheid’ 1969-1976. Between 1899 and 1923 when the territory was ruled by the BSAC based on the royal charter, the belief was that eventually Africans would assimilate into white society. After 1923 when Rhodesia became a self-governing colony, land was set aside for Africans separate from that for Europeans.

Following UDI in 1965, Rhodesia became frankly white supremacist and race relations came to resemble even more closely those in neighbouring South Africa. ‘Racially discriminatory legislation and administrative practices had evolved to give colonial authorities such tight control over Africans that some have drawn analogies between

African life under settler rule and total institutions such as prisons, slavery, and concentration camps.<sup>ccli</sup> Naturally, African resentment grew towards this discrimination and the inequities they produced, especially in the areas of voting rights, local government and land and agricultural policies, just to name a few.

### Voting rights

Although they were outnumbered by Africans throughout the colonial period, sometimes by as much as 1:45, the Europeans controlled all elected national bodies. This was achieved through the franchise allocation systems in existence which denied the right to vote to nearly all of the Africans. Until the Rhodesian Front (RF)'s republican constitution of 1969, the franchise regulations were colour-blind in principle. In practice, however, 'they ensured that the numbers of registered African voters never reached even one per cent of the total African voting population'.<sup>ccliii</sup>

Throughout the colonial period, the country was a meritocracy where one became a voter on merit based on educational qualifications and ownership of property. Through this system, only 51 Africans were on the voters' roll in 1906. In 1912, the Company administration decided to raise the property qualifications to beyond the reach of most of the Africans, with the express intention of denying Africans the vote, given the racially skewed character of wealth-holding and income distribution in the country at that time.

After the end of Company rule and the establishment of a settler government in 1923, attempts were made to further restrict African voting rights. In 1933, the Legislative Assembly passed a resolution urging the government to abolish the African franchise altogether but without success. In 1951, an amended Electoral Act required voters to own property to the value of 500 pounds, up from 150, or earn annually 240 pounds, up from 100; in addition, voters also had to be able to speak and write English, up from just being able to complete the registration form. In 1961, a new constitution came into being with an 'A' voters' roll for the whites and a 'B' voters' roll for the Africans where the former carried more weight. All this was meant to render insignificant the vote of the Africans who were by far in the majority.

### Traditional leaders

Colonial rule made chiefs an extension of its administrative system, thereby altering the relationship between rulers and their subjects. From the time of colonial takeover of the country, the chiefship and other authority positions depended not only on the application of inheritance laws but also on government approval. Chiefs who had



rebelled against company rule during the 1896-97 uprisings were removed and loyalists rewarded, a practice that continued throughout the colonial period. The Native Affairs Department created in 1898 rendered them instruments of colonial government. To that end, the Native Regulations of 1910 gave the Administrator in Council powers to appoint a chief to preside over a tribe and a headman over a section of a tribe, thus taking colonial control to the smallest possible unit of the population.

With the enactment of the Native Law and Courts Act in 1937, chiefs and headmen were, for the first time since colonial conquest, given judicial functions and powers. However by this time they were no longer authentic traditional institutions, having been transformed into an extension of the colonial administrative system. Thus instead of being responsible to their subjects, rulers had to satisfy the colonial authorities if they wished to retain their positions. They had become police constables whose duty was to uphold European-imposed law and collect European-imposed taxes, both thorny issues among their people. Thus, 'village heads came to be called "keeper of the book" (sabhuku), referring to the tax register, instead of head of the village (samusha).<sup>ccliv</sup>

Successive settler governments always held the position that chiefs were the true representatives of the Africans, both rural and urban, and went to great lengths to bolster their positions vis-à-vis their subjects. In 1951, the government created chiefs' provincial assemblies as vehicles for expressing African views on legislation affecting Africans. In 1959, threatened by young, educated nationalists, the chiefs used these assemblies to petition the government to ban nationalist meetings. In 1961, they approved the constitution rejected by the African nationalists. And in 1964, they 'unanimously approved the government's proposed unilateral declaration of independence from Britain and requested then that they be given parliamentary representation'.<sup>cclv</sup> In 1967, the Tribal Land Authority Act restored to the chiefs their right to allocate land and control its use within their chiefdoms. And the UDI republican constitution of 1969 reserved seats for chiefs in the senate and house of assembly.

### The land question

At the root of the 1896-7 Matebele and Mashona uprisings was the issue of land. Seeing the rate at which land and gold claims were being pegged by the settlers, Selous warned Rhodes and Jameson, the administrator of the territory, that soon there would be nothing left for the local peoples, and that war would be inevitable. True to his warning, the Matebele had regrouped (after Lobengula's defeat) in the Matobo Hills and

the Shona were becoming increasingly restive over the loss of their land which had deprived them of the ability to sustain themselves and graze their cattle. So, on 24 March 1896 the Matebele struck. Three months after the rebellion was put down, on 16 June 1896, the Shona rebellion began as well, but was soon put down.

Both Lobengula's war of resistance and the uprisings had alerted the British to the need to set aside inalienable land for the Africans. The first reserves were set up in Matebeleland in 1894, in areas that were arid, followed by Mashonaland in 1898. Of the total land area in the country in 1925, reserves occupied 22% and land alienated by the whites 32%. The Land Apportionment Act of 1930 set aside 17% of the unalienated land for the creation of African Purchase Areas; another 40% was allocated for exclusive European purchase, and the rest was left as Unassigned Land. The effect of the act was that 'European areas constituted 50 per cent of the land, African areas 30 per cent and Unassigned Land 20 per cent. Contrasted with the 1925 allocation, the 1930 Act allotted another 8 per cent of land to Africans and an additional 18 per cent to whites'.<sup>cclvi</sup>

In 1951, the African Land Husbandry Act came into being. Its main purpose was to end migrant labour that produced inefficient part-time farmers. Presented as a device to improve African agriculture, 'it gave district commissioners powers to limit the numbers of cattle and other livestock that African farmers might own, and to restrict the acreage that they might plant to maize'.<sup>cclvii</sup> Only cultivators resident in the Reserves qualified for farming and stock rights that had been calculated to ensure each holder subsistence with a small surplus. These years were remembered for the massive losses of cattle by Africans to the Europeans as the former were compelled to sell their 'excess' cattle to the latter at give-away prices. The way the Act was enforced grew stricter following a series of resolutions passed by the European Farmers' Union in 1954 and 1955 which claimed that unless African production of food was restricted, white commercial farmers would be unable to survive.

The republican constitution of 1969 replaced the Land Apportionment Act with the Land Tenure Act which divided the land roughly equally between Europeans and Africans. African land increased from 30 percent to 53 percent while European land decreased to 47 per cent of the total land available in the country. These figures, however, belie the imbalance in the land ownership between the races which can only be better understood when the relative population densities and discrepancies in the quality of the land are taken into consideration. With a rural population density of 45.8 persons per square

mile of inferior quality land for the Africans, and with a population density of 1 person per square mile of superior quality land, most of it lying unused,<sup>cclviii</sup> for the Europeans, the land ownership was skewed by far in favour of the latter.

### Observations

From this brief overview of colonial history, a number of observations emerge:

- ❑ Lobengula was cornered into signing the Rudd Concession which Rhodes abused to get the British charter which he used as a pretext for occupying the territory that is Zimbabwe today; and when he tried to resist, he was attacked and defeated.
- ❑ Soon after their arrival in 1890, the settlers began taking away the land without regard as to whether it was being used by the Africans at the time or not.
- ❑ Right from the start, but especially after the self-rule referendum of 1923, the successive settler governments systematically put in place and rigorously implemented a system designed to deprive the Africans of their rights as people and citizens of the country.
- ❑ Members of the settler community urged and abetted the government's onslaught on African rights and freedoms as exemplified by the pressure the European Farmers' Union brought to bear on the government to curtail African agriculture.
- ❑ The colonial governments first weakened the African system of chiefs and then used it as an instrument of subjugation and domination of the African people thereby turning the Africans against each other.

## 3.4 The liberation struggle and war

The 1896-7 Matebele and Mashona uprisings that marked the completion of the occupation of the country by the British also marked the beginning of the liberation struggle for self-determination by the indigenous people. When the settler guns finally fell silent, Rhodes negotiated a lasting peace with the Matebele. 'The Shona were not shown such respect, and their spirit medium ...Nehanda ... was arrested and hanged without trial.'<sup>cclix</sup> With the native question 'settled' once and for all, the full exploitation of the country's resources began.

### The qualified franchise.

Defeated but not vanquished, Africans gradually became politically active. The first black political movement was the Union Native Voters Association (UNVA) which was formed in about 1912 in response to the raising of franchise qualifications by government. After the First World War, the Southern Rhodesian Native Association (SRNA) which operated in Mashonaland and the Rhodesia Bantu Voters Association (RBVA) which operated in Matebeleland, were formed. These organisations became less active or died away in the early 1930s, leaving a political void which was temporarily filled in by the Southern Rhodesia Native Missionary Conference which comprised African preachers, evangelists and other church leaders.

In 1936, the Southern Rhodesia Bantu Congress (SRBC) was formed in Bulawayo. In 1944, the Congress played a leading role in opposing then prime minister Godfrey Huggins's plan to replace black voting rights with a guarantee of two seats in the Legislative Assembly that would be held by whites ostensibly representing African interests. Meanwhile, a new grouping, the African Voters League (AVL), was formed, with branches in Salisbury, Bulawayo, Gwelo and Bindura. It vehemently rejected Huggins's proposals by holding meetings, passing resolutions and lobbying the government. The Congress, which changed its name to the African National Congress of Southern Rhodesia in 1945, was by 1947 increasingly becoming more radical as Huggins pressed forward with his African disenfranchisement proposals. In 1948, Joshua Nkomo was elected its president, his predecessors having been Enoch Dumbutshena and Thompson Samkange.<sup>cclx</sup>

### Mass nationalism.

In 1955, the City Youth League was formed in Harare by people like James Chikerema, George Nyandoro and Edison Sithole<sup>cclxi</sup> on a platform that was critical of the African elite and their self-serving limited political agenda. In 1956, the League organized a bus boycott which began in Harare and spread to Bulawayo and turned into a mass demonstration with riots in the streets.

In September 1957, the ANC merged with the City Youth League to form the Southern Rhodesia African National Congress (SRANC). Joshua Nkomo was elected the leader of this new ANC, with James Chikerema as vice president, George Nyandoro as general secretary, Joseph Msika as treasurer, and Francis Nehwati and Stanislas Marembo as committee members.<sup>cclxii</sup> The new organisation was a complete departure from the old

ANC as it adopted the mass nationalist agenda of the City Youth League. It 'demanded universal suffrage and parliamentary democracy, the repeal of all racial legislation, and a society based on individual freedom and equal opportunity for all'<sup>cclxiii</sup>. These demands were too much for the government to stomach, and soon the SRANC was banned and most of the leadership arrested. From its ashes arose, in January 1960, the National Democratic Party, and Joshua Nkomo was elected its president in absentia.

Unlike its predecessors, the NDP now called for African self-rule and not merely the right to participate in government.<sup>cclxiv</sup> In 1961, an NDP delegation which comprised Joshua Nkomo, Ndabaningi Sithole, George Silundika and Herbert Chitepo<sup>cclxv</sup> participated in a constitutional conference with the British and the settler government. The conference got unstuck on the issue of land tenure and the NDP delegation walked out of the conference, while the British and the settler government went ahead with the new constitution. In July of that year, the mainly European electorate voted for the proposed constitution in a referendum boycotted by the NDP. The NDP held its own parallel referendum among the Africans which showed that the majority of them rejected it. Nationalist violence continued to increase in the aftermath of the referendum. On 7 December 1961 the police opened fire on rioters in Salisbury and two days later the NDP was banned, only to be replaced a week later by the Zimbabwe African People's Union, again led by Joshua Nkomo.<sup>cclxvi</sup>

The nationalists' changes in strategy were generally a response to the changes in the attitude and actions of the colonial governments towards the African people. The advent of Garfield Todd as Prime Minister in 1953 signified the end of Huggins's conservatism especially as signified by his persistent attempts to disenfranchise the Africans over his long tenure as prime minister. A more liberal attitude on the part of the European towards the African population<sup>cclxvii</sup> was in the air since the run up to the federation<sup>cclxviii</sup> and the advent of Todd seemed to confirm this trend. But this trend was to be short lived. 'In 1958 the white politicians of the ruling United Federal Party ... threw out Garfield Todd and brought in the hard-liner Edgar Whitehead who at once began to try to crush the emerging African opposition.'<sup>cclxix</sup> It was the Whitehead government that, in February 1959, banned the African National Congress and arrested hundreds of its leaders, some of them staying in prison for up to four years, and in December 1961, banned its successor, the NDP.

Hard as he was, Whitehead was unfortunately deemed not hard enough by some of his United Federal Party colleagues. Thus in 1962 he went for elections under the 1961

constitution against a new breakaway party of hardliners, the Rhodesian Front (RF), which was seeking a mandate to keep power in white hands indefinitely. This was ‘...the decisive moment in deciding whether Rhodesia was to evolve in peace or turn to civil war with all the consequences of that tragic happening...’<sup>cclxxx</sup> The watershed election (as it turned out to be), was won by the white supremacist RF party, signifying the closure of the gates of communication between the races and pointing to, in the words of Josiah Chinamano, the battle of white versus black, and Southern Rhodesia would, according to Ken Flower (the chief of intelligence), henceforward be a different place from the one they had known before.<sup>cclxxi</sup> The new prime minister was Winston Field; his government moved quickly to introduce tough new legislation limiting freedom of speech and creating a mandatory death sentence for acts of sabotage.

Meanwhile, Zapu took its campaign onto the international stage. In 1962 it succeeded in having the UN General Assembly in New York pass a resolution calling for an all-party conference to draw up a new constitution. At home, it stepped up its programme of industrial strikes and other forms of resistance. The movement was increasingly becoming convinced of the need to wage the armed struggle in order to resolve the constitutional problem and achieve majority rule, and preparations were being made to that effect.

#### Towards the armed struggle.

However, if not unfortunately, the next phase of the struggle was destined to be entered in disunity. In August 1963, the nationalist movement split into two organisations; those disaffected with Nkomo and his leadership and strategies broke away to form the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and elected Ndabaningi Sithole as their leader. The new party was committed to a non-racial, democratic, socialist state. Its anti-colonial, anti-imperialist and socialist language was a departure from that used by earlier nationalist organisations. However, ‘the major difference between the two rival nationalist organisations at this stage was Zanu’s more radical rhetoric rather than its strategy’.<sup>cclxxii</sup> Nevertheless, this signified to the government that the nationalists had stepped a gear up.

Like its predecessor governments, the RF’s main concern was to bring about the country’s full independence from Britain. In its election campaign in 1962, the RF had made this issue its main platform, and was geared to press ahead, even if it meant achieving the goal through UDI (Unilateral Declaration of Independence). When Field seemed hesitant, he was replaced as prime minister by Ian Douglas Smith in April 1964.

In August of the same year, both Zapu and Zanu were banned<sup>cclxxiii</sup>. In October, Smith held an *indaba* with African chiefs seeking their backing for UDI, which they provided. And on 11 November 1965, Rhodesia unilaterally declared independence from Britain.

The nationalists responded with the battle of Chinhoyi on 28 April 1966 involving Zanu guerrillas. This marked the beginning of the liberation war, otherwise known as the second Chimurenga (after the 1896-7 uprisings), which would last for the next 14 years to 1979. The war might have dragged on for decades but for the Lancaster House constitutional conference of 1979 which brought about majority rule. But this was not before the country and its people had had their fair share of suffering. The war, which became more brutal with each week or month that passed, wore down protagonists on all sides. By 1979, 36 000 combatants and civilians were dead, the same number had been injured and 1,5 million people had been displaced, and no armed force was even close to victory.<sup>cclxxiv</sup> However, it is the ordinary civilians, most of them unwilling participants in a war not of their own making, who bore the brunt of the suffering.

#### Caught in the middle.

Caught in between two armies, the ordinary people were faced with a delicate balancing act just to survive. The government required them to report the presence of guerrillas in their villages. Often they demanded this on pain of death for failure to do so; they also tried to entice them to do so by offering monetary rewards. Messages to this effect were communicated to the people by various means, including posters, and print and electronic media. On the other hand, the guerrillas demanded that nobody reports their presence to the government forces, upon pain of death as well. Anybody who did, or was suspected of having done so, was labelled a sell-out and was often killed. Thus caught in between, the people were at a loss as to what to do.<sup>cclxxv</sup>

The war saw massive displacements of rural people who were forced to abandon their homes and a much better life in the rural areas to join the sprawling urban squatter camps. Some ran away from constant harassment by the soldiers for not reporting the presence of the guerrillas. Others ran away from the guerrillas and their informers, especially the youths that had become a law unto themselves. This was the only way to escape certain death for those that had been accused of being sell-outs. Those who had sons and daughters working in urban areas, especially in the government's security services, were particularly at risk. Sometimes they would be asked to go and bring their children home, a hard choice indeed in the absence of a guarantee that both parent and child would be spared. All this resulted in the displacement of scores of villagers into

the major urban centres resulting in life of squalor in the squatter camps like Chirambahuyo in Chitungwiza near Harare.

