



Peace is Possible

Eight Stories of Change from Zimbabwe

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Preface

PEACE IS POSSIBLE

Peace has many faces. This booklet presents eight stories which show how people in Zimbabwe managed to deal peacefully with conflicts. We hear about Chishuwo (23) in Epworth, Memory (31) in Murehwa and Jabuliso (92) in Bulawayo – how they succeeded in overcoming potentially disastrous divisions in their community or their cooperative, how they managed to forgive people who had treated them violently or had caused other harm to them.

Women talk about how they became victims of politically motivated violence – and how they learnt to make the most of their lives after their terrible ordeal. We hear how a community forum can encourage divided residents to lay aside their different opinions and ideologies and plan together for the development of their village, be it the construction of a well or a school.

All eight stories have one thing in common: In each case, the best way out of an apparently unsolvable conflict or a hopeless situation was found only after the intervention of a Zimbabwean peace organisation.

These eight organisations have one thing in common as well: They are assisted by expert personnel from the German Civil Peace Service (CPS) programme. Lawyers, mediators, psychologists and other CPS experts advise Zimbabwean peace organisations on how to implement their projects. They all contribute to a more peaceful Zimbabwe by encouraging people to change their behaviour and tackle conflicts in a peaceful manner.

The eight stories are meant to show the impact the respective peace organisations could achieve with their interventions. Each story stands for itself, and yet it fits into a wider context



and carries a message beyond the documented cases.

At a workshop in November 2012, members of the eight peace organisations came together and told each other their success stories. They explained the essence of the conflict

situation they had to deal with, who was involved, how they approached them and how they got the conflicting parties to enter into a dialogue. Subsequent queries by the other workshop participants helped each story teller to reflect upon the events and the methods used – which ones worked and which ones didn't. The most important question was always whether it was really the organisation's intervention that made the documented changes possible. Through the process of telling and eventually writing down the respective stories it became much clearer how exactly the changes came about.

This type of reflection is called the "Most Significant Change" method: Participants in training or consultancy sessions as well as their CPS advisors are asked for their own judgement of the impacts and significant changes which might have been achieved through their particular intervention.

WFD, GIZ and AGEH, the three German CPS agents in Zimbabwe, as well as their eight partner organisations want to show that peace is possible. The stories in this booklet are vivid proof of this. They also remind us, however, that something needs to be done for peace.

Barbara Jochheim (WFD)

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The Civil Peace Service in Zimbabwe

Conflicts are a part of everyday life. This holds true for Zimbabwe as well. Here however, the colonial period, the war of liberation until independence in 1980 and the subsequent political polarisation process have fuelled many violent conflicts. These have become much more frequent in recent years. For decades people have lived in fear of politically motivated violence, whilst others have meted out such violence without being held accountable.

There is not only polarisation between rival political parties. Social conflicts are politicised as well and thus drawn into the same antagonistic pattern. On top of that, there are profound ethnical divisions in the country. Ever since the Land Reform process from 2000 onwards and the volatile election campaigns that followed, politically motivated violence has dramatically increased and reached its climax in the elections of 2008.

Despite the formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU) in 2009, there remains a deep dividing line between the major political parties – the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the two formations of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). On the ground, this often leads to violent clashes between their supporters – even when people only suspect someone else as belonging to the opposite party. There is a constant struggle about holding on to power and getting access to valuable resources as opposed to implementing democratic reforms. This situation is reflected in most of the eight stories in this booklet.

A decade ago, the German WFD (Weltfriedensdienst, i.e. “World Peace Service”) started projects aimed at promoting sustainable peace in Zimbabwe. A few years later the German Development Service, meanwhile merged into the development corporation GIZ, followed suit, and more recently the AGEH (Personnel Agency of the German Catholics for International Cooperation) embarked upon a similar project. However, a sustainable peace is only possible when people on the ground make it their own mission.