Throughout the war, the guerrillas waged a sustained war of terror on the civilian population. Of major concern to the guerrillas was their personal security, which they believed was threatened by two particular phenomena: witchcraft and selling out on them by the civilians. During the war, witchcraft fear became something monstrous for the guerrillas who launched a brutal campaign against sorcery. Thus many people accused of witchcraft were either thoroughly beaten or killed. The same fate met those people accused of being sell outs. Anybody was potentially a sell out, but especially those in paid employment in the towns, those in government employ like teachers and generally everybody that was materially better off compared to those around him/her. However, most of the 'sell outs' were a creation of relatives, fellow villagers or the youths popularly known as *mujibhas* (male) and *chimbwidos* (female). 'Youth played an important role in identifying sell-outs for the guerrillas, and were primarily responsible for many of the deaths or punishments of innocent people.'<sup>cclxxvi</sup> The *mujibhas* would use personal hatred to identify sell-outs such that many innocent people were killed. Sometimes the *mujibhas* themselves would kill people without the permission of the guerrillas. Relatives also sometimes sold out wealthier or better-educated family members out of jealousy.

In a bid to win the hearts and minds of the rural population, both the guerrillas and the Rhodesian soldiers were guilty of desecrating the dead. 'In many parts of the country, for example, the Rhodesians displayed the bodies of dead guerrillas and forced people to look at the degradation.'<sup>cclxxvii</sup> This they would do by either leaving the dead bodies within homesteads or by sticking the body on a stake up a hill where it could be seen from surrounding villages. Occasionally they would fly helicopters over villages carrying a netful of dead bodies for everyone below to see.<sup>cclxxviii</sup> Using similar tricks, the guerrillas often left their murdered sorcery or sell out victims to decompose in the open where they could easily be seen by villagers and other passers-by. These actions had the psychological effect of forcing the villagers to participate in the death of the victims and thus becoming victims themselves as well.

Villagers also bore an inordinate burden of sustaining the war by providing for the material needs of the guerrillas, especially food. When the guerrillas first entered an area, they would simply ask for food. Soon they were asking for meat. First it was the chickens, but they soon ran out, then followed the goats. Every parent would rotate



giving goats; when they too were all gone, they would give cattle. The youths were also partly to blame for this. Since 'they would eat with comrades, so they wanted meat too. If comrades weren't in the area for a while and youth wanted meat, they'd go looking for them'<sup>cclxxix</sup>. The villagers also had to provide for the guerrillas' clothing and financial needs. Often they would ask anyone to 'donate' to them any item of clothing especially shoes and jackets that they liked. Teachers and other people in paid employment as well as local business people had to chip in with 'pocket' money and other personal items.

Women as a group were especially victims of the war. Guns and other instruments of war became licences for sexual favours for both guerrillas and Rhodesian soldiers. In the case of guerrillas, while parents were busy providing them with food and other material needs, their daughters were being used as unwilling 'free' wives by the guerrillas. Many young girls lost both their virginity and their youth in this way such that by the end of the war, they were adults already and the less fortunate were mothers of unwanted babies and children whose fathers and therefore lineage they would never be able to trace. The boys, while more fortunate by dint of their biological make up, also had their youth stolen from them because of the logistical and other tasks they had to perform in support of the war effort.

The war also affected the provision of social services in the rural areas, thereby affecting the lives of the people living there. Many schools closed down such that a whole generation of children missed out on a few years of formal education; some of these were forced to enter or re-enter the system at a more advanced age after the end of the war in 1980. Similarly, health provision was affected as numerous clinics and hospitals closed down for security reasons and shortage of staffing as personnel relocated to safer areas. Transport services were also seriously affected as roads and bridges were made impassable due to physical destruction and/or fear of landmines. And cattle dipping ceased as dip tanks were destroyed by the villagers on the instructions of the guerrillas.

Civilians suffered from the war in more other ways. In some parts of the country, people in the rural areas were moved by the government from their villages into protected villages otherwise known as 'keeps', thereby being forced to abandon their homes, livestock and crops. This process began in 1973 in the Zambezi valley areas of the Mashonaland Central province. In mid 1974, the government announced plans to move the entire population of the Chiweshe communal areas into some 21 keeps. Within the space of a month following that announcement, 'between 43 000 and 47 000 [people]

had been moved from their homes'.<sup>cclxxx</sup> Next in line was the Madziwa communal area where 13 500 people were moved into 10 keeps. Soon other areas were also affected and the keeps remained in place until the end of the war.

The purpose of putting people into the keeps was, ostensibly, to protect them from harassment by the guerrillas. However, the real purpose was to deprive the guerrillas of the material and logistical support they got from the villagers. Yet, the guerrillas would still come to the keeps at night for their material and logistical support. Sometimes they would storm the keeps and order everybody out and run away with them to the mountains. There in the mountains a whole village would live a guerrilla life in the face of constant bombings by the Rhodesian soldiers amid famine and disease.

Although life in the keeps was not a bed of roses, it was probably better than life in the mountains. A typical protected village was of about 100 acres in area which was fenced and gated; the gates would be locked at night. The number of people in one keep depended on the size of the village where they came from. However, there was general over-crowding and limited accommodation, forcing parents to share sleeping quarters with grown children. A family would be allocated a 15 square metre piece of land to re-create their homestead – dwellings, toilet, fowl run and all. In some of the keeps, the villagers complained of lack of sanitary facilities, running water, shelter and/or poles to build it with. Other problems related to this dislocation of their lifestyle were limited food supplies, limited economic activities as they had abandoned their fields and businesses, lack of health facilities and disruption in the education of their children.

While some were being sent to the keeps by the Rhodesian government, others were being forced to move from their ancestral lands and permanently relocated to distant areas with completely different ecological conditions. In March 1974, more than 200 people were moved from Madziwa in Mashonaland Central [ecological region 1] to Beitbridge in Matebeleland South [ecological region 5] as punishment for having cooperated with the guerrillas.<sup>cclxxxi</sup> The Tangwena people were hounded by the authorities out of their ancestral lands in the Nyanga area into the mountains where, for years, they lived 'a hand-to-mouth existence subject to sudden police raids and patrols'.<sup>cclxxxii</sup> As punishment for their obduracy, their children were abducted from school and put under the care of the Social Welfare Department. In the late 1960s chiefs Gobo and Ruya were moved from the Mvuma area to Silobela to make way for Europeans under the Land Tenure Act. A third chief, Huchu, who had refused to go to Silobela complaining about the poor soils, was forced to go to Charama, in the north-

east part of Gokwe. As the area was tsetse infested, the chief and his people had to sell all their livestock. To date, these people are still in those areas.

Besides guns and bombs, the government also used the law and the legal system to fight its war. Under the Emergency Powers Act which became operational early in the war, people could be detained without trial, their homes and property burnt to the ground, a curfew imposed, businesses closed, crops destroyed and a whole lot of other things. Under this law, special courts were set up to deal specifically with the guerrilla menace by providing on the spot justice and handing down stiffer penalties.<sup>cclxxxiii</sup> The Indemnity and Compensation Act of 1975, 'which had retrospective effect back to 1<sup>st</sup> December 1972, gave the State, its employees and appointees immunity from criminal and civil court action for harm done in good faith to suppress terrorism or to maintain public order'.<sup>cclxxxiv</sup> Many human rights violations by the state or its agents on ordinary civilians were covered up as a result of this law.

#### Towards independence.

While the war was going on, diplomatic efforts to resolve the constitutional crisis and therefore end the war were also going on. Smith's stubborn resistance to majority rule was finally broken by the South Africans under pressure from Henry Kissinger, then Secretary of State of the United States. In September 1976, 'Vorster [the South African president] told Smith that he had two choices: black rule or the closure of Beit Bridge. On 23 September, the Rhodesian leader made a radio and television broadcast announcing that elections would be held on the basis of universal franchise'.<sup>cclxxxv</sup> In October (1976), a British-sponsored conference was held in Geneva to try to thrash out a final deal; all stakeholders attended, including Zapu and ZanuPF. However, the conference failed and Smith turned to moderate nationalist leaders within the country with whom he agreed a deal where all discrimination would end and free elections based on universal franchise would be held under the supervision of international observers. In 1979, the elections were held and the first black prime minister took over the reigns of power. However this did not stop the war, which only did after the all-party Lancaster House conference later in the year. Following the Lancaster House agreement, Rhodesia became Zimbabwe on 18 April 1980.

Independence brought about mixed fortunes to various individuals and communities. 'Zimbabwe's negotiated independence ensured the survival of a powerful and centralized state. Rhodesian traditions of authoritarian and technocratic planning persisted while constitutional guarantees underpinned a largely unchanged economic system'.<sup>cclxxxvi</sup>

Cognizant of this reality, the government announced a policy of reconciliation aimed at the white 'Rhodesians' and their supporters, urging them to stay in the country and help to develop it, but excluding the blacks, the main victims of both the war and 90 years of colonial rule. As a result social and economic inequalities between the majority black people and the minority white people persisted. At the village level, the people who had contributed to guerrilla support were in no mood to be reconciled with those who had fled their rural homes during the war and now wished to return without having to compensate them for their wartime losses while the government was not going to compensate them either. To make matters worse for them, a blanket amnesty was declared for all acts committed by Zanu, Zipra and the Rhodesian forces during the war, including those acts committed on them. And the 1975 indemnity and compensation law remained on the statute books, which meant that they could not seek redress through the courts either.

### Observations

From this brief discussion of the liberation struggle and war, a few observations emerge:

- ❑ There were two facets to the fight by the people of Zimbabwe for self-determination: on the one hand was the liberation struggle by the generality of the people of this country that began with Lobengula's war of resistance in 1891 to majority rule in 1980; and on the other hand was the 1970s guerrilla war fought between the Rhodesian government on one side and the Zanu and Zipra guerrilla armies on the other, with political direction from ZanuPF and Zapu respectively and the support of the people.
- ❑ Caught between a hard place and a rock, ordinary civilians, especially those in the rural areas, were forced to play a pivotal role in the guerrilla war and paid dearly for that, both materially and sometimes with their lives as they had to endure all sorts of personal and collective abuse, while young men and women were forced to join the liberation armies.
- ❑ The government's black-white policy of reconciliation announced at independence did not take the needs of the majority black people into consideration, thus maintaining the status-quo of their suffering, in contrast to the affluence of the white people, made worse by unfulfilled high expectations fanned during the war as part of the mobilisation strategies of the guerrillas.
- ❑ At independence, there was no black-black reconciliation policy or process which meant that the hatred and resentment among the blacks, both at

community and liberation movement level, generated in the heat of the struggle, were left to fester on and take their own course.

- ❑ The government's blanket amnesty for all acts committed by the guerrillas and the Rhodesian soldiers during the war together with the 1975 indemnity law meant that people and communities that had been victimised by either side during the war were neither heard nor compensated, thereby leaving them to 'lick' their war wounds in anonymous silence.

### 3.5 The Matebeleland gukurahundi war

The Matebeleland gukurahundi war was a product of personal vendettas and political power struggles. Its origins lay in the revolt of the Shona element in Zapu that led to the formation of Zanu back in 1963. This section will trace these two strands, showing how they fed on each other and how they manifested themselves during the war itself almost two decades later.

The break away

Zapu, the successor to the NDP, was also banned by the Edgar Whitehead government in 1962 and its entire executive thrown into prison except its president Joshua Nkomo who at that time was out of the country in Lusaka Zambia. From Lusaka, Nkomo proceeded to Dar es Salaam Tanzania before returning home. Upon his arrival, he was promptly arrested and detained together with his colleagues who he tried to convince that the only way to pursue the struggle was from exile. 'He told them [that] President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania had offered them a sanctuary while they built up an army and the committee voted in favour of the proposal.'<sup>cclxxxvii</sup>

After their release from prison by the newly elected Rhodesian Front government of Winston Field, several of them, including Mugabe and his wife, flew to Dar es Salaam where 'Nyerere told them bluntly that he had never given such advice to Nkomo and that they were not welcome to set up a Zapu office in the country... Mugabe was not only furious, but felt betrayed. It was clear that Nkomo had to go...'.<sup>cclxxxviii</sup> A meeting was held 'at which it was decided that Nkomo should step down as leader'.<sup>cclxxxix</sup> On seeing the minutes of the Dar es Salaam meeting, Nkomo decided to take disciplinary measures and 'suspended Mugabe, Sithole, Takawira and Moton Malianga from the

executive'.<sup>ccxc</sup> On receiving the news of their suspension while still in Tanzania, the group responded by voting to replace Nkomo with Sithole.

In an attempt to resolve the leadership crisis, Nkomo called a Zapu congress. It was held at Cold Comfort Farm near Harare in August 1963 and attended by delegates from all over the country.<sup>ccxci</sup> Sithole's group did not turn up; instead they held their own parallel meeting in Enos Nkala's house in Highfield Harare from where they announced the formation of Zanu.<sup>ccxcii</sup> Nkomo remained at the helm of Zapu, but a rift had been created that would never be healed.<sup>ccxciii</sup>

From then on, it was a cat and mouse game between the two parties as each tried to assert its supremacy. In the townships, the parties were in open conflict as party thugs carried out nightly raids, 'burning homes of opponents and killing members of the rival party'.<sup>ccxciv</sup> This marked the beginning of the inter-party violence that was to become the hallmark of politics and electioneering in post-independence Zimbabwe.

#### The Zanla-Zipra clashes

Soon the arms race began. The two sides started to build armies as the race for the state-house began in earnest and by the end of the decade, Rhodesia was at war. On one side were the Rhodesian forces fighting in defence of white minority rule and on the other were Zanla and Zipra fighting for black majority rule. While Zanla and Zipra were meant to, and actually did, fight the Rhodesian army for the liberation of the country, they also fought each other both inside and outside the country for power in the liberated Zimbabwe.

At two joint training camps in Tanzania in 1975, there were clashes between the two armies in which a considerable number of Zipra guerrillas were killed.<sup>ccxcv</sup> These were at Mgagao where an unknown but significant number were killed and at Morogoro where 'over a hundred young Zapu fighters died at the hands of the Zanla soldiers'.<sup>ccxcvi</sup> Thereafter, the two armies kept their distances, at least as far as their training camps and rear bases were concerned, with Zanla concentrated in Tanzania and Mozambique and Zipra in Zambia.

The next flashpoint was the operational zones inside the country. As Zanla moved in from the east and Zipra from the west, the centre of the country became a three-way battle field. Here, both sides had to contend with the Rhodesian forces as well as with each other.

### Diplomatic hide and seek

While the two armies were sparring with each other in the field, their respective political wings were also battling it out in the diplomatic arena. By December 1974, there had been a further fracturing of the nationalist movement with the arrival on the scene of the African National Council (ANC) led by Bishop Muzorewa and the Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe (FROLIZI) led by James Chikerema. In an attempt to forge a united front to negotiate with Smith the Rhodesian prime minister, the four organisations agreed to unite under the banner of an enlarged ANC in what came to be known as the Lusaka Agreement. However, the agreement came to naught as each of the leaders of the four organisations feared to lose his position in the unifying elections that were to be held later. Thus the possibilities of an early end to the war were sacrificed on the altar of personal power.

Two years later, under pressure from the frontline states to form a united front, Zapu and Zanu began talks to form the Patriotic Front. However, the negotiations dragged on for years as each side manoeuvred to gain an upper hand both diplomatically and militarily, such that when the agreement was finally reached and formalised in 1979, it turned out to be too little too late and only a marriage of convenience. For in all intents and purposes, the two sides remained as far apart as ever. Thus even at the Lancaster House constitutional talks in London, while the two sides participated under the Patriotic Front banner, each had its own full delegation in the wings. As the end of the talks ushered independence, it also sounded the death knell to the Patriotic Front as the two parties contested the 1980 independence elections separately.

### Into Zimbabwe

Soon after independence, Enos Nkala came into prominence. As pointed out earlier, it was in his house in Highfield Harare that Zanu was formed back in 1963. He seemed to cherish the opportunity to strike a blow at Nkomo who he had a long-standing dislike for<sup>ccxcvii</sup> and who he accused of seeing himself as a ‘self-appointed Ndebele King’ (quotations in original).<sup>ccxcviii</sup> This personal vendetta, placed in a backburner for almost two decades now, was brought to the forefront and fully exploited by Zanu in its power game. It was Nkala’s incendiary speech at a ZanuPF rally in Bulawayo in November 1980 in which he threatened to crush Zapu that triggered the first Entumbane clashes between Zipra and Zanla guerrillas,<sup>ccxcix</sup> an event that is generally viewed as marking the beginning of the Matebeleland gukurahundi war.

Thereafter, taking full advantage of his various ministerial positions throughout the war – finance, national supplies, home affairs and defence – Nkala continued to inflame and reinforce the atrocities. 'In Matebeleland and Midlands, it was Nkala who embodied everything that was evil with [the government] and ZanuPF against the Ndebele people. His authoritative evil appearance and public incendiary threats and speeches at all the compulsory rallies in which hundreds of thousands of people had been forcibly gathered throughout Matebeleland and Midlands, sent shockwaves of indescribable fear penetrating the spines of all the Ndebele people. For, every Ndebele person instantaneously knew their fate after attending these compulsory rallies addressed by Nkala.'<sup>ccc</sup> It is in the light of this that he is regarded as the main architect of Gukurahundi.<sup>ccci</sup>

Whatever role he actually played, Nkala's active involvement goes to show that this was not a tribal war; after all, he himself was Ndebele, and 'could not have been part of the decision to exterminate what he called "his own people"' (quotations in original).<sup>ccci</sup> Rather, it was a question of personal vendettas, a mustard seed originating from the events that led to the Zapu split and the subsequent formation of Zanu, and watered over the years by lust for political power in an independent Zimbabwe. This factor of the power struggle showed itself quite clearly both in the run up to and during the war itself.