This is why the German Civil Peace Service (CPS) agencies work closely together with local civil society partners who are rooted in the communities and the culture of the respective conflict area. CPS experts are sent out to give advice and assistance, but only if local groups specifically ask for such a deployment. The success stories in this booklet show that the concept of promoting peace through assisting local civil society is working well.

There is no peace without development, but also no political and economic development without peace. A sustainable peace, however, can't be ordered from above. It must grow from within a society and must be accepted by all parties concerned. Such a peace is more than just the end of violence. It also requires political solutions and a new social climate in which people can overcome their fear and their distrust of fellow citizens.

The foreign CPS experts function as an external third party which is called in by local organisations in order to assist them with a targeted intervention into a specific conflict. Outsiders can bring a new dimension and a new angle to a conflict situation. They can mediate between divided parties and thus promote a fresh dialogue. After all, it is a prerequisite for peace that people are able and willing to communicate and to listen to each other.

This is the very goal of the Civil Peace Service which is operating at various levels in society. The programme particularly aims at influencing societal processes to bring about a change of attitudes, views, behaviour and relationships. Ultimately, this means working with human beings for the sake of human beings.

The intended transformation of conflicts through a civil society intervention does not aim at preventing conflicts once and for all – this would be impossible since conflicts are an inevitable part of human coexistence. The core problem is not the conflict itself, but the way it is being dealt with – whether violently or peacefully. It is therefore paramount to find a win-win situation which at least partially serves the interests of all parties concerned. Then people can learn how to deal with conflicts constructively.

The CPS programme tries to achieve this goal at a civil society level mainly with the following methods:

- facilitating cooperation and dialogue which may transcend deeply rooted divisions, e.g. by strengthening traditional mediation mechanisms or establishing round tables for the conflicting parties
- enhancing the information and communication about the origins and the consequences of a conflict
- diminishing clichés of “the enemy”, as they are often contained in school books or in the media
- strengthening the rule of law and human rights in the conflict area

- reintegrating and rehabilitating people affected by violence as well as former combatants and offenders – even though perpetrators in more serious cases will have to be brought to justice
- advising and training key stakeholders in the various aspects of conflict transformation by civil society
- strengthening civil society structures by enhancing citizens' participation.

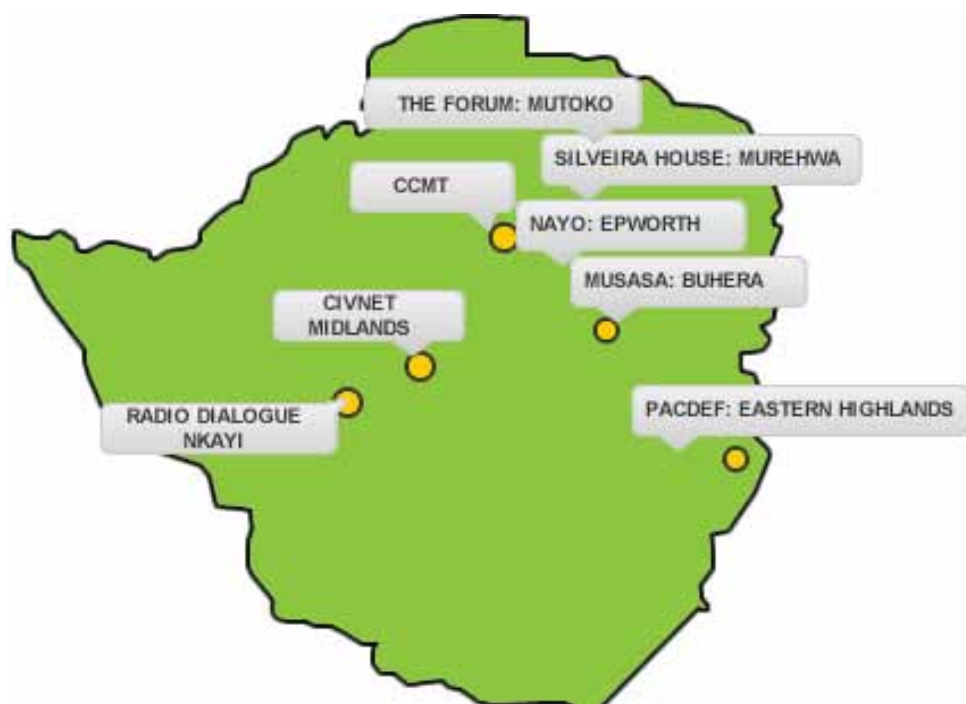
With these methods, the CPS programme wants to contribute to:

- preventing violent conflicts before they break out (crisis prevention)
- dealing with conflicts in a peaceful manner (minimising violence)
- creating structures and institutions apt to sustain peace on a long-term basis (stabilising peace) .

Eight partner organisations of the German CPS operate within Zimbabwe. A ninth group sponsored by the same regional CPS programme is the Council of Non-Governmental Organisations within the Southern African Development Community (SADAC-CNGO). Since this group is based in Gaborone, the capital of Botswana, it was not included in this booklet which is focused on projects in Zimbabwe only.

We invite our readers to meet the eight Zimbabwean partners of the German CPS programme and hear about their successful interventions for peace – as reflected in their “Most Significant Change” stories.

Map with Location of Projects



PACDEF

Overview

The Peace-building and Capacity Development Foundation (PACDEF) was formed in 2006 and began implementing projects in 2007. Its core business is aimed at the improvement of civic participation in peace building, leadership and local governance. PACDEF wants to strengthen the capacities of rural communities in areas of conflict transformation, local governance, human rights, gender equity and sustainable livelihoods. This is done through civic education, lobbying & advocacy and networking.

The targeted population includes such community sector groups as traditional leadership, civil society, political parties, faith-based organisations, civil servants, women, youth and disadvantaged persons. These groups are identified through a ward public meeting to represent their sectors in a dialogue structure called Community Forum.

PACDEF has successfully facilitated the establishment of over 50 Community Fora in Mutare, Buhera and Mutasa rural districts of the Manicaland Province.

PACDEF wants to create a community of free citizens who are well informed about their obligations and rights – citizens, who will work together and care for each other, sharing space and resources regardless of differences in socio-cultural and political backgrounds. It also aims to bring about enriched sustainable livelihoods and foster the principles of democracy and good governance.

Peace invades Dora communities

By Tauya Nhedzi and Lloyd Chiseke



As one enters Dora Dombo village area in the Eastern Highlands, a deplorable state of infrastructure greets you. The badly damaged roads, schools and other institutions could pass for a deserted area status. Peace is a prerequisite for development, just as development is to peace; it was evident from the state of things that all was not well.

Upon making further interaction with the community, the Peace-Building and Capacity Development Foundation (PACDEF) established that the severe 2008 elections had negatively impacted the development of Dora community. The politically motivated violence of that time had resulted in widespread fear, mistrust, hatred and disharmony among households and community members who supported different political parties.

Political polarisation had become the order of the day as people would not sit together and plan for development. Ward coordination meetings had lost their meaning, since they had been turned into

campaign platforms for the party that held the councillor's office, resulting in supporters of the other party distancing themselves from these planning meetings. The Headman acknowledged the effect this had had on development and attributed it to a lack of peace and harmony. This had led to politicisation of non-political issues in his area and had also fuelled bad relations among the villagers. Violence had allegedly come from ZANU-PF and the MDC alike as they were both victims and perpetrators. Some houses had been set ablaze forcing people out of their homes and sleeping in the mountains and on river banks.

In order to benefit from the food distribution schemes, one had to be politically aligned. Both parties provided food to their supporters as a means of rewarding loyalty. It further led to the breeding of a system where people traded loyalties for their own lives. All neighbourly trust was lost. Access to information was also denied in some cases, as it became dangerous to be seen reading any newspa-



pers beside those liked by the dominating party in this ward.