#### The anti-Zapu campaign

For Zanu, Zapu was the stumbling block to absolute power, to the one-party state. So, it had to be wiped out of existence. The strategy was a two-pronged attack: one prong targeted the party and its leadership; the other targeted the party's support base, the Ndebele people who happened to be concentrated in the Matebeleland and Midlands provinces.

Nkala's Entumbane speech marked the beginning of the government's anti-Zapu campaign. Soon, the government's propaganda machinery was in full swing, taking every opportunity to denigrate both the party and its leadership, particularly its president Joshua Nkomo. Its goal was to portray the party as an enemy of the state that had to be liquidated if the country was to fully enjoy its peace and 'hard-won' independence. Thus the ZanuPF and government leadership took every opportunity to make statements to that effect at political rallies and through other fora. One of these statements was prime minister Mugabe's now famous cobra speech: 'The only way to deal effectively with a snake is to strike and destroy its head'.<sup>ccci</sup> Other key government



officials also weighed in with various pronouncements. The then Minister of State Security in the Prime Minister's Office, Emmerson Mnangagwa, accused Zapu of association with the dissidents when he said: 'The government is aware that dissidents operating in the Midlands use Zapu party structures and move from one official to another for food and shelter'.<sup>ccciv</sup>

By 1982, the government of national unity, of which Zapu was a part, was creaking under the weight of accusations and counter accusations as the dissident menace in the Matebeleland and Midlands provinces gathered pace. On 17 February 1982, Nkomo and his Zapu colleagues – Josiah Chinamano, Joseph Msika and Jini Ntuta – were dismissed from government;<sup>cccv</sup> and on 1 March, Lookout Masuku, former Zipra commander and now deputy commander of the national army and Dumiso Dabengwa, former Zipra intelligence chief and now a private business person, were arrested and detained together with a few others. Although the two were later tried and acquitted, they were immediately re-arrested and detained only to be freed four years later in 1986.<sup>ccvii</sup> Nkomo himself became a target of elimination and as the net closed in on him, fled the country; however, the attack on his party and supporters did not relent.

In the affected provinces, Zapu supporters but especially officials were targeted by the security agents and ZanuPF youths. Involved in the operation were 'the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA), including the notorious Fifth Brigade; the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO); the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), including the Police Support Unit, Special Constabulary, Criminal Investigations Department (CID), and the Police Internal Security and Intelligence unit (PISI); and the paramilitary groups, including the Youth Brigade and People's Militia'.<sup>ccviii</sup> The main objective seemed to be to turn the people of the region away from Zapu and, if possible, to ZanuPF. This was especially rife during the run-up to the 1985 general elections in which Zapu was the strongest party challenging ZanuPF for political power.

In December 1984, the Matebeleland South Governor Mark Dube addressed a rally in Plumtree at which he threatened violence on the local population, saying that 'anyone who wanted to remain a Zapu supporter should immediately flee to Botswana'.<sup>ccviii</sup> That night, the Youth Brigade waged a terror campaign on the residents as a result of which the next day there was a long line of people queuing at the local ZanuPF office waiting to buy party cards.<sup>ccix</sup> 'The most severe violence was reserved for those who were Zapu officials or prominent supporters of Zapu... They were subsequently forced to renounce

their allegiance to Zapu, sing ZanuPF songs all night, and learn the ZanuPF slogans and ideology.<sup>’cccix</sup>

Similar incidents happened in other areas. In November 1984 in Beit Bridge, the local Zapu office and the house of a Zapu official were gutted by fire, and Zapu supporters were rounded up and beaten.<sup>cccxi</sup> In June, ZanuPF supporters roamed the suburbs in Kwekwe beating suspected Zapu supporters; the local Zapu office was ransacked and burnt down, and the home of William Kona a Zapu MP was also targeted.<sup>cccxi</sup> And in Lower Gweru, taking the cue from the Midlands Governor Benson Ndemera, ZanuPF Youth Brigade members were responsible for the violence in which four people died, 207 houses and huts were burnt down and 55 granaries were destroyed.<sup>cccxi</sup>

Yet the end of the elections did not bring any respite to Zapu and its supporters. In Harare, for example, violent riots centred on the Highfield constituency where Ruth Chinamano had stood against Mugabe. Immediately after the results were announced, ZanuPF supporters targeted suspected Zapu voters, beating them up and looting their property. ‘Six people were killed, including Simon Charuka who was “gruesomely hacked to death with axes”; Kenneth Mano, a Zapu Central Committee member, was also stabbed several times’ (emphasis in original).<sup>cccxi</sup> And in the Midlands, members of the Youth Brigade and the Special Constabulary descended upon the Silobela area and destroyed an estimated 150 homes and burned granaries; people were also beaten up and four villagers died in the process.<sup>cccxi</sup>

Throughout the Matebeleland gukurahundi war, the political nature of the activities of the government agents was there for all to see. ‘The Fifth Brigade, an essentially political army, not only killed thousands of civilians, it combined these killings with a cruel parody of the *pungwes* held during the liberation struggle. Ndebele civilians were forced, under threat of beatings or death, to denounce their own party and sing ZanuPF songs in a language they often didn’t comprehend... Zipra ex-combatants, Zapu politicians, and prominent party supporters were targeted for incarceration and abuse... disappearances were also found to have a particularly political character with large numbers of Zapu officials, well-known party enthusiasts, and “natural leaders” abducted in months prior to the 1985 parliamentary elections. Presumably, the motive for these abductions was to intimidate the local populace into supporting the ruling party. In effect, Zapu was murdered, detained, tortured, abducted, and generally harassed into impotence. Any honest history of the Matebeleland conflict cannot fail to take this into account.’<sup>cccxi</sup>

## The Unity Accord

From about the time of the 1985 elections, sensing victory, ZanuPF began to make first innuendos and then open remarks about the need to turn the *de facto* one party state obtaining in the country then to a *de jure* one. Zapu was already wobbling on its knees and was desperately seeking accommodation with ZanuPF.

While Zapu and ZanuPF began to hold conflict resolution talks back in 1983, these broke down due to mutual suspicion and distrust. In 1985, the two parties commenced unity talks; these too broke down as there were more areas of disagreement than common ground.<sup>cccxvii</sup> The meetings took on a new sense of urgency by 1987 as Enos Nkala, Minister of Home Affairs, stepped up attack on the opposition party at all levels. After the unity talks collapsed in April 1987, the government increased the pressure on Zapu by banning its meetings and public rallies, raiding its offices country-wide, closing the party's administration, and arresting members of Zapu-dominated local councils in Matebeleland North.<sup>cccxviii</sup> Eventually, an agreement was reached and the Unity Accord was signed on 22 December 1987.

'Zapu was persuaded by the argument of force, not by force of argument, to come to the negotiating table for Unity Accord talks. In practical terms, the Unity Accord meant the end of Zapu as a party, but by the end of 1985, it had no choice but to seriously consider the option of merging into ZanuPF. Its offices had been shut down, its leaders detained, its meetings banned, its followers intimidated, and its organisational structure decimated.'<sup>cccxix</sup> Thus as a result of the Unity Accord, the name ZanuPF was adopted for the 'new' party, and there was heightened talk of establishing a *de jure* one party state which, however, did not come to fruition. Former members of the Zapu leadership returned to leadership positions in government. At the grassroots level in Matebeleland and the Midlands, the initial reaction to the accord was one of great relief as it 'stopped the killing'<sup>cccxx</sup>. Soon, however, this feeling yielded to 'disillusionment as people perceived that the central government was not sensitive to their concerns and that the expected economic development ... was failing to materialise.'<sup>cccxxi</sup>

## Observations

From the above brief discussion of the Matebeleland gukurahundi war, a few pertinent observations emerge:

- ❑ The war was part of a larger power game between ZanuPF and Zapu dating back from the liberation struggle, and a vendetta between the leadership in ZanuPF and that in Zapu dating back from the 1960s.
- ❑ The people of Matebeleland and Midlands provinces were innocent victims caught up in the middle, like the proverbial grass trodden by two fighting bulls.
- ❑ The Zapu leadership was forced into the so-called Unity Accord more to save their own skins, both political and literal, than for the good of the Ndebele people per se.
- ❑ The event was purely a war by ZanuPF on the people of Matebeleland intended to scare them away from supporting Zapu, and in no way a tribal war between the Shona and the Ndebele.

### 3.6 Land redistribution

As much as the Gukurahundi action in the Matebeleland disturbances of the mid 1980s had nothing to do with tribalism but everything to do with power and personalities, so had the fast-track land redistribution that began in 2000 nothing to do with correcting the land ownership disparities brought about by colonialism nor economically empowering the poor but everything to do with power and personalities.

#### Land redistribution phase 1

One of the major motivations for the peasants' support of the 1970s liberation war was the land. When Zimbabwe became independent in 1980, peasant expectations for land redistribution were high. But partly due to the special clauses built into the Lancaster House agreement, the government could not launch a wholesale land acquisition and redistribution programme during the first decade of independence. Instead, land for resettlement had to be acquired on a willing-seller willing buyer basis, with financial assistance from the British government. According to the willing-seller willing-buyer principle, the government could buy land from the farmers only if it had been offered for sale. At that time, 17 million hectares or 42% of Zimbabwe's land, including most of the best agricultural land, was owned by white farmers.

The government wanted to acquire 8 million hectares of this for resettlement and resettle 162 000 families in the first five years, something generally viewed as overly optimistic and not well thought out. It turned out that in the first decade of

independence, the government acquired a little over three million hectares on which it resettled about 50,000 families. By the end of the second decade, the pace of land reform had declined; less than one million hectares were acquired for distribution during the 1990s and fewer than 20,000 families were resettled.<sup>cccxix</sup>

Budgetary allocations showed that land acquisition was not a government priority during these years. 'In one year, for example, the amounts budgeted for resettlement, a new State Guest House and telephone expenses for the Department of Defence were Z\$10, 40 and 35 million respectively.'<sup>cccxix</sup> By the end of what became known as "phase one" of the land reform and resettlement programme in 1997, the government had resettled 71,000 families (against a target of 162,000) on about 3.5 million hectares of land. As a result, in 1999 just before the farm invasions began, eleven million hectares of the richest land were still in the hands of about 4,500 commercial farmers, the great majority of them white.

Meanwhile, at independence, the government passed a law giving itself first refusal on any rural land offered for sale. This would give the government the opportunity to see if it could buy the farm for its resettlement programme in accordance with the willing-seller willing-buyer principle. If the farm was not required for resettlement, a 'certificate of no current interest' was issued, and the owner could place his/her property on the market. Following this procedure, more than 80 per cent of the farms subjected to the 2000 invasions had been bought from their previous owners after independence in 1980.<sup>cccxix</sup>

As stated earlier, one of the 'sunset clauses'<sup>cccxix</sup> in the Lancaster agreement regarded land. The clause said that in the first ten years, the Zimbabwean government would only be able to get white-owned land by buying it from willing sellers at market price using hard currency that could then be taken out of the country. This imposed several limitations on the resettlement scheme, besides the obvious one of money, especially foreign currency. Some farmers exploited the situation by overstating the market values of their farms; and most of the land bought was poor and scattered since this was the first thing farmers preferred to sell. In 1985 the policy was changed so that a fixed price was paid, and that the payment could be in local currency. Henceforward the government could buy lands for an amount it felt was fair, but only if the farmer was willing to sell. This was changed by the 1992 Land Acquisition Act which permitted the government to seize farms and compensate the farmers with an amount it felt was fair.<sup>cccxix</sup> This however, did not accelerate the resettlement process.

On the other hand, the landless peasant farmers were not always the main beneficiaries of the resettlement programme. Cronyism soon set in such that many farms purchased for resettlement were leased to people in high places which undermined and defeated the purpose of the programme. 'The first official signs were in 1993/4 when it became known that 98 previously white-owned farms had been leased to senior government officials for a minimal charge.'<sup>cccxvii</sup>

#### Citizens' challenge

Meanwhile, pressure was mounting on the government from other quarters. Margaret Dongo had successfully mounted an electoral challenge on the governing party in 1995, shattering the myth that ZanuPF could not be beaten. Then came the showdown with the war veterans in 1997 when the government capitulated and granted them a \$50 000 gratuity each (50 000 of them) and a \$2 000 monthly pension for life, subject to review in response to changes in inflation rates. The government decided to fund part of the compensation package by raising sales tax from 15 to 17,5 per cent, increasing the tax on electricity and imposing a fuel surcharge of 20 cents a litre.<sup>cccxviii</sup> This was too much for the workers, already reeling under the effects of the economic structural adjustment programme (ESAP) who, on 9 December 1997, staged a successful country-wide demonstration against these new taxes.

That the different groups of people had stood up to the government, albeit with varying measures of success, beginning with Margaret Dongo, showed that the people had lost their fear of it. The government panicked; it needed a new cause to rally people behind it and, in the absence of a real battle, one had to be created. 'Just before Christmas 1997, the government announced that 1 471 white farms had been earmarked for compulsory acquisition.'<sup>cccxix</sup> However, there was no indication as to how the affected landowners would be compensated as required by the existing legal instruments.

In the wake of this announcement and a growing confrontation with the British and other donors over the financing of land transfers for resettlement, an international donors' conference on land reform and resettlement was held in September 1998. This forum aimed to build a consensus among various stakeholders in the land reform programme. A set of principles was adopted to govern land resettlement henceforward, including respect for a legal process, transparency, poverty reduction, affordability, and consistency with Zimbabwe's wider economic interests. However, relations between the donors and the government soon broke down amid accusations and counter-accusations and the agreement was never implemented.

Meanwhile, civil society groups had become convinced that Zimbabwe's problems stemmed from a faulty constitution and were determined to do something about it. In 1997, they came together and formed the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) to take up the issue. The NCA immediately took steps to engage the government on the need to re-write the constitution. Under pressure from the NCA's demands for a new constitution, but without wanting to acknowledge defeat, the government set up a constitutional commission in May 1999. The NCA and other civic groups did not join the government commission because they were critical of the process that it adopted. By the end of the year, the commission had produced a draft constitution with provisions that would greatly strengthen the executive at the expense of parliament, and extend the powers of the government to acquire land compulsorily without compensation. The draft constitution was subjected to a national referendum in February 2000.

Meanwhile, the civic organisations in the NCA had gone a step further, in their challenge to the government, to sponsor the formation of a new political party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999. The MDC's mandate was to directly challenge the governing party for power. 'The creation of the MDC was the first time in Zimbabwe's post-independence history that an opposition party had succeeded in creating a genuinely national movement, and thus represented a real threat to the ruling party. In particular, the MDC was the first party to attract support from white Zimbabweans, and received significant financial support from the white business and commercial farming communities.'<sup>cccxix</sup> When the government-sponsored constitution was subjected to a referendum in February 2000, both the MDC and NCA campaigned for a "no" vote, defeating the government by 53 percent of the 1.3 million votes cast.

#### The farm invasions

Stung by this defeat, the government responded on two fronts. On the one hand, it revived the call for radical land redistribution ostensibly to fulfil the promises made at independence. 'Within days of the constitutional referendum, a rag-tag army of former guerrillas invaded white-owned farms and occupied land throughout the country in a coordinated fashion. The government provided Z\$20 million (US\$500 000) to fund the war vets, and the severity of attacks ranged from courteous negotiation to total occupation of the farmer's home forcing him and his family to withdraw to a neighbouring property or the safety of the nearest town.'<sup>cccxix</sup> However, some lost their lives in the process.

On the other hand, the ruling party mobilized violence against the political opposition.

To the government, these two seemingly unrelated operations were parts of the same goal: to neutralize the opposition. The farmers were viewed as the major source of funding for the ruling ZanuPF party's only real opposition, the MDC. They were also thought to influence their workers' votes. The government lost the constitutional referendum partly because the farmers were said to have lobbied their workers to vote NO. Of Zimbabwe's 5 million registered voters at the time of the referendum, 1.5 million lived on its farms, and a do-or-die parliamentary election was in the offing. The government could ill-afford a defeat then, nor in the presidential election scheduled for 2002.<sup>cccxxxii</sup> There had been some political violence before the February 2000 referendum, but the parliamentary elections were marked by much worse violence and intimidation, supported by public statements by senior ZanuPF figures, particularly directed against MDC candidates and supporters, white farm owners and black farm workers, teachers, civil servants, journalists and residents of rural areas believed to support opposition parties.<sup>cccxxxiii</sup> Thus while the MDC was the main target of the violence, the white farmers were viewed as a vital cog in the MDC wheel whose removal would see the MDC wheel grind to a halt.