PACDEF had to intervene to save the situation from deteriorating further, since the community risked sliding into total chaos. Conflict transformation workshops were held in a bid to harmonise relations and bring about forgiveness and reconciliation. It was challenging in the early stages of the intervention to bring the fighting parties together. They could not see eye to eye. PACDEF had to make use of persuasive approaches to get the most influential individuals from both parties to participate. Some even refused to eat food at the workshops for fear of being poisoned. It was not until their own representative also joined the catering team that they could eat food freely. Relationship building approaches were used to get people to trust one another again and ensure their cooperation.

After a series of workshops, it was heart warming and indeed encouraging to observe a total paradigm shift where participants from different parties interacted, joked, hugged and laughed replacing fear, suspicion and anger. Collectively, they committed themselves to peace and non-violence regretting being manipulated into destroying their own communities and lives. Some church leaders expressed hope that healing was coming to this community as most people had lived with wounds for a long time. The traditional leaders also threw their weight behind the healing efforts and pledged to use restorative justice when dealing with perpetrators in order to encourage the wrongdoers to own up to for their acts.

After attending the workshops on conflict transformation, a certain ZANU-PF chairperson confessed at a coordination meeting

the one who masterminded the violence and torture in his party's camps. He went on to give a public apology and promised to go door to door to meet his victims in the eleven villages and apologise and even pay reparations where possible. At a later stage he again gave feedback at a coordination meeting and admitted that some of his victims had fled when they saw him coming to their areas.

The conflict had also caused total collapse to community institutions and structures like the traditional leadership and the Ward Development Committee (WADCO). Some traditional leaders were despised having been implicated in the promotion of partisan violence. The composition of the Ward Development Committee was politically one-sided resulting in loss of credibility.

PACDEF introduced a non-partisan, inclusive and peace-building community structure known as a "Community Forum." It was meant to support local structures that were not working well and to link the community and its leadership. Currently the Community Forum is holding meetings monthly to discuss issues of concern and plan for development in the community. It has been acknowledged by all villagers that the new structure is doing a splendid job which gives hope for a better future in Dora Dombo.



Silveira House

Overview

Silveira House Jesuit Social Justice and Development Centre is a Catholic organisation established in 1964. The Centre envisages a peaceful and just Zimbabwean society characterised by tolerance and coexistence of people with social, economic and cultural differences. Guided by the values of the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church, the Centre promotes integral human and community development through a special focus on the poor and marginalised, empowerment of women and participatory leadership. After nearly fifty years of existence, Silveira House has massive wealth of experience in its programming activities.

At present, there are five programmes, namely Community Development, Health and Sustainable Agriculture, Technical Vocational Skills Training, Advocacy and Peace Building, and Socio-economic Research and

Analysis. The originally separate Advocacy and Peace Building Programmes were introduced in 2000 as a response to the political challenges at that time. In 2011, they were merged within the Advocacy and Peace Building Department which aims to promote sustainable peace in communities through constructive approaches to handling conflicts. To this end, Silveira House works with traditional leaders (chiefs, headmen and village heads), elected leaders (councillors, political party structures), church leaders and the Zimbabwe Republic Police.

Strengthening relationships: Villagers doing it for themselves

By Chipo Chandahwa and
Farai Maketiwa



After undergoing a conflict management workshop at Silveira House, Memory felt fired up to handle community conflict situations confidently. Little did she know that she was going to find herself in a conflict that would nearly break her gardening cooperative apart. Memory (now 31) is the only female in this four-member cooperative in Murehwa District east of Harare. It was on the verge of collapse as individual members were beginning to go their separate ways. This stalemate lasted for three months. The conflict provided Memory with an opportunity to put into practice skills for conflict management which she had just learnt.

Silveira House strives to promote peace and social justice in Zimbabwe. One approach is strengthening economic capacities of self-employed and unemployed youth. Youth in Zimbabwe are defined as people from 10 to 30 years of age. Unemployed youth are vulnerable to adults who might want to use them for political expediency. Silveira House offers holistic training that enables them to be eco-

nomically independent and assertive. The trainings include vocational skills and other life skills like conflict management, leadership, business management as well as HIV/Aids awareness. It is from the conflict management training that Memory acquired skills for constructive approaches to handling conflict. She is now putting the skills into practice in order to transform conflict in her community.