According to the 1990 land policy, the government's criteria for identifying land to be acquired for redistribution were that the land was: derelict, under-utilized, owned by a farmer who also had other farms, foreign-owned, or contiguous to communal areas. The fast-track land resettlement programme disregarded all this. There was no formal process, for example, to ensure that people from a communal area who have a historical claim get precedence in settling on that land. Rather, the fast track process brought people who otherwise had no connection with each other, usually from neighbouring towns and cities, together in new settlements.<sup>cccxxxiv</sup>

### Alternative approaches

In response to this onslaught, the Commercial Farmers' Union (CFU) adopted a two-track approach. On the one hand, the union challenged the new laws and policies in the courts. Unfortunately the government either ignored the rulings that went against it and/or enacted a new law, or introduced an amendment to the existing law, usually using the presidential powers. At the same time, the CFU took a decision to negotiate with the government, and offered land for resettlement. For example, in November 2001, following the Commonwealth-brokered Abuja agreement, the CFU announced the launch of the Zimbabwe Joint Resettlement Initiative (ZJRI), based on a proposal submitted to government in May 2001. Under the initiative, the CFU offered 562 farms to the government, representing one million hectares of land distributed across the country, with the promise of technical and other assistance for newly resettled



farmers.<sup>cccxv</sup> However, fast-track land occupations continued unabated and by January 2004, large-scale commercial farming was virtually non-existent.

The ZJRI was not the only initiative put forward by concerned citizens for consideration by the nation as a possible solution to the land question in Zimbabwe. One such other initiative was the partial excision of large-scale commercial farms put forward by civil society organisations in the mid-1990s. Partial excision involved a farmer giving over to the government at no cost<sup>cccxvi</sup> that part of his/her farm not being utilised for any economic activity, whether crop farming, cattle ranching or tourism. There were two major advantages to this model had it been adopted by government:

*...on the one hand the farmers will remain with land already being used, so existing production is not affected, and the infrastructure they have developed over the years [can be shared at a cost to the resettled farmers or can easily be extended to cover the new farmers]. On the other hand the government does not spend a single cent for the acquired land. This is a win-win situation!*

*It realises that existing farmers are a resource and no farmer is pushed out of production, directly or indirectly, and those indebted to financial institutions will continue to meet their obligations. As a result, national food security is not threatened and with the correct incentives and dedication, agricultural production will be set for a boom.*<sup>cccxvii</sup>

Similar ideas had been put forward to the government in the 1980s where existing farm owners would retain portions of their farms and assist with mentoring the new farmers. Unfortunately the proposals were thrown out.<sup>cccxviii</sup>

## Observations

From this brief background to the land invasions, a few pertinent observations emerge:

- ❑ Despite the expiry of the ‘sun-set’ clauses in 1990, giving the government more room to manoeuvre, the land redistribution programme actually slowed down, with far fewer families resettled in the second than in the first decade of the programme.
- ❑ Some of the farms bought by the government for the purpose of resettling the land-hungry rural people were leased to top government and ZanuPF officials for long periods at concessionary rates.

- ❑ The fast-track land redistribution programme was a political move, in the face of a strong opposition party, designed to earn votes for ZanuPF and therefore enable it to remain in power.
- ❑ Land redistribution was never really the government's priority as signified by its repeated rejection of alternative approaches over the years, right up to and even during the farm invasions.
- ❑ In the spirit of national reconciliation, the offer of land by the white farmers in the context of ZJRI could have come in the early 1980s despite the sunset clauses from the Lancaster House conference.

### 3.7 Inter-party struggles for power

Politics is generally viewed as the authoritative sharing of valued things. Because those valued things are usually scarce, everybody would like to be the one to control that process of sharing, or at least to be part of that controlling authority. And because not everybody in society who so wishes can assume that authority or power, nor can everybody agree with the way that power is exercised by those holding it at any given time, often there is competition for that power between or among interested individuals or groups. These individuals and groups, known as politicians and political parties respectively, sometimes employ organised violence with the hope of achieving their power goals. And in that organised violence they make use of their supporters most of them ordinary people; in the process they turn brother against brother and neighbour against neighbour, thereby destroying families and communities.

#### The first cracks

Violence between nationalist parties competing for dominance in Zimbabwe first manifested itself in 1961. Then, the British and Southern Rhodesian governments who were holding a constitutional conference in Salisbury asked the National Democratic Party (NDP) to participate. The NDP was represented at the talks by its leader Joshua Nkomo together with Ndabaningi Sithole, Herbert Chitepo and George Silundika who were mandated to negotiate strictly within the party's principles. The NDP was committed to immediate parliamentary majority rule and universal suffrage or to retaining Britain's reserve powers.<sup>cccxix</sup>

After the conference, the NDP delegation was alleged to have sold out on these demands, or at least abandoned the party's principles, and although they were eventually

absolved, the disquiet lingered. On the strength of these suspicions, some members broke away and formed two rival parties, but they were castigated as traitors and beaten up by NDP loyalists and the parties just fizzled out.<sup>cccxi</sup>

#### The final split

When the NDP was banned by the Rhodesian government, it was replaced by the Zimbabwe African People's Union (Zapu) in 1961, again under the leadership of Joshua Nkomo. Soon, however, divisions resurfaced within the leadership of the party which marked the beginning of the problem of disunity that would persist right up until today.<sup>cccxi</sup> The divisions persisted and took on a tribal tone as some members, most of them Shona-speaking, began to openly urge Zapu 'to bring the majority tribes to the leadership of the party and to get rid of *Zimundevere*,<sup>cccxlii</sup> an allusion to Joshua Nkomo. Under the weight of these divisions, the nationalist movement split into two organisations in August 1963. Those disaffected with Nkomo's leadership formed a new party, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), under Ndabaningi Sithole<sup>cccxlili</sup>, and party rivalries began. Those people suspected of being loyal to the other party were subjected to attacks on their homes and persons. Soon, the two parties 'were in open conflict in the townships, with party thugs carrying out nightly raids, burning homes of opponents and killing members of the rival party'.<sup>cccxliv</sup>

With the split in the nationalist movement, the people's liberation struggle was hijacked by groups of power seekers each vying for the control of the people who then became victims rather than drivers of the struggle. Zanu had been set up on the back of tribal feelings, and 'once that spirit is out of the bottle there is no telling where it will go'.<sup>cccxlv</sup> From that time on, tribalism became a weapon for political power, and the people never again knew peace.

By the time Smith declared UDI in 1965, both Zapu and Zanu had committed themselves to the armed struggle and had already begun training and arming fighters in Zambia and Tanzania. Zapu's army was called the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) while Zanu's was called the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA). Although not at first intentionally, the armies were recruited on a regional basis such that Zipra ended up being predominantly Ndebele, fighting from the west, and Zanu Shona, fighting from the east. 'Thus the military realities reinforced the tribalistic tendencies which the Zanu leadership were openly fostering';<sup>cccxli</sup> Zapu became more and more a Ndebele party and Zanu a Shona party, and members of the two tribal groupings became enemies by default.

### Zanla-Zipra clashes

During the war, despite fighting a common enemy, the two armies often fought each other as they sought to control the people in the operational zones in order to win them over to their political organisations. Thus while the main aim of fighting the war was to liberate the country, the underlying aim was to ensure domination of the independent Zimbabwe by their political parties. This partly explains why Zanla branded as enemies all the other nationalist organisations, placing them in the same category as the Rhodesian government which was the 'common' enemy. Thus 'even though the [Zanla] guerrillas called on people to unite...they actively promoted inter-party conflict. Their slogans identified not only Smith but also the other nationalist parties as the enemy'.<sup>cccxlvi</sup> This was intended to win the hearts and minds of the people to Zanu's cause and place it in a good position to win power should the contest be decided through the ballot box.

### Attempts at unity

While the showdown between Zipra and Zanla was going on in the field of battle, the political front was complicated by the arrival of new players. First was FROLIZI (Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe) formed by another group of break-aways from Zapu, under the leadership of James Chikerema. Then came in the ANC (African National Council), led by Bishop Abel Muzorewa, formed to coordinate the African response to the 1972 constitutional proposals in what is popularly known as the Pearce Commission. The four parties participated in the Lusaka negotiations of December 1974 intended to hammer out a united nationalist front to negotiate with Ian Smith, the leader of the Rhodesian government. The agreement reached (known as the Lusaka Agreement) recognized the 'expanded' ANC as the unifying body, and charged its new executive, which would include leaders<sup>cccxlvi</sup> and other members of the other parties, with the responsibility to negotiate with Smith. Within four months, the new executive would also prepare a constitution and then call a congress to elect a leadership to represent the united people of Zimbabwe.<sup>cccxl</sup> The agreement came to nothing, largely because the individual leaders were afraid of losing the elections and therefore their leadership positions, and Zimbabwe's nationalist movement remained divided. This selfishness among the leaders squandered an opportunity for early majority rule, and prolonged the war for another six long years of suffering and death for the people of Zimbabwe.<sup>ccc</sup>

### The death of the Patriotic Front

The end of the Lancaster House constitutional conference in 1979 signalled the end of the Patriotic Front. The Patriotic Front, formed in 1976 to unite Zapu and Zanu, 'had its own constitution as a political party, agreed between the central committees of Zapu and Zanu and signed in Addis Ababa early in 1979'.<sup>cccli</sup> As the two parties had participated in the Lancaster House talks as the Patriotic Front, it was generally expected that they would contest the independence elections as such. The two parties would meet in London just after the signing of the Lancaster House agreement to agree an election strategy. But this was not to be, for soon after the Lancaster House agreement was signed, and while Zapu leaders were waiting for their Zanu counterparts for the pre-arranged meeting in London, the latter were announcing on radio from Dar es Salaam that '...Zanu would be fighting the elections on their own'.<sup>ccclii</sup> Zapu seemed to have been taken by surprise, an indication of a cat-and-mouse power game between the two parties that had nothing to do with the good of the generality of the people of Zimbabwe.

#### The independence elections

During the independence election period, the various units of the Rhodesian forces as well as South African agents were all potential threats to peace and to the elections themselves. However, 'the greatest threat to the fair conduct of the elections came not from any of these but from Zanla guerrillas in the eastern areas of the country'.<sup>cccliii</sup> Under the terms of the Lancaster House agreement, 'all guerrillas were supposed to be confined to camps inside Rhodesia during the run-up to the elections, but [Zanu] had violated the agreement and sent young *mujibhas* (collaborators) into the camps instead, dispatching [its] trained soldiers to conduct a terror campaign against villagers, telling them that if Zanu did not win, there would be an even more horrific war than the one they had already faced'.<sup>cccliv</sup> 'No outsider was allowed in those places, on pain of death ... Two [Zapu] candidates and eighteen ... campaigners were killed by these adversaries. Many more were terrorized'.<sup>ccclv</sup> As it happened, ZanuPF won the independence elections, more on the strength of the people's fear rather than love for it, especially given the fact of the terror campaign.

#### The Matebeleland gukurahundi war

'The period immediately after independence became a time of sporadic violence between opposed forces of ex-combatants... The hostilities advanced struggles for power which had been waged during the liberation war, but not resolved'.<sup>ccclvi</sup> The first fighting occurred in Bulawayo in early November 1980. ZanuPF organized a party rally at the White City Stadium in the western suburbs of Bulawayo. One of the key speakers, Enos

Nkala (a leading member of the party), ‘threatened that Zanu would eventually destroy Zapu’.<sup>ccclvii</sup> ‘Immediately afterwards rifle shots were fired into the Zipra camp at Entumbane nearby. Zipra fired back into the neighbouring Zanla camp.’<sup>ccclviii</sup> The result was a two-day battle during which the two sides fought each other in the streets of the suburb.

Fighting broke out again in February 1981 at a national army camp of ex-Zanla and ex-Zipra soldiers at Ntabazinduna outside Bulawayo. The hostilities at once spread out to Entumbane in Bulawayo and Connemara barracks near Gweru. From then on, one event led to another and soon the country was witnessing a full-scale civil war, the Matebeleland disturbances, otherwise known as Gukurahundi, which lasted until 1988. Thus these events together with the Matebeleland gukurahundi war that followed them, were part of the power struggle between Zapu and ZanuPF that dated back to the revolt within Zapu in 1963 that gave birth to Zanu.

The Matebeleland gukurahundi war was waged by the army, the CIO and the police on the people of Matebeleland and Midlands provinces. The unit of the army most associated with this operation was the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade code-named ‘Gukurahundi’ a Shona word for the late spring rain that washes away the grain chaff after processing the year’s harvest. The purported objective of the military operation was to ‘wash away’ the dissidents, most of them ex-Zipra guerrillas, operating in the area. But in the context of the decades-old power struggles between ZanuPF and Zapu, and given the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade’s mode of operation, the Gukurahundi war was viewed as a ZanuPF strategy to strike at the root of its arch-rival Zapu’s power base, the Ndebele people, and finally ‘wash it away’. This avenue of reasoning seemed to be born out by the government’s rhetoric directed at linking Zapu with the dissidents, making it a legitimate target for liquidation, and by the fact that once Zapu capitulated in the Unity Accord of 1987, the war ended. Apparently, therefore, while the ordinary villagers of the Matebeleland and Midlands provinces suffered so terribly, it was really a case of being caught in crossfire rather than being the prime target of the ZanuPF onslaught. (See Section 3.5: *Matebeleland gukurahundi war* for more details).

The 1985 general election, the first after independence, took place under the dark cloud of the Matebeleland gukurahundi war. The election pitted Zapu and ZanuPF as the main contenders. Like in the independence election, Zapu was on the receiving end of violence and intimidation, and effectively blocked from campaigning in ‘non-Zapu’ areas. The Ndebele as a group were generally held in suspicion and would be objects of

victimisation at every opportunity. However this was not because they were Ndebele per se, but because they were deemed to be supporters of Zapu (until proven otherwise) which was ZanuPF's main challenger for power then.

#### The demise of Zapu

In 1987, purportedly to save the Ndebele from the Gukurahundi, Nkomo agreed to merge his Zapu party with ZanuPF under the name ZanuPF. This agreement was formalised in the Unity Accord signed between the two parties on 22 December 1987, and the Matebeleland gukurahundi war came to an end. Thus when the 1990 elections came, Zapu was out of the power equation. However, there was a new kid on the block in the form of the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) formed by Edgar Tekere, a former secretary general of ZanuPF. Tekere fielded parliamentary candidates, while he challenged Mugabe for the newly created post of executive president. The Ndebele were no longer the object of attack since they no longer posed a threat to ZanuPF's hold on power. The target for violence was now anybody anywhere that dared support ZUM. Again, there was widespread violence across the country as ZanuPF's now tried and tested machinery left no stone unturned. ZanuPF won the elections convincingly, and soon after, ZUM was all but finished as a contender.

By 1995, ZanuPF had managed to subdue all potential challengers to its hold on power such that when the parliamentary elections of that year and the presidential elections of 1996 came, there was no real opposition to talk about. As a result, voter apathy was generally very high with only 26% of the registered voters participating in the 1995 election, and there was much less violence compared to the previous elections. However, it was but a lull in the storm that was on the horizon as the ordinary people of Zimbabwe were organising themselves to take back their right to participate in their own governance, which meant challenging ZanuPF's hold onto power and in the process putting themselves in the firing line.

#### The constitutional referendum

The dress rehearsal for this challenge was in the constitutional referendum of February 2000. After the 1995 and 1996 elections, the general slide in the ESAP (Economic Structural Adjustment Programme)<sup>ccclix</sup> economy and related governance issues, civil society identified the country's constitution as the underlying cause of all the problems and decided to target it for change. This saw the birth of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) to pressure the government to re-draw the constitution. For a time the government resisted, much to the chagrin of some elements within the NCA who

responded by forming a political party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)<sup>ccclx</sup>, to directly challenge the government for power. As a way of levelling the playing field for the forthcoming general elections scheduled for sometime in 2000, the MDC supported the NCA in demanding a new people-driven constitution. In response to this pressure, the government initiated a constitution-making process which was boycotted by the MDC and the NCA, and took the resultant constitution to the electorate for ratification in what came to be the historic February 2000 constitutional referendum. Both the MDC and the NCA campaigned against the adoption of the constitution, mainly because of the sweeping powers it vested in the presidency and because it allowed for the arbitrary re-possession of commercial farms by the government, and the government was defeated. This defeat is generally regarded as the first time since independence that ZanuPF tasted defeat, and a backlash was to be expected. Indeed it came down like a sledge hammer, for within two weeks after the results of the referendum were announced and the president 'accepted' defeat, the farm invasions began.

#### The farm invasions

The invasions seemed spontaneous at first, and most people expected the government to act against the invaders. But to their shock and horror, the government did not. It even went further to give them moral and material support. Gradually it became clear that the farm invasions were a government programme with a double edge: to attract the people's votes by giving the people access to the land that they had been waiting for since independence, and financially weakening the white farmers who it viewed as the main financial backers of its main challenger, the MDC, thereby incapacitating it. This partly explains why some people say that were it not for the emergence of the MDC on the political arena, the people would not have been given the land. Thus the fast-track land redistribution programme was not an altruistic gesture by government to the 'landless' people of Zimbabwe; rather it was a self-serving move in its attempt to continue to hold onto power. (See Section 3.6: *Land Redistribution* for more details).

#### ZanuPF versus the MDC

With the defeat of the government in the referendum and the start of the farm invasions, a stage was set for the clash between ZanuPF and this new challenger party, the MDC, in the June 2000 parliamentary elections and the 2002 presidential elections. The 2000 parliamentary elections turned out to be the most violent to date. Both elections pitted ZanuPF and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) as the main contenders. After the original Zapu (before the 1963 break-away that saw the formation of Zanu), the MDC was the first party to derive meaningful support across tribal divisions, and was



the first black-led party ever to attract a sizeable number of white people into its ranks. Thus its support base cut across all colour, ethnic and regional divisions in the country, which bettered ZanuPF's support base and threatened its hold onto power.

ZanuPF countered this development by unleashing massive vaults of violence against the MDC using the Youth Militia, popularly known as the Green Bombers, alongside the war veterans and the women's league, ZanuPF's traditional foot soldiers. The government also denied the MDC access to the electronic media, all of it under its control. For the presidential elections, it enacted two powerful pieces of legislation, namely POSA (Public Order and Security Act) and AIPPA (Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act), and 're-organised' the judiciary onto its side, all devices meant to trip the MDC in its race to power. Over and above all that, it labelled the MDC a British sponsored party operating in cohort with the unrepentant Rhodesians and bent on returning the country to the whites. Thus the government was playing the race card and appealing to the people's anti-colonialism sensitivities, both issues which should have been resolved soon after independence had there been true reconciliation rather than mere policy pronouncements.

Both elections have since come and gone, but the violence has persisted, most of it organized, to the extent that the country seems to be experiencing an undeclared civil war. 'On the one side is [ZanuPF] which controls the army, police, youth militia and CIO. On the other side is the MDC which, despite having fifty-four members of parliament or 45 per cent of the elected seats, is more like an underground movement than a political party, often meeting in secret to avoid being targeted by government agents.'<sup>ccclxi</sup> The agricultural industry has been run down and food shortages are now the order of the day. Yet the government soldiers on in its war against the people as it acts to continue to hold onto power. This is the legacy of the 1963 Zanu revolt and most recently, the people's attempt to regain their place in their own governance through a new people-driven constitution.

#### Observations

From the foregoing discussion of the struggles for power among political parties, the following observations emerge:

- ❑ That the people have been bystanders at best or at worst drivers of the conflicts within their communities as they sought to settle personal scores.

- ❑ That the 1963 split in Zapu, although not on tribal lines, had tribal undertones and produced two rival parties operating on tribal lines.
- ❑ The Matebeleland gukurahundi war was only part of a broader power struggle between Zapu and ZanuPF dating back from the Zapu split in 1963.
- ❑ The liberation struggle was prolonged and exacerbated by power struggles within the struggle as parties and personalities within the movement tried to further their own interests at the expense of those of the country and people in general.
- ❑ That there have been other 'gukurahundi' wars since the Matebeleland gukurahundi war as the strategies and principles developed and used then have been continuously sharpened and applied ever since against supporters of other opposition parties challenging ZanuPF for political power.
- ❑ That violence has become a permanent feature of Zimbabwean politics, especially during elections where it is used as part of the campaign strategy.

### **3.8 Food shortages**

Although it used to be known as the food basket of southern Africa, Zimbabwe experienced varying degrees of food shortages in the early 2000s. To the government, these food shortages were a blessing in disguise, rather than a curse. For, confronted with a very real spectre of death through starvation, a hungry person can do anything just to survive. That leaves him/her open to manipulation for political and other ends by those with the power of life or death through the control of access to food. The government realised this early in Zimbabwe's independence and has continuously used it to good effect ever since.

#### **Background**

Zimbabwe is divided into five ecological regions depending on the soil types and the amount of rainfall each respective region receives. However, these regions can be placed into two broad categories: those that are more suitable for crop farming that generally receive a reasonable amount of rainfall annually and those that receive less rainfall and are therefore more suitable for cattle and game ranching. Administratively, the former region covers the Mashonaland and Manicaland (the northern) provinces, while the latter covers the Matebeleland, Midlands and Masvingo (the southern) provinces. People in the northern provinces tend to produce excess food to sell while those in the southern provinces usually produce just enough for themselves, if not less, and therefore

generally depend on the market to supplement their food requirements. Thus when a drought hits the country, food shortages are more acute in the southern than in the northern provinces.

Since independence, Zimbabwe has experienced quite a few droughts. The first major one was in the 1982-83 cropping season which severely affected the southern provinces. Fortunately, the northern provinces had produced a surplus, thanks to the large-scale commercial farming sector, such that there was enough mealie meal in the shops throughout the country for those who could afford to buy it. As for those that could not and needed food relief, it was easy for both the government and relief agencies to source their requirements from within the country and supply them. The same pattern of events occurred ever since whenever there was a grain deficit in one of the parts of the country.

Come the first few years of the new millennium, however, it was a different ball game altogether. There was a nationwide food deficit caused partly by the drought, but largely by a massive disruption in the farming sector through the government's fast-track land resettlement programme that saw the destruction of the large-scale commercial farming sector in favour of small-scale largely peasant subsistent farming. Thus food relief was desperately needed not only in the traditionally grain-deficit southern region but in the normally self-sufficient northern region as well.

#### The early stages

Several times since independence, the governing party took advantage of food shortages in the country to win support for itself away from the opposition. The first was in the mid 1980s, in the wake of the Gukurahundi campaign against the dissidents in Matebeleland. 'Here, for the first time, [the government] used starvation as a tactic for political intimidation.'<sup>ccclxii</sup> For example, in part of Matebeleland South Province in 1984, 'food supplies were cut off to the area and tens of thousands rural Ndebele began to starve...the government deliberately withheld maize stocks in various Matebeleland South silos during this period...in cases where food was actually distributed, it was only given to those who held ZanuPF party cards',<sup>ccclxiii</sup>

In the other parts of the country, on the other hand, ZanuPF consolidated its support base through the provision of relief food. Most of the relief food then was coming from the government through the Grain Marketing Board (GMB). Unfortunately most of the people responsible for distributing the food were ZanuPF functionaries who did a good

job of giving the people the impression that the food was being donated to them by ZanuPF if not by the president in his personal capacity. As a result, most of the rural people felt indebted to the president for having saved them from imminent starvation time after time, hence the support he enjoyed from the rural areas during elections.

#### The farm invasions

During the food shortages of the early 2000s, largely induced by the farm invasions, the government more openly used starvation as a tactic for political intimidation. Its vehicle for the selective starvation of its people was the GMB. Only the GMB was allowed to import, distribute or market maize. From its silos and depots, maize would be sent to approved millers, all under ZanuPF control. These millers would then convert the maize to 'mealie meal', and sell it on at wholesale prices to local ward councillors. These councillors would then organise a distribution point in each ward, selling it onto local people at a 25% mark up. The mealie meal was being sold only to accredited ZanuPF supporters, while it was denied to MDC voters. Reports from all around the country confirmed the same story. The state food distribution machinery had been taken over for lethal party political ends.

To make the ban yet more devastating, the government forbade any private movement of maize. This ban was severest in 2002. Anyone carrying maize would have it confiscated as GMB staff participated in police roadblocks where they searched private vehicles and buses. In Beitbridge, notwithstanding massive starvation in the surrounding district, the government impounded a 132 metric tonne maize delivery brought in by the MDC which would have brought relief to tens of thousands. But for weeks it remained there, surrounded by barbed wire and patrolled by government guards.

Only one method of food distribution remained - at least nominally - outside the control of the government. That was through non-governmental organisations (NGOs), all viewed with suspicion by the Government. Some found it better just to co-operate with Zanu PF. That way they could be sure their aid got through. But there was a price to be paid, since local militias ensured that only ZanuPF supporters got fed. NGOs which insisted on overseeing distribution were often prevented from operating. This was the fate of both the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and Save The Children in Binga in early November 2002. Both were accused of collaborating with the MDC. As a result, no food reached the people of Binga from NGOs for months.<sup>ccclxiv</sup>

Government ministers were open with their threats. Speaking in Matebeleland South, one said: 'As long as you value the Government of the day you will not starve, but we do not want people who vote for colonialists and then come to us when they want food. You cannot vote for MDC and expect ZanuPF to help you? You have to vote for ZanuPF candidates before government starts re-thinking your entitlement to this food aid'.<sup>ccclxv</sup> By contrast, mealie meal was being given away free by ZanuPF in Kuwadzana ahead of a parliamentary by-election that was due to be held there in a few weeks to come. During the Insiza by-election in September 2002 ZanuPF bosses seized three metric tonnes of World Food Programme (WFP) maize and distributed it to their own supporters. The WFP reacted in the only way it could and suspended supplies. In poor townships in Zimbabwe's capital Harare, shoppers were being denied maize unless they showed ZanuPF membership cards.<sup>ccclxvi</sup>

In the rural district council elections in September 2002, harassment and intimidation meant that MDC candidates ran in only 646 out of 1,397 contested seats. Food was openly used to bribe - or threaten - starving voters into supporting ZanuPF. As terrifying as the violence during the elections was the retaliation afterwards. ZanuPF 'won' the great majority of seats during the September elections: but Binga district returned 16 out of 21 wards for the MDC. Retribution was dire. Three MDC families had their properties burnt down, while all donor food to starving children was suspended, resulting in around 30 child deaths from malnutrition-related illness. Government officials openly boasted that it was cut off as a punishment for opposing ZanuPF.<sup>ccclxvii</sup>

## Observations

From the foregoing discussion of unfair distribution of relief food, a few very pertinent observations emerge:

- ❑ Beginning as far back as the mid-1980s, the government took advantage of food shortages to gain political mileage for itself.
- ❑ The government benefited from the farm invasions in at least two ways: it 'fulfilled' its often repeated electioneering promise of giving the land to the people and it helped cause food shortages giving it another opportunity to use food relief as a political tool.
- ❑ Especially since the farm-invasions-induced food shortages, the government became more systematic and open in its use of food relief as a political tool.

- ❑ Non-governmental organisations involved in the distribution of relief food were a spanner in the works in the government's scheme of using food relief as a political tool.

Zimbabweans are said to be a peace-loving people. This trait, however, can be misused to their detriment by their governments. Twice before, it has been so misused, once before independence through UDI which led to the liberation war, and once after independence through the ZanuPF government's desire to hold onto power no matter what. Now is the time to put it to constructive use through the community-driven reconciliation process.

In this chapter, we will look at how, in the context of the conflict history of the country and the people's perceptions of that history, the reconciliation process could be implemented.

#### **4.1 Context of the reconciliation process**

##### Shared historical perspective

In a conflict situation, there will always be varying perceptions of history. Not only will there be differing interpretations of what happened between the perpetrators and the victims, but there will also be official and unofficial versions of that history. A genuine community-driven reconciliation process can only be built on the firm foundation of a shared view of the same history. For example, in the context of the Matebeleland gukurahundi war, the government cited the dissident action and Zapu's perceived support of the dissidents for the massive deployment of security organs and the sanctioning of their actions against the civilian population. On the other hand, as one of the victims of the deployment, Zapu was protesting its innocence and accusing the government and ZanuPF of an ulterior motive, while the civilian population, as revealed in the field study, just found themselves at the receiving end with no logical explanation for it.

The divergence between the official and the unofficial history becomes wider when the state is one of the sides to the conflict, or at least an interested party, as in the case of the liberation war. The official reasons for the war were different from those promoted by the other side to the war, and so were the reports on the progress or otherwise of the war. And in the post-war era, the history of the war was re-written to reflect what the new authorities wanted.

The more distant in time, however, the more the events become more of a myth as the memory of what actually happened fades. Sometimes this myth will be based on stories handed down from generation to generation, causing further distortions to the events. A typical example is the pre-colonial Ndebele raids on the Shona communities where some Shona today are convinced that the Ndebele did untold injustice to their forefathers, and that some revenge of sorts, whatever its source and form, is in order. On the other hand the Ndebele have come to see anything bad done by a Shona to one of them as revenge for the 'sins' committed by their ancestors. It is in this light that the Matebeleland gukurahundi war was viewed on both sides.

### Community action

In any national conflict, the action takes place at two levels, the national or inter-group level and at community or inter-personal level. While the parameters of the conflict are defined at the broader national level, most of the action is at the community level, carried out by local people who are normally in daily interaction with each other. This is what makes them more vicious and 'effective', because the perpetrators know and understand the socio-geographical terrain so well. (This partly explains why the death toll in the Rwanda massacres was so high.) In fact it is the action at the community level that feeds and sustains the 'national' conflict to the extent that if the conflict crumples or fails to take off at the community level, it will dissipate completely.

In the context of the inter-party rivalry in Zimbabwe, for example, the national leaders set the tone of the violence, sometimes openly encouraging their followers to mete out violence on members of the opposition parties. Terms such as 'degrees in violence', 'snake in the house', 'uprooting the tree stumps', etc uttered by some of the leaders during election campaign rallies and carried by the public media fall into this category. However, the violence does not take place at that level; rather, it takes place at the community level where neighbour rises against neighbour and brother against brother. Even when the violence is perpetrated by people from outside the confines of a particular community, they will be under the guidance of locals. Even regarding the issue of unfair distribution of relief food in the villages, which is nothing but a political power game, the perpetrators are local to the communities and well known to the victims. This explains why the victims usually express anger and threaten revenge not at the national leaders, despite the fact that it is they that incite the victimisation, but at their fellow villagers.



Similarly, in the context of farm invasions, the people that were in the forefront of invading some of the farms and attacking their owners were people familiar with those farms and the farmers concerned. This was usually the case with those farms bordering communal areas where the villagers simply scaled the fences armed with hoes, axes and sticks and began to claim ownership of the farms. During good times, most of these people had at one time or another worked on those farms, usually as casual labourers especially during harvest time. In some instances, some farmers just woke up one day to find that their own farm workers had turned against them and were demanding that they vacate the farms.

And in the context of the liberation war, under the weight or sometimes cover of the war, villagers would turn against each other, betraying one another to either of the warring sides. Most of the so-called sell-outs and witches killed by the guerrillas during the war were in fact victims of local feuds and personal vendettas; so were some of those people, especially community leaders, killed by the Rhodesian soldiers for purportedly harbouring or failing to report the presence of terrorists. This attitude of settling scores and general mistrust of each other in the villages contributed to the viciousness of the war for the ordinary civilian population.

In view of this reality, therefore, most of the suffering brought about by the conflict is at the community level. The offenders and the victims live together in the same community and interact with each other on a daily basis. Needless to say that some of the offenders are also victims as they are forced to commit those offences in the name of their political party or for their own personal survival.

## **4.2 Participants in the reconciliation process**

Reconciliation can be at two levels: the inter-personal and the collective. At the inter-personal level, it involves individuals who are connected as victims, beneficiaries and perpetrators of the conflict. Many reconciliation processes and activities focus on this level. However, for reconciliation to succeed, the process must include the collective level as well, which involves population groups and communities, i.e. many more persons and groups on either side than those who were directly involved in the conflict.

### **Victims**

The definition of victimhood, as it is used here, includes family members, neighbours and even friends of direct victims, all of whom may have been traumatized by what they

have experienced or witnessed. Victims can be classified on the basis of three broad distinctions: individual/collective, direct/indirect and first and second generation victims (based on the dimension of time).

All brutal conflicts inflict severe harm on individual men and women but most, in particular genocide and civil war, also cause collective victims. Collective victims are created when violent actions are directed at a specific population, for example, an ethnic, ideological or religious group. In such cases, individuals are targeted because of their connection to an identifiable collectivity. In the context of colonialism, for example, all black people were victimised as a collective by a system that defined them one and all as second class citizens of the country. And during the liberation war, every black person, especially in the rural areas, was presumed to be a terrorist or terrorist collaborator, just because of the colour of his/her skin, until proved otherwise.

In the context of the Matebeleland gukurahundi war, every Ndebele-speaking person was presumed to be a Zapu supporter and dissident. This led to the victimisation of many innocent Ndebele people. For example, in the Midlands case area, all the Ndebele members of the community were branded as dissidents by their Shona counterparts.

In the context of the inter-party rivalry in the post-independence period, every Zimbabwean with an opinion on national issues divergent to that of ZanuPF was regarded a member of the opposition and subject to abuse.

And in the context of the farm invasions, the targeting of farms was done on the basis of the skin colour of the owner. White-owned farms were systematically targeted for invasion and resettlement regardless of any factor such as its level of productivity and contribution to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and foreign currency inflows, or the fact that the farmer had only one farm and had bought it after independence with the express permission of the government.

On the direct/indirect dichotomy, direct victims are those who have suffered the direct effects of violence. They have been killed or physically and psychologically abused, detained, discriminated against and so on. Indirect victims are those who are linked to direct victims in such a way that they too suffer because of that link. Usually these are the family members of a direct victim. Relatives often experience extreme hardship and pain because of the suffering of a family member or by being punished because of their connection to that person - through serious socio-economic deprivation, bereavement,

the loss of a breadwinner, missed educational opportunities, family breakdown, police intimidation or humiliation. For the past one hundred years but especially the last forty years, Zimbabwe has been in continuous conflict, which has produced many direct victims as people were abused, injured or even killed.

Many others, 'innocent' people, were caught in cross fire, or escaped victimisation by a whisker. They were forced to witness the beating to death or outright killing of 'collaborators' and 'sell-outs' by members of the Rhodesian forces, the guerrillas and *mujibhas* (war collaborators) during the liberation war; sometimes they were forced to beat or even kill their neighbours and relatives. During the Matebeleland *gukurahundi* war, they were subjected to similarly bizarre experiences at the hands of the security agents and dissidents. Many children in Matebeleland and the Midlands could not proceed with their education for lack of birth certificates which they could not get either because their fathers had been killed during the disturbances or because they were products of rape at the hands of the security personnel operating in the area at the time.