Initially, Memory's cooperative was successfully cultivating and selling garden produce that included beans, butternuts, tomatoes and water melons. Relations soured when allegations of abuse of money and lack of transparency in the sharing of profits emerged. This was worsened by other issues like poor communication between the cooperative members and lack of consultation on what they should produce together. Some of them were also no longer forthcoming in contributing towards fuel costs for the water pump.

The conflict degenerated into a three-month-long stalemate that was character-



rised by open hatred between the cooperative members. The partners were avoiding each other and working as individuals in their plots. They boycotted working together which slowed progress. The cooperative was no longer economically viable as there was minimum production. The conflict also drew in other villagers with vested interests, and this worsened the already strained relations between the cooperative members even more.

Memory took the initiative to address the conflict. She attributed her move to the knowledge she gained during her Silveira House training on conflict management, especially on the need for non-violent approaches to conflict and for negotiating with the other parties. She first engaged Tarisai (32), one of the cooperative members. Together they analysed the situation, putting each other into the full picture of what was

happening to the group. They also discussed how they were all being affected and the need to come up with an amicable solution to the problems they were encountering.

After successfully engaging Tarisai, Memory went through the same process with the two other cooperative members. She then brought all four of them together, and they collectively negotiated a viable solution that will see the cooperative members working together again.

They came up with a written agreement, committing them to work as a team. They developed mechanisms of ensuring transparency in marketing of produce and sharing of profits among all members. Furthermore, they emphasised the need to plan together and to distribute their labour fairly between their plots. On top of that, the

cooperative explored projects for the future and came up with the idea of having one communal plot for their gardening efforts.

Group relations have improved and work in the gardens is progressing well. The cooperative is currently expecting a bumper harvest from its butternut project. Members are now forthcoming on areas where one needs assistance. They are collectively planning their activities and marketing their products. Dialogue has greatly improved. Memory and her group are now also raising awareness among other villagers on the need to resolve conflicts peacefully and to shun violence. “Other cooperatives in our village are learning from our experience”, Memory remarked.

Memory’s story is an example of how Silveira House is engaging young adults to contribute positively to their development through constructive approaches to conflict resolution. Self-assertive youths are well placed to resist the urge to engage in violent activities in their communities, and they can influence other youths towards responsible behaviour as well.



The Forum

Overview

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the Forum) is a coalition of 19 human rights non-governmental organisations in Zimbabwe. Its mission is to reduce organised violence and torture as well as any form of cruel inhuman and degrading treatment. Furthermore, the Forum endeavours to challenge impunity and foster a culture of accountability as well as the building of institutions of non-violence, tolerance and the respect for human rights. The Forum conducts its work through its three functional units, namely the Research and Documentation Unit, the Transitional Justice Unit and the Public Interest Unit.

The Research and Documentation Unit is responsible for the documentation of human rights violations, in particular cases of organised violence and torture (OVT). It also produces various publications on human rights issues. The Transitional Justice Unit is actively involved in transitional justice and peace building work, whilst the Public Interest Unit is responsible for litigation on behalf of victims of OVT.

The long walk in pursuit of justice

By Tafadzwa Christmas

Braving the winter cold, a man in a threadbare jacket emerges out of a partially thatched hut. He does not bother to look up at the pale sun above him submerged by clouds in the sky. Last night he just could not sleep again. Peering through the gaping hole in the roof over his head, he relived the events of that fateful year – 2006.

In 2006, Mr. Mazanhi (not his real name) from Chimango Village in Mutoko saw stealth shadows approaching his homestead under the moonlight. When he went outside to investigate, he was attacked by a group of self-proclaimed ZANU-PF supporters. They accused him of being a supporter of the MDC, and before he could respond, they commenced assaulting him with sticks all over his body. As he lay in agony on the ground, the assailants dragged Mr. Mazanhi's wife and three children out of the house and proceeded to set his homestead and property on fire.