Most reconciliation processes tend to be concerned only with first generation victims – those who have been victimized during their lifetime. Yet 'their children and sometimes even their grandchildren have to bear the consequences of what happened and may feel and behave like victims, displaying deep hurt and bitterness.'<sup>ccclxviii</sup> Zimbabwe is a sea of victims of the various conflicts that it has experienced. Many of the past conflicts have already produced second and some even third or fourth generation victims. There is also the possibility of multiple victimisation as a later generation victim of a previous conflict could be a first generation victim of a subsequent conflict, further complicating the situation.

### Offenders

Offenders can be classified according to the nature of their guilt, which could be criminal, political or moral. It could also be individual or collective. Criminal guilt is attributed to primary or direct offenders. These are the people who, on the basis of national or international law, can be brought before a criminal court.

On the other hand, those people whose guilt is of a political and/or moral nature are generally regarded as indirect offenders. Their offence is caused by the direct or indirect advantages they enjoyed as a result of the offences of others, by inaction when witnessing violations of human rights, or by unintentional harmful action. Each regime

that is based on gross inequalities, each civil war, has its many silent beneficiaries. They do not kill, torture, abduct or abuse physically. But they profit whenever scarce resources are allocated.<sup>ccclxix</sup> In the context of the Zapu-ZanuPF inter-party rivalries in the 1980s, for example, many high profile public and security service jobs in Matebeleland were given to the Shona at the expense of the local Ndebele in what seemed to be a deliberate policy to that effect. And in the context of the fast-track land redistribution programme, some prominent members of society benefited in a manner that seemed related to their political affiliations more than just being Zimbabweans.

Bystanders and onlookers are another type of indirect offender. 'Complicity here is due to inaction when confronted with victims of violent conflict. They know what happens, or choose not to know, and remain silent. Their guilt is moral.'<sup>ccclxx</sup> At the international level, a typical case in point is the 1994 genocide in Rwanda where the UN and some countries were accused of not having done enough to prevent it. At the local level, some church organisations were accused of not having spoken loudly enough against the violence and atrocities during the Matebeleland gukurahundi war, the election-related violence between political parties and the excesses of the farm invasions. The media and members of the international community also stand accused of not having taken any action against the government in the face of the Gukurahundi atrocities. To varying degrees, each of these groups is complicit to the crimes committed during the conflicts in question. In South Africa, for example, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) found out that churches, professional groups such as the judiciary and the medical profession, business and the media contributed to human injustice, acting at least as beneficiaries and bystanders. Business leaders in particular often refrained from criticizing state violations of human rights because they wanted government contracts.

### **4.3 Pillars of the reconciliation process**

There are four complementary mechanisms that are fundamental to a true reconciliation process, namely: healing the wounds of the survivors; some form of retributive or restorative justice; historical accounting via truth-telling; and reparation of the material and psychological damage inflicted on the victims.

#### Healing the wounds of the survivors

Healing can be viewed as any strategy, process or activity that improves the psychological health of individuals following extensive violent conflict. Strategies, processes or activities aimed at rehabilitating and reconstructing local and national communities more broadly are also integrally linked to this process. As such, healing is not only about assisting individuals to address their psychological health needs in an isolated way, but is dependent upon and integrally linked to repairing and rebuilding communities and the social context. This implies restoring a normalized everyday life that can recreate and confirm people's sense of being and belonging.<sup>ccclxxi</sup>

The healing process should therefore be directed not only at the individual victim but also at his/her community and broader society. This is because in most violent conflicts, victimisation is not limited to the physical injury of the individual but also extends to the psychological trauma that the witnesses of the violence experience. In the 1970s guerrilla war, villagers were forced to witness or even participate in the killing of relatives and fellow villagers. Sometimes they would then be prevented from burying them, thereby being forced to live with decomposing bodies. The Rhodesian soldiers also subjected them to the same bizarre experiences when they offloaded bodies of dead guerrillas at homesteads as proof that they (the soldiers) could kill the terrorists.

The viciousness of the liberation war was recreated in the Matebeleland gukurahundi war. There were still public killings but this time they were more indiscriminate and more ruthless. More people would be killed in one episode, sometimes by being buried alive and sometimes by being herded into and barricaded in a grass-thatched hut which would then be set on fire, horrific scenes that only movies are made of. Such scenes, widespread as they were, subjected whole villages in the affected provinces to extreme trauma.

Some form of retributive or restorative justice

There are two forms of justice, retributive and restorative. The central idea in retributive justice is that perpetrators should be punished. This kind of justice is however limited in its effect in the context of reconciliation because: it focuses on one side of the conflict, being perpetrator-oriented; the whole process may lead to re-victimization as the victim is cross-examined in a court of law as he/she testifies against the perpetrator; and it emphasizes individual guilt and punishment, and thus overlooks the community dimension in the conflict. It may also lead to the offender feeling victimised and therefore likely to revenge.

Restorative justice, on the other hand, handles wrongdoing differently. It works with the full participation of the victim and of the relevant communities in discussing the facts, identifying the causes of misconduct and defining the sanctions. The ultimate aim is to restore relations as far as possible, both between victim and offender and within the broader community to which they belong.

Whatever form it takes, some measure of justice is expected of a reconciliation process by the victims of the conflict. Thus in the context of the liberation war, for example, villagers who were abused by the combatants on either side would expect to see the offenders made to answer for their crimes. Similarly, political prisoners who were tortured in the Rhodesian jails would expect no less. In the context of the Matebeleland gukurahundi war, victims of the atrocities would want to see the offenders brought to book. And in the context of the inter-party rivalry, victims of political violence would like to see some form of justice done, so do farmers subjected to violence in the name of farm invasions.

Especially in the context of the post-independence conflicts, the community emphasis of restorative justice is particularly relevant, for Zimbabweans as a collective are largely responsible for the conflicts. It is they that beat each other in the inter-party violence, they watched mum as the Matebeleland gukurahundi war unfolded, they invaded the commercial farms and they deprive each other of the life-sustaining food relief.

#### Historical accounting via truth-telling

The instrument of historical accounting that has come into common use recently is the truth commission. At least 25 official truth commissions have been established around the world since 1974. The <sup>ccclxxii</sup>following are some of the advantages of a truth commission.

*Commissions can help establish the truth about the past.* They can establish a record of the past that is accurate, detailed, impartial and official. This record can serve to counter the fictitious or exaggerated accounts of the past that were propagated by the previous regime (or other parties to a past conflict) and bring the true scale and impact of a violent past to the public consciousness. In this way, a common view of the past will be established, on which to build a common and better future. One overriding problem fuelling conflicts in Zimbabwe is the dearth of information about the factors surrounding the events. With respect to the land issue, for example, stories were told by the government about the sinister machinations of the white farmers backed by the

British government in trying to frustrate the government's land redistribution plans, and how the MDC was a puppet of both to that end. And in the context of the Matebeleland gukurahundi war, the victims would be able to tell their stories so that the true extent of the atrocities could be better appreciated.

*Truth commissions can promote the accountability of perpetrators of human rights violations.* They can complement the work of criminal prosecutors by gathering, organizing and preserving evidence that can be used in prosecutions. Most of the conflicts in Zimbabwe have criminal aspects to them as people were killed or otherwise abused and property destroyed. In the name of justice, perpetrators of such crimes might have to be tried in courts of law and evidence might be needed for the purpose.

*Commissions can provide a public platform for victims.* They can put victims, long ignored and forgotten by the public, at the forefront and centre of the transition process. This can help to make victims whole again, both individually and as a group, and give them a sense of personal vindication. Victims of human rights violations perpetrated during the liberation struggle, for example, have not been able to tell their stories due to the state imposed amnesia and continue to suffer in silence, thereby delaying their healing. The victims of the Matebeleland gukurahundi war are in an even worse situation because the conflict in which they were victimised is yet to be given official recognition, such that as far as the government is concerned, they do not exist. So are the victims of the inter-party violence where for the government to acknowledge them would be to incriminate itself, both legally and politically.

*Commissions can promote reconciliation.* They can promote tolerance and understanding by allowing conflicting parties to hear each other's grievances and suffering. This may help build empathy, thereby deterring acts of vengeance and countering the rivalries and hatreds arising from past events. At community level where most of Zimbabwe's conflicts are acted out, victims and offenders would come to appreciate each other's situation and proceed on that basis to build a mutually beneficial future.

## Reparation

This is with respect to the material and psychological damage inflicted on the victims. Some of the issues involved in the reparation process are restitution, compensation and rehabilitation. Restitution, which literally means 're-establishment of the situation which existed before the wrongful act was committed' is an important

component of reparation as it relates to essential 'belongings', such as the return of property, the restoration of liberty, citizenship and other legal rights, the return to place of residence and the restoration of employment. Thus in the context of the liberation war, or at least at the start of the fast-track land redistribution programme, some population groups who were displaced by colonialism could have been given their traditional lands back. In the context of the Matebeleland gukurahundi war, those people who lost their homes, businesses and other belongings could be assisted in replacing them.

Compensation is the payment of money as a recognition of the wrong done and to make good the losses suffered. In the context of the Matebeleland gukurahundi war in particular and the Zapu-ZanuPF rivalry in general, for example, this can be both individual and collective in view of the fact that some of the victimisation was collective and that the Matebeleland provinces were said to be lagging behind in infrastructural development compared to the rest of the country because of their support for Zapu. In the same tenor, white farmers who lost their sources of livelihood to the farm invasions and people who lost relatives and property to inter-party violence could be compensated so as to assist them to re-establish themselves.

Rehabilitation can be defined as the restoration of a victim's physical and psychological health. Since most of the conflicts involved extreme violence and torture, rehabilitation could form part of the reconciliation process. And also since some of the conflicts targeted specific ethnic groups, like the whites (farm invasions) and the Ndebele (Matebeleland gukurahundi war) these groups could be collectively rehabilitated back into the national fabric.

#### **4.4 Outcomes of the reconciliation process**

Reconciliation is a process that takes time and nurturing. The process has three recognisable milestones to be attained progressively: non-violent co-existence, confidence and trust, and empathy.

##### **Non-Violent Coexistence**

When the violence stops, the first step away from hatred, hostility and bitterness is the achievement of non-violent coexistence between the two sides to the conflict. Most if not all the conflicts in Zimbabwe have not yet achieved this stage as there is still hostility



and bitterness across the divides – Shona-Ndebele in the context of the pre-colonial tribal wars and the Matebeleland gukurahundi war; black-white in the context of colonialism, the liberation war and the fast-track land redistribution programme; and ZanuPF-opposition parties in the context of inter-party rivalries and their various manifestations.

The move towards such coexistence requires first of all that victims and perpetrators be freed from the paralyzing isolation and all-consuming self-pity in which they often live. This involves the building or renewal of communication inside the communities of victims and offenders and between them.<sup>ccclxxiii</sup> Such communication would have a liberating effect, both within and between the groups. It is this liberating communication that has been absent from the parties to the various conflicts, hence their failure to achieve meaningful co-existence.

A second condition for achieving co-existence is a safe environment. Without a minimum of physical security there is no prospect of any progress along the path to reconciliation. Serious effort must be directed towards establishing the rule of law on equitable and accepted terms. For the greater part of the independence period, Zimbabweans have experienced physical insecurity, usually along political lines.

In this context, therefore, there is no genuine co-existence in Zimbabwe as the various population groups live in 'isolation' from each other. Thus the reconciliation process across any divide has not yet begun.

#### Confidence and trust

Then, in due course, coexistence evolves towards a relationship of trust. At this second stage in the process, both the victim and the offender gain renewed confidence in themselves and in each other with respect to the conflict issue.

To get to this stage, one should be able to distinguish between a person and his actions, hating the sin while trying not to hate the sinner. The victim should also be able to distinguish degrees of guilt among the perpetrators - to disaggregate individual and community, an important move in destroying atrocity myths, which keep alive the idea that all the members of a rival group are actual or potential perpetrators. And society should put in place a minimum of functioning institutions - a non-partisan judiciary, an effective civil service and an appropriate legislative structure.

It is because these things were missing from the system since 1980 that independence did not bring to Zimbabwe a just and durable peace, creating a fertile ground for all the post-independence conflicts and the prevailing negative peace. Thus although the liberation war ended more than twenty years ago, the nation is not yet confident that it will not return in one form or another. Although the Matebeleland gukurahundi war ended more than fifteen years ago, the people of Matebeleland are still not sure if it would not come back. And although ZanuPF won the 2000 parliamentary and 2002 presidential elections, it still does not feel secure in its seat. There is no confidence and trust in the victims; neither is there confidence and trust in the offenders. So the prospect for peaceful co-existence across the various divides is still a mirage.

### Empathy

Empathy comes with the victims' willingness to listen to the reasons for the hatred of those who caused their pain, and with the offenders' understanding of the anger and bitterness of those who suffered.

One way to make this possible is by sifting fact from fiction, truth from myth, through truth commissions. This truth-telling creates objective opportunities for people to see the past in terms of shared suffering and collective responsibility. Through this process, the two sides begin to empathise with each other.

In the context of conflicts in Zimbabwe, this stage has not been reached. The two previous attempts at reconciliation were founded more on selfish self-preservation than a genuine concern for each other and for the collective. Thus in the politics of reconciliation announced in 1980, the government wanted the capital, skills and expertise of the whites to drive the economy for its own political survival, while the whites wanted to hold onto their privileged Rhodesian way of life. And in the ZanuPF Unity Accord of 1987, the Zanu leadership wanted an opportunity to partake in the national cake while ZanuPF wanted to neutralize its challenger and establish a *de jure* one party state.

The major thrust of this document was to demonstrate the need for a community-driven national reconciliation process. This was done by looking at the reality on the ground today, the conflict history of the country and the people's perceptions of both. From that discussion, a few insights and observations that are pertinent to the proposed community-driven national reconciliation process emerge.

### **5.1 Major conflicts**

Zimbabwe has seen many conflicts spanning the length of its short history beginning with just before the advent of colonialism. These are the pre-colonial tribal wars, colonialism, the liberation struggle and war, the Matebeleland gukurahundi war, the inter-party rivalries, the fast-track land redistribution programme and the unfair distribution of relief food.

There are causal relationships among the conflicts as earlier conflicts came back to influence subsequent ones, an indication that the conflicts concerned were not adequately resolved. A case in point is the liberation struggle which ended with majority rule in 1980. While the main rallying point of that struggle was the land, nothing decisive was done about it, thereby maintaining the colonial land imbalance. This led to the fast-track land redistribution programme which began with the farm invasions of 2000. Another is the Matebeleland gukurahundi war where the victims have neither been formally recognised as such nor compensated for their losses despite the 1987 Unity Accord.

Over the years of conflict, there has been alternation of roles as yesterday's offenders became today's victims. This happened especially with respect to the fast-track land redistribution programme when blacks turned against the white settler farmers and evicted them from the land which had been alienated from their ancestors during colonialism. And in the context of the post-unity accord inter-party violence, some former victims of the Gukurahundi are turning against their former fellow victims and beating them in the name of ZanuPF.

There were two attempts at reconciliation since independence, both of which failed. There was the policy of reconciliation of 1980 that was intended to reconcile the blacks

and the whites after ninety years of colonial domination and oppression of the former by the latter. However, the policy failed because no concrete mechanisms were ever put in place for its implementation at whatever level of society. Then there was the unity accord of 1987 between Zapu and ZanuPF. According to the hopes of its architects, the accord was supposed to 'unite' the two major indigenous ethnic groups in the country, the Shona and the Ndebele. However, the accord failed because it did not involve the people at the grassroots level in its planning and implementation.

While some conflicts were identified in all the case areas, there were others that were specific to some (case areas). Those widely identified include inter-party violence, liberation war and unfair food distribution. On the other hand, while the Matebeleland gukurahundi war was a major issue in the Midlands, the Matebeleland South and the Bulawayo case areas, it was virtually not mentioned in the other areas; and while the problem of protected villages was a key issue of concern in the Mashonaland Central case area, it was not mentioned in any other case area.

In the context of the above, the community-driven reconciliation process will have to determine which conflicts to include in or leave out of the process and in which geographical areas, reckon with the causal relationships between the various conflicts, recognise and deal with the alternate roles played by the various groupings of people in the country over time, and derive lessons from the failed attempts at reconciliation made before.

## **5.2 Community action**

While the identified conflicts are national level conflicts, most of the action was carried out at community level where the offences were perpetrated on members of a community by members of the same community, possibly neighbours and/or relatives. The aims of these local level actors are more often to settle their own personal scores than to advance the cause of the conflict. This happened during the liberation war, the Matebeleland gukurahundi war, election-related inter-party violence, the farm invasions and the distribution of relief food.

In the context of the above, the community-driven reconciliation process will have to reckon with the fact that in many communities throughout the country are perpetrators and their victims whose ways of life are inter-twined and would therefore need to be helped to normalise their relationships so that life can go on. The process should also

take cognisance of the fact that as much as the communities can drive the conflicts, they can also drive the peace-building process; thus it can also utilise the energy inherent in the communities to drive the peace process.

### **5.3 Mis-perceptions**

Most of the people's attitude towards and participation in some of the conflicts were based on wrong perceptions of those and related conflicts. As an example, the Shona generally resent the Ndebele because of the pre-colonial Ndebele raids on the Shona communities, as if the Ndebele did something unusual, yet the Shona themselves were also fighting each other at the time. The Ndebele on their part seem to have come to accept this blame. This misunderstanding on both sides filtered into the Zapu-ZanuPF divisions and rivalries, and dominates the interaction between the two tribal groups at all levels today.

Another victim of wrong perceptions is the Matebeleland gukurahundi war. Many people on either side of the tribal divide think that it was a tribal war waged by the Shona on the Ndebele. Nothing can be further from the truth. Rather, the drivers of the conflict took advantage of the inter-tribal resentments to pursue their own political and personal agendas. And some of the perpetrators of the atrocities might have been under the mistaken impression that they were striking a blow against the 'enemy' on behalf of all the Shona people.

And many black people participated in the farm invasions genuinely believing that they were fighting a real war against colonialism when in fact they were just pawns in a political power game. Similarly, in the context of the recent inter-party rivalry, some ardent ZanuPF supporters victimise supporters of the opposition MDC under the wrong impression that they are fighting the British in defence of their beloved motherland.

In the context of the above, the community-driven reconciliation process will have to help people establish a commonly shared view of key historical events, especially those pertaining to the conflicts under consideration, and the reality on the ground at the time.

### **5.4 A political power game**

All the post-independence conflicts were mere manifestations of the power game between political parties. The Matebeleland gukurahundi war was a case of ZanuPF

trying to undermine Zapu's power base and therefore neutralise its challenge for political power. The strategy was to win the Ndebele away from Zapu over to ZanuPF, or to discourage them from participating in politics completely and leave the few Shona spatterings in the area to vote for ZanuPF and therefore wrest control of the region from Zapu.

The farm invasions and subsequent fast-track land redistribution programme were part of ZanuPF's strategy against the MDC. It is a widely held view that the MDC caused the fast-track land redistribution programme, by challenging ZanuPF for power and enjoying the support of the white commercial farmers at the same time. ZanuPF's answer to this was to take away the land from the farmers in an attempt to weaken the MDC.

Food was first used as a political weapon against Zapu during the Matebeleland gukurahundi war, and then against the MDC in the form of the partisan distribution of relief food during the post-farm invasion food shortages. In either case, the idea was to win over supporters of the opposition party using food as the carrot and the threat of starvation as the stick.

And election violence was a constant piece of ammunition in ZanuPF's arsenal against any challenger of whatever form, beginning with the independence election in 1980. In 1980, ZanuPF deployed some of its former guerrillas into their former operational zones to seal them off from any other political party. In 1985, Zapu was hunted down like a 'cobra in the house'. In 1990, the first post-Zapu elections, ZUM supporters were hunted down like game. And in 2000 and 2002 and every by-election thereafter, violence reached unprecedented levels.

In the context of the above, the community-driven reconciliation process will have to take cognisance of ZanuPF as a constant factor in these conflicts on the one side against every other actor on the other. It should also recognise that as the government, it might not take too kindly to any activities that could expose it.

## **5.5 Divisions in society**

It is said that colonial governments, especially Ian Smith's RF government, used the divide and rule tactic to dominate the blacks and prolong white rule. However, if the truth be told, Smith did not create the divisions within the black populace; rather he

took advantage of the divisions already in existence. For indeed the black people of this country, especially the Shona, are fragmented and have a natural tendency to fragment even further.

These divisions and the propensity to divide were also exploited by the post-independence ZanuPF government in pursuit of its own political objectives. During the Matebeleland gukurahundi war, the government took advantage of the inter-tribal divide between the Shona and the Ndebele to wage a war against the latter. In doing so, it knew or at least assumed that it would get tacit approval from the Shona people wherever they happened to be. And the government was vindicated as little or no criticism emerged from the Shona side of the population of this country, regardless of social status. The war was even unknown, or at least a non-event, to people in some parts of the Shona provinces.

The government also took advantage of the racial divide to secure the majority black vote since independence. During the 1980s and 1990s, it rallied people behind it by promising to give people land and accusing the white industrialists and farmers of being filthy rich while the blacks, the rightful owners of this country, were wallowing in abject poverty. Then beginning with the farm invasions of 2000, it took the racial divide even further by declaring the whites as non-Zimbabweans, thereby morally justifying the expropriation of their land and giving it to the 'land hungry' majority blacks.

And ever since independence but especially after the MDC almost swept the urban vote during the 2000 parliamentary elections, the government drew a dividing line between the rural and the urban people. Suddenly, the two sides of the same coin, especially given the *kumusha*<sup>ccclxxiv</sup> tradition of most Zimbabweans, were two separate coins and the rural areas became a no-go area for people from the urban areas.

The rural-urban divide was not the only unnatural fault-line created and/or exploited by the government for its political ends but areas of professional endeavour too. For in the political scheme of things, every industry is a stand-alone and can be dealt with alone. It is in this manner that the government dealt with the white commercial farmers, the industrialists, the media and civil society. It is in the same manner that it has dealt and continues to deal with opposition political parties. As the government picks and crushes its target the rest of society watches in 'peace' as if that targeted segment suddenly ceases to be part of them too.

Yet the fragmentation is not yet complete, for it continues down to the level of the individual. Now nobody trusts anybody, making it very difficult to share any kind of information for fear of being sold out. It is now each person for themselves, regardless of political or social status, and the powers that be for us all.

In the context of the above, the community-driven reconciliation process will have to reckon with these divisions in terms of their existence, the degrees of culpability implied and the attitudes and sensitivities across them.

## **5.6 Prognosis**

Zimbabwe is sitting on a time bomb of further conflicts as some victims of current or recent conflicts are waiting for an opportunity to revenge. The general feeling is that the strong-arm tactics of the current government act as a lid over a highly restive population of victims agitating for revenge, thereby giving a false appearance of peace in the country. This is especially so because most of the perpetrators are ZanuPF supporters who do it with impunity, banking on the protection of the government. In some cases, offenders and other criminals hide away from justice under the ZanuPF umbrella. The 'defenceless' victims are therefore waiting for the return of non-partisan rule of law for them to take out their revenge.

Thus in the light of the above, the community-driven reconciliation process will have to work to assuage this restive segment of the population so that they do not look to revenging which could be catastrophic to the country.

## **5.7 The role of the community**

Reference has been made to the community as the driver of the conflicts and therefore potential driver of the peace. That community however is made up of individual people, institutions and organisations. Whether acting singly or collectively, it is the individual that takes the decision to destroy or to build. Thus for the community-driven national reconciliation process to move forward, every individual in every community throughout the country will have to reflect on their role and play their part. Every institution from the family up will also have to play its part. The family, for example, will have to inculcate a culture of compassionate listening, tolerance and non-violence into the rank and file of its members as well as into its operations. So too will every organisation, be it a private sector company, a public service department or a civil society organisation.



Modes of participation vary but the bottom-line is constructive engagement with and support for every other facet of the community in this noble cause.

## **5.8 Further research**

While this document might have answered some of the reader's questions, it has probably raised more questions than it did actually answer. This is as it should be for it must be apparent now that Zimbabwe is a complex laboratory of conflict resolution science. Thus, this document was never intended to be exhaustive. Rather, we sought to invite the people of Zimbabwe to interrogate some of the generally accepted notions about some of the aspects of the history of the country, with specific reference to some of the major conflicts that its people have experienced. In so doing, we hoped to open a debate on the subject where people could begin to seek to clarify their and other people's perceptions of our history and its likely effects on the present and the future so that in the process our society could be healed and reconciled with itself.

We also simultaneously invite those of academic or more scholarly inclination to revisit the scratches that we have but barely made on the subject with a view to smoothening and extending them for the good of the disciplines concerned and the practices that they inform.

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## Notes

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### Notes to Chapter 1

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- <sup>ii</sup> *ibid.* p12
- <sup>iii</sup> *ibid.* p19
- <sup>iv</sup> *ibid.* p16.
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### Notes to Chapter 2

- <sup>ix</sup> For the purpose of the research, the interviewees were placed into three broad age groups: those aged 18-30 years, those aged 31-55 years and those aged 56 years and above.
- <sup>x</sup> The Mashonaland Central Province is in the north-eastern part of the country, marking the country's northern border with Mozambique. This province saw the first heavy infiltration by the Zanja guerrillas and witnessed the most fierce fighting during the 1970s liberation war. As a result of these experiences, the people of the area are easily controlled by the government simply by threatening them with another war.
- One of the toughest experiences the people of the area had during the war was life in the 'protected villages', popularly known as 'keeps'. During the war the guerrillas relied on the support of the villagers without which they could not prosecute the war. Thus in an attempt to paralyse the operations of the guerrillas, the Rhodesian government decided to herd the villagers into the keeps ostensibly to protect them from harassment by the 'terrorists' but in reality so that they could easily monitor and control their
- <sup>xi</sup> Interviewee MC115, a woman aged 31-55.
- <sup>xii</sup> Interviewee MC109, a woman aged 56+.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Interviewee MC136, a woman aged 31-55.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Interviewee MC33, a woman aged 56+.
- <sup>xv</sup> Interviewee MC43, a woman aged 31-55.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Interviewee MC115, a woman aged 31-55.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Interviewee MC109, a woman aged 56+.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Interviewee MC129, a man aged 31-55.
- <sup>xix</sup> Interviewee MC30, a woman aged 31-55.
- <sup>xx</sup> Interviewee MC24, a woman aged 31-55.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Interviewee MC22, a man aged 31-55.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Interviewee MC116, a woman aged 31-55.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Interviewee MC112, a man aged 31-55.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Interviewee MC45, a woman aged 31-55.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Interviewee MC165, a man aged 18-30.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Interviewee MC47, a woman aged 31-55.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Interviewee MC22, a man aged 31-55.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Interviewee MC102, a woman aged 31-55.
- <sup>xxix</sup> Interviewee MC38, a man aged 31-55.
- <sup>xxx</sup> Interviewee MC29, a man aged 31-55.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Interviewee MC163, a man aged 31-55.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Interviewee MC19, a woman aged 31-55.



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- xxxiii Interviewee MC101, a woman aged 56+. In the local government structure, the district is divided into sections called wards. Each ward elects a councillor to represent it in the district council in rural areas, or city or town council in urban areas.
- xxxiv Interviewee MC20, a woman aged 31-55.
- xxxv Interviewee MC21, a man aged 18-30.
- xxxvi Interviewee MC20, a woman aged 31-55.
- xxxvii Interviewee MC49, a woman aged 18-30.
- xxxviii Interviewee MC31, a woman aged 31-55.
- xxxix Interviewee MC49, a woman aged 18-30.
- xl Interviewee MC101, a woman aged 56+.
- xli Interviewee MC48, a woman aged 31-55.
- xl ii Interviewee MC162, a woman aged 18-30. The food was distributed through the local leaders who in this area were all ZanuPF.
- xl iii Interviewee MC40, a woman aged 31-55.
- xl iv Interviewee MC162, a woman aged 18-30.
- xl v Interviewee MC40, a woman aged 31-55.
- xl vi Interviewee MC135, a man aged 18-30.
- xl vii Interviewee MC137, a man aged 31-55.
- xl viii The Mashonaland West Province is in the north-western part of the country, stretching from just outside Harare to the lower end of the Kariba Dam and down the last stretch of the country's border with Zambia on the Zambezi River. This province saw the Chinhoyi battle of 1966 between the Rhodesian forces and a unit of Zanla guerrillas which officially marked the beginning of the liberation war that lasted the whole of the following decade.
- xl ix Interviewee MW137, a woman aged 56+.
- l Interviewee MC153, a man aged 56+.
- li Field report, Mash West province.
- li i Interviewee MW165, a woman aged 31-55.
- li ii Interviewee MW97, a man aged 31-55.
- li v Interviewee MW160, a woman aged 56+.
- li v Interviewee MW67, a man aged 18-30.
- li vi Interviewee MW164, a woman aged 31-55.
- li vi i Interviewee MW67, a man aged 18-30.
- li vi ii Field notes, Mash West province.
- li x The Matebeleland South province is in the south-western part of the country where it borders with Botswana to the west and South Africa along the Limpopo river to the south. This province saw a lot of action during the liberation war of the 1970s especially involving Zipra forces with some Zanla activity as well and the Rhodesian forces. As one of the two Matebeleland provinces, it also witnessed a lot of the Gukurahundi activities during the 1980s.

Most of the people found in the area during the research exercise were the elderly and the retired; among the young and productive ages it was mostly young women. This could be explained by the fact that most of the youth provide migratory labour to neighbouring Botswana and South Africa while others were also away in the country's urban areas.

Especially because of their sense of political insecurity, quite a number of people in this area declined to participate in the interviews. The general feeling in the community was one of distrust for the researchers who were suspected to be government agents spying over the community who they feared would come back and victimise those that would have participated in the interviews.

The youths felt particularly vulnerable after the Gukurahundi experiences when many young people were victimised. Many young people died then while others disappeared without trace, and their whereabouts were still unknown. On the other end of the age spectrum, most of the elderly were prepared to talk, albeit in a guarded manner, as if to say 'I have seen it all before; I don't care what happens to me now'.

- l x This term is used here to refer to the liberation war and the Matebeleland *Gukurahundi* war.
- l xi Interviewee MS152, a woman aged 56+.
- l xii Interviewee MS47, a man aged 56+.
- l xiii Interviewee MS89, a man aged 56+.
- l xiv Interviewee MS85, a woman aged 56+.
- l xv Interviewee MS19, a woman aged 56+.



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lxvi Interviewee MS60, a woman aged 56+.

lxvii Interviewee MS91, a woman aged 56+.

lxviii Interviewee MS95, a woman aged 56+.

lxix Interviewee MS33, a woman aged 56+.

lxx Interviewee MS148, a woman aged 56+.

lxxi Interviewee MS60, a woman aged 56+.

lxxii Interviewee MS6, a man aged 56+.

lxxiii Interviewee MS50, a woman (age unknown).

lxxiv Interviewee MS24, a man aged 31-55.

lxxv Interviewee MS2, a man aged 56+.

lxxvi Interviewee MS74, a man aged 31-55.

lxxvii Interviewee MS156, a woman aged 18-30.

lxxviii Field report.

lxxix The Midlands Province is located right in the middle of the country where it touches almost every other province and is also locked in by them such that it does not come into contact with any international boundary. The province straddles the linguistic seam that marks the blurring dividing line between the predominantly Shona-speaking eastern parts of the country on the one hand and the predominantly Ndebele-speaking western parts of the country on the other. Thus in terms of the indigenous people of this country, the province is linguistically and culturally more heterogeneous and more prone to language-based conflicts than any other province.

The area of the province where the study was carried out was bi-ethnic. The Ndebele who were the original inhabitants of the area were living in harmony before the arrival of the Shona. This relative peace was broken as soon as a group of Shona people were brought into the area and resettled right in the middle of a Ndebele community, dividing it up into two. To worsen the situation, the Shona brought with them their chieftainship which was then imposed over the whole area such that the Shona chief had jurisdiction over the Ndebele people as well whose chiefs were reduced to headmen under the Shona chief. Thus the Shona were in a sense an occupying force.

Ever since then, political activity in the area followed the tribal fault line as the Shona tended to support one political party while the Ndebele supported another. When the Matebeleland Gukurahundi war happened in the 1980s, this part of the Midlands was also affected. Just like in all the other areas affected by the war, the Gukurahundi soldiers mainly targeted the Ndebele (while sparing the Shona). They even set up their field camp in the Shona section of the community from which they would then launch their operations. This further affected the relationship between the two ethnic groups.

lxxx These were especially the Ndebele raids on Shona from who they captured cattle, grain and women.

lxxxii The Shona were brought to the area by the Rhodesian government in 1969, only a few years before the liberation war spread to the area.

lxxxiii The Shona referred to ordinary law-abiding Ndebele people pejoratively as dissidents since the insurgence operating in the area then were Ndebele.

lxxxiii The implication was that the Shona regarded every Ndebele as a dissident, just because the 'dissidents' were Ndebele-speaking, thereby endangering their safety from the army and other security agents operating in the area then.

lxxxiv Interviewee ML66, a Ndebele woman aged 31-55, and had lived in the area for 23 years at the time of the interview.

lxxxv Interviewee ML157, a woman aged 56+ and had lived in the area since 1968.

lxxxvi Interviewee ML26.

lxxxvii Interviewee ML70, a Ndebele man aged 31-55.

lxxxviii Interviewee ML112.

lxxxix Interviewee ML24, a man aged 18-30.

xc Interviewee ML112, a Shona woman aged 31-55.

xcii Interviewee ML66, a Ndebele woman aged 31-55, and had lived in the area for 23 years at the time of the interview.

xciii Interviewee ML71.

xciv Interviewee ML88, a Ndebele man aged 31-55.

xcv Interviewee ML53, a Ndebele man aged 31-55.

xci Interviewee ML167.

xcvi Interviewee 95, a Ndebele man aged 31-55.

xcvii Interviewee ML82.

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- xcviii Interviewee ML83.
- xcix Interviewee ML158, a Ndebele man aged 31-55.
- c Interviewee ML148.
- ci Interviewee ML7.
- cii Interviewee ML148.
- ciii Interviewee ML83, a Ndebele man aged 18-30.
- civ Interviewee ML82, a Ndebele man aged 18-30.
- cv Interviewee ML96.
- cvi Interviewee ML149, a Shona woman aged 18-30.
- cvi At the time of the research, the school was offering only 'O' Level or four years of secondary schooling, and had applied for 'A' Level status so that it could offer another two years to make six which are a required for admission into university.
- cviii Interviewee ML22.
- cix Interviewee ML84, a Ndebele man aged 56+ who went on to say 'We also want to be developed'.
- cx Interviewee ML122.
- cxii Interviewee ML94.
- cxii Interviewee ML145.
- cxiii Interviewee ML97.
- cxiv Interviewee ML29, a Shona man aged 18-30.
- cxv The councillor was a Shona man, resident in the Shona area and elected councillor on a ZanuPF ticket.
- cxvi Interviewee ML80, a Ndebele man aged 56+.
- cxvii Bulawayo is the second largest city in Zimbabwe, located in the western half of the country towards the border with Botswana. Popularly known as the city of kings, it boasts of having been founded by Mzilikazi, the first king of the Ndebele.
- Two major historical events helped shape the thinking and opinions of the people in the area. These were the 1970s liberation war which most of the elderly inhabitants witnessed. As Bulawayo is in the Matebeleland area, it was mainly the ZIPRA forces that most of the people had had contact with. Then, especially for the Ndebele, came the Matebeleland Gukurahundi war.
- cxviii Although the war was mainly fought in the rural areas, many people interviewed had first hand experience of it either because they resided in the rural areas then, or when they visited their rural homes.
- cxix Interviewee BYO67, a Ndebele man aged 31-55 who suggested that the problem be left to god to solve.
- cxx Interviewee BYO112, a Shona man aged 31-55 who referred to the Matebeleland disturbances as the 'Gukurahundi massacres' as if to underscore the viciousness of the episode.
- cxxi Interviewee BYO14, a Ndebele woman aged 31-55 who urged people to forgive and move 'beyond the past'.
- cxxii Interviewee BP88, a Ndebele woman aged 31-55, who went on to say that people should sit down and talk over the issues.
- cxxiii Interviewee BP42, a Ndebele woman aged 56+.
- cxxiv Interviewee BP49, a Shona man aged 56+ who also noted that the hatred that contributed to the conflict was still there.
- cxxv Interviewee BP102, a Ndebele man aged 56+.
- cxxvi Interviewee BP27, a Ndebele woman aged 31-55
- cxxvii Interviewee BP109, a Ndebele woman aged 31-55.
- cxxviii interviewee BYO9, a Ndebele man aged 31-55 who suggested that more effort should be expended addressing present grievances, like citizenship issues, rather than the past.
- cxxix Interviewee BYO23, a Ndebele man aged 31-55.
- cxxxi Interviewee BYO89, a Ndebele man aged 18-30 who reported the same conflict in his home area in Plumtree which, he said, just died down after the elections.
- xxxii Interviewee BP98, a woman aged 18-30. By 'cheap maize from the government' she was contrasting the price charged for it compared with that for maize by private dealers. This maize was sold to the people by the government's Grain Marketing Board (GMB) through structures supportive of the government like ZanuPF ward councillors.
- xxxiii These are national-level strikes aimed at the government where workers desist from going to work. They were normally associated with the MDC because the then leadership of the party was instrumental in calling for them when they were still part of the leadership of the national labour organisation, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU).
- xxxiiii Interviewee BH140, a woman aged 31-55.

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cxxxiv Interviewee BH140, a woman aged 31-55.  
 cxxxv Interviewee BH168, a man aged 31-55.  
 cxxxvi Interviewee BYO118, a woman aged 18-30.  
 cxxxvii The city of Bulawayo is predominantly Ndebele but there is a sizeable number of Shona who ironically seem to dominate in the public service and the security agents, and some of who are openly anti-Ndebele.  
 cxxxviii Interviewee BYO76, a Ndebele woman aged 31-55.  
 cxxxix Interviewee BYO72, a Ndebele woman aged 18-30.  
 cxl Interviewee BH151, a woman aged 56+.  
 cxli Interviewee BH146, a man aged 31-55 and living in the Hillside area of Bulawayo.  
 cxlii Interviewee BYO70, a Ndebele woman aged 31-55.  
 cxliii Interviewee BYO30, a Ndebele woman aged 18-30.  
 cxliv Interviewee BP92, a Ndebele man aged 31-55. He went on to talk about the need for people to live in harmony and respect each other's rights.  
 cxlv Interviewee BYO106, a man aged 31-55. He talks of tribal conflicts and inter-party conflicts in one vein as if to imply that they are two sides of the same coin, an indication that in that part of the country, the political dividing line coincided with the tribal fault line, a further indication of some underlying phenomenon.  
 cxlvi Interviewee BP115, a Ndebele man aged 18-30.  
 cxlvii Interviewee BP96, a woman aged 31-55.  
 cxlviii Interviewee BH148, a white man aged 31-55.  
 cxlix The city of Gweru is located in the middle of the country on the road and rail link between Harare and Bulawayo, and is the capital of the Midlands province. It is a bi-lingual city in terms of Shona and Ndebele as it is surrounded by Shona-speaking areas to the east and Ndebele-speaking areas to the west.  
 cl Interviewee GWS134, a man aged 56+.  
 cli Interviewee GWN71, a woman aged 18-30.  
 clii Interviewee GWS128, a woman aged 56+, talking with reference to election-related events in Masvingo, formerly known as Fort Victoria, on the Harare-Beit Bridge road to South Africa.  
 cliii Interviewee GWN17, a woman aged 18-30.  
 cliv Interviewee GWN5, a man aged 56+, talking with reference to events in Bindura, a small farming town and capital of Mashonaland Central province, and located 88 km north of Harare.  
 clv Interviewee GWS119, a man aged 31-55, also talking with reference to events in Bindura in the Mashonaland Central Province. The whole province is generally regarded as a ZanuPF strong-hold and a no-go area for other parties.  
 clvi Interviewee GWN67, a woman aged 31-55.  
 clvii Interviewee GWS33, a man aged 31-55, talking with reference to events in Chinhoyi, a small town 115 km outside Harare on the main road from Harare to Chirundu on the country's border with Zambia. War veterans are the former guerrillas of the 1970s liberation war and are generally aligned with ZanuPF.  
 clviii Interviewee GWR6, a woman aged 18-30, talking with reference to events in Budiriro, a residential area in Harare.  
 clix Interviewee GWR8, a man aged 18-30, talking with reference to events in Chitungwiza near Harare. He went on to say that the ruling party needed to be trained to mend their bad ways.  
 clx Interviewee GWR15, a man aged 18-30, talking with reference to events in Chivhu, a small farming town 140 km outside Harare on the Harare-Masvingo Road.  
 clxi Interviewee GWN61, a woman aged 18-30, speaking about events in the Kadoma area.  
 clxii Interviewee GWR92, a man aged 18-30, speaking about events in Kwekwe.  
 clxiii Interviewee GWR92, a man aged 18-30, speaking about events in Kwekwe.  
 clxiv Interviewee GWN55, a man aged 18-30 speaking of developments in the Gutu district of the southern Masvingo province.  
 clxv Interviewee GWR2, a woman aged 56+ speaking in the context of the Mazowe area just north of Harare.  
 clxvi Interviewee GWN15, a woman aged 31-55 speaking about developments in the Macheke area south east of Harare. She went on to urge the new farmers to produce enough for the nation rather than just for themselves; this could be the next frontier of the conflict.  
 clxvii Interviewee GWN54, a man aged 18-30 speaking in the context of events in the Bindura/Mazowe area just north of Harare where he said the conflict was still going on.  
 clxviii Interviewee GWN68, a woman aged 18-30 speaking about developments in the Shurugwi area near Gweru.

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clxxix Interviewee GWN22, a man aged 31-55.

clxxx Interviewee GWS4, a man aged 31-55 who was speaking in the context of events in the Matobo district of Matebeleland South province.

clxxxi Interviewee GWR95, a man aged 18-30 speaking in the context of the situation in Bulawayo.

clxxxii Harare, the capital of the country, is located in Mashonaland right at the confluence of the three provinces by that name, Mashonaland East to the east and south, Mashonaland West to the west, and Mashonaland Central to the north. Home to over a million people, Harare attracts people from all parts of the country, and has a sizeable foreign contingent from the region and beyond.

clxxxiii Interviewee KW106, a woman aged 18-30.

clxxxiv Red is a colour generally associated with the MDC after the concept of the 'red card' signifying dismissal from the game that they borrowed from football.

clxxxv Interviewee KW92, a woman aged 18-30.

clxxxvi The police have been known, especially after the February 2000 constitutional referendum, to accuse victims of violence of instigating that violence and proceeding to immediately arrest them.

clxxxvii Interviewee WF37, a woman aged 18-30. She went on to say that group consensus is difficult to achieve at national level so people should learn to accept differences of opinion.

clxxxviii Interviewee WF45, a woman aged 18-30.

clxxxix Interviewee WF53, a woman aged 18-30. She added that 'people should learn to do away with the culture of fear and silence because this is what the ruling party uses as a weapon'.

clxxxx Interviewee WF46, a man aged 18-30 who added that Bindura, the capital of Mashonaland Central to the north, was also affected by the violence.

clxxxi These are the ex-fighters of the 1970s liberation war. They receive a monthly pension for life from government plus other benefits in addition to the one-off gratuities paid to them in 1997.

clxxxii Interviewee GNB49, a man aged 31-55.

clxxxiii Interviewee WF39, a woman aged 18-30. She went on to say 'people should get knowledge on how to manage conflicts as I think this will have an impact unlike the terror and increased violence that people went through. Policies like an eye for an eye should not be used in such political situations as this will only perpetuate the cycle of violence.'

clxxxiv Interviewee WF73, a man aged 18-30 who, talking about events in Gokwe, said that there was less violence (compared to Harare) because of the dominance of the ruling party there.

clxxxv Interviewee WF44, a man aged 18-30.

clxxxvi Interviewee KW91, a woman aged 18-30 speaking about events in Mt Darwin in the Mashonaland Central province.

clxxxvii Interviewee WF69, a man aged 18-30.

clxxxviii Interviewee KW80, a woman aged 18-30 speaking of her experiences in the Goromonzi district just outside Harare in the Mashonaland East province.

clxxxix Interviewee WF62, a woman aged 31-55 speaking of her experiences in the Svosve communal area in the Mashonaland East province.

cxcc Interviewee KW98, a woman aged 31-55 speaking of her experiences in Marondera in the Mashonaland East province.

cxcci Interviewee KW98, a woman aged 31-55 speaking of her experiences in Marondera in the Mashonaland East province.

cxccii Not many people in Harare spoke about the Matebeleland gukurahundi war, but the few that did spoke with conviction and raised many issues.

cxcciii Interviewee GNB57, a woman aged 18-30 speaking of her experiences in Gweru, the capital of the Midlands province. However, she also advocated for reconciliation and forgiveness.

cxcciv Interviewee GNB57, a woman aged 18-30 speaking of her experiences in Gweru, the capital of the Midlands province. However, she also advocated for reconciliation and forgiveness.

cxccv Interviewee GNB77, a man aged 18-30.

cxccvi Interviewee GNB65, a man aged 18-30 speaking of events in the Silobela area of Kwekwe district in the Midlands province. He went on to suggest 'reconciliation and forgiveness' as the way forward.

cxccvii Interviewee GNB34, a woman aged 31-55 speaking of events in Bulawayo.

cxccviii Interviewee GNB65, a man aged 18-30 speaking of events in the Silobela area of Kwekwe district in the Midlands province.

cxccix Interviewee GNB42, a woman aged 18-30 speaking with reference the Ndebele based on her experiences in Bulawayo.

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- cc Interviewee GNB77, a man aged 18-30 speaking of events in Kwekwe, a town in the Midlands province which also witnessed the disturbances. He went on to say that the 'Shona and Ndebele will not get along no matter what'.
- cci Interviewee GNB55, a man aged 31-55 speaking of events in Bulawayo.
- ccii Interviewee GNB34, a woman aged 31-55 speaking of events in Bulawayo.
- cciii Interviewee GNB69, a man aged 31-55.
- cciv Interviewee KW107, a man aged 31-55 speaking of his experiences in the Chihota area of Harava district just outside Harare in the Mashonaland East province.
- ccv Interviewee KW90, a woman aged 18-30 speaking of his experiences in Mberengwa district in the Midlands Province.
- ccvi Interviewee GNB12, a man aged 18-30 speaking of his experiences in the Zimuto area of Masvingo district in the southern province of Masvingo involving staff of Care International.
- ccvii Interviewee WF54, a woman aged 31-55 speaking of her experiences in Mutoko district in Mashonaland East province.
- ccviii Interviewee GNB12, a man aged 18-30 speaking of his experiences in the Zimuto area of Masvingo district in the southern province of Masvingo.
- ccix Mutare is located on the country's eastern border with Mozambique. It is one of the four major cities in the country, and is the capital of the eastern Manicaland Province. When the research was conducted in Mutare, the political temperature was very high. This was just a few weeks after a gruelling election campaign and balloting for the urban mayoral and council elections featured ZanuPF which controlled the city council and thus wanted to maintain its position, and the opposition MDC which was challenging for the control of the city for the first time. The campaigning was characterised by rampant violence in which people were injured and property destroyed.
- ccx Interviewee MN171.
- ccxi These are little convenience shops located at strategic points in residential areas.
- ccxii Interviewee MN74.
- ccxiii Interviewee MN67.
- ccxiv Interviewee MN184.
- ccxv Interviewee MN76.
- ccxvi Interviewee MN158.
- ccxvii Interviewee MN65.
- ccxviii Interviewee MN24.
- ccxix Interviewee MN36.
- ccxx Interviewee MN82/56.
- ccxxi Interviewee MN127.
- ccxxii Interviewee MN152.
- ccxxiii Interviewee MN185.
- ccxxiv Interviewee MN78.
- ccxxv Interviewee MN2, a man aged 31-55
- ccxxvi Interviewee MN137, a woman aged 56+ who also thought that the conflict could only be resolved through the intervention of leaders of other countries or other prominent people.
- ccxxvii Interviewee MN114, a woman aged 31-55. She also suggested that members of these law enforcement agencies should be taught to desist from beating people for no reason.
- ccxxviii Interviewee MN185, a man aged 18-30.
- ccxxix Interviewee MN139, a man aged 31-55.
- ccxxx Interviewee MN61, a woman aged 56+ who was talking about the inter-party rivalries and the liberation war in the same breath as if to draw parallels between them.
- ccxxxi Interviewee MN157.
- ccxxxii Interviewee MN115.
- ccxxxiii Interviewee MN182, a man aged 18-30.
- ccxxxiv Interviewee MN182, a man aged 18-30.
- ccxxxv Interviewee MN90, a woman aged 18-30.
- ccxxxvi Interviewee MN34, a woman aged 31-55.

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cclx Nkomo *op cit.* p46  
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- ccci xv These are clauses that were added into the agreement late in the negotiation process.
- ccci xvi Surendran op cit p14.
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- ccci xxi v Marongwe, N. 1999. Civil society's perspective on land reforms in Zimbabwe: Some key suggestions from a survey, Harare: ZERO Regional Environment Organisation. p9.
- ccci xxi vi *ibid.* pp10-11.
- ccci xxi vii *ibid.* p11.
- ccci xxi ix Although Rhodesia was a self-governing colony since 1923, Britain had reserved for itself a right to veto any legislation that it deemed prejudiced the majority Africans.
- ccci xl Kriger op cit. p103.

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cccxli Nkomo op cit. p113. Nkomo was a Ndebele and also big in stature, hence the derogatory term 'zimundevere'.

cccxlii *ibid.* p117.

cccxliii Kriger op cit. p85.

cccxliv Hill op cit. p61.

cccxlv Nkomo op cit. p223.

cccxlvi *ibid.* p167.

cccxlvii Kriger op cit. p101.

cccxlviii The leaders were as follows: Bishop Abel Muzorewa (ANC), Nadabaningi Sithole (Zanu), James Chikerema (FROLOZI), and Joshua Nkomo (Zapu).

cccxlix Nkomo op cit. p156.

cccl *ibid.* p156. Nkomo said that Zapu was the only party that fulfilled its terms of the Lusaka Agreement.

cccli *ibid.* p205.

ccclii *ibid.* p206.

cccliii *ibid.* p212.

cccliv Hill op cit. p70.

ccclv Nkomo op cit, p212.

ccclvi Werbner op cit. p196.

ccclvii Hill op cit. p76.

ccclviii Nkomo op cit. p225.

ccclix ESAP had been introduced in the country in 1992, and was now taking its toll on social services people's lives generally.

ccclx The MDC was formed in September 1999, just a few months before the momentous events of 2000.

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ccclxiii Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (Zimrights) op cit. p70.

ccclxiv Osborne op cit. p5.

ccclxv *ibid.* p6.

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ccclxxi *ibid.* p77

ccclxxii *ibid.* p125-6.

ccclxxiii *ibid.* p20

## Notes to Chapter 5

ccclxxiv *Kumusha* is Shona for home. Most black Zimbabweans view their rural areas as their real homes, vis-à-vis their houses in towns and cities, to which they feel duty-bound to go back to at least once every year, especially at Christmas time.