Four years after that fateful day, only a heap of burnt red brick, mortar and shattered asbestos lies where his huts used to

stand. As Mr. Mazanhi bends over to tie his torn canvas shoes, he feels a sharp piercing pain in his lower back. Fumbling in his shirt pocket, he takes out the painkillers he was given by nurses at the local clinic – the only medication he received since the day he was assaulted.

A few minutes later his wife, a slender tall woman in a faded floral dress, joins him, and they slowly begin their long walk to Kotwa Police Station. The solitary officer there, a clean-shaven young man in his mid twenties, produces a ward of dog-eared papers and flips through them. Eventually, he tells the couple that the docket for their case had been transferred to Nyamapanda Police Station. That's how it was for four years, a seemingly endless back and forth trek between Kotwa and Nyamapanda.

On one of his many visits to Nyamapanda Police Station, however, Mr. Mazanhi met a woman who resided in Masenda Village near to his own home. He learnt that she was also a victim of political violence and that she was being assisted by an organi-

Due to the sensitivity of the subject, photos could not be used for this article.



sation called the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the Forum) to claim compensation against the perpetrators. Mr. Mazanhi visited the Forum and narrated his story to a lawyer who in turn addressed a letter to the officer-in-charge of Nyamapanda Police Station.

The Forum made several follow-ups with the police officer investigating the matter, leading to the arrest of the perpetrators. Now Mr. Mazanhi and his wife embarked on long journeys from Chimango Village to Mutoko Magistrates Court, 70 kilometers away from their home. On some days they had to walk on foot, for two days, in order to get to the court. Eventually, the perpetrators were convicted and sentenced to serve forty-eight months in prison and were also ordered to pay compensation to Mr. Mazanhi for unlawful destruction of his property.

A year after securing the judgment against the perpetrators, Mr. Mazanhi approached

his Chief and advised him of the outcome of the case. The Chief referred him to the Village Head, who summoned the families of the perpetrators to a meeting. After the usual formalities of the traditional court, Mr. Mazanhi was given the opportunity to tell his story. He gave a vivid account of what occurred and concluded by producing and reading out the judgment by the Magistrates Court which ordered the wrongdoers to compensate him.

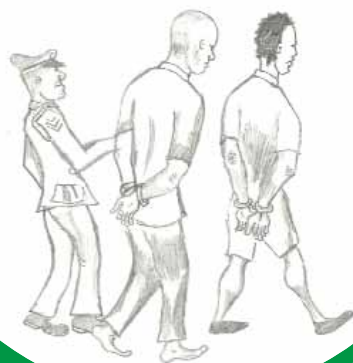
The families of the perpetrators acknowledged that Mr. Mazanhi had indeed been wronged. They apologised to him as well as to the Village Head for the acts of their relatives and pledged to compensate him and also give him a token of their apology in terms of the Shona tradition. They offered him a total of six cattle which he accepted. The following day, before villagers and in the presence of the Village Head, the families of the perpetrators handed over the six beasts to Mr. Mazanhi and his family. After this

exchange, the once estranged families shook hands to signify their reconciliation and departed for their respective homes.

After a few weeks, Mr. Mazanhi sold three of the six cattle in order to get money for building materials to reconstruct his homestead and buy clothes and blankets for his family. He was convinced that after a long and arduous search, he finally had found justice. But on one summer day in 2011, as he was busy thatching his hut under the scorching sun, a stranger walked up to his home. He wore a brown uniform which unmistakably belonged to members of the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP). Mr. Mazanhi stood transfixed aloft his makeshift ladder as his heart pounded within his chest.

The stranger introduced himself indeed as a police officer. After asking Mr. Mazanhi for a proof of identity, he told him that he was under arrest and was to go with him to Mutoko Police Station immediately. Shell-shocked and dumbfounded, Mr. Mazanhi felt his head spin and for a second thought he was going to fall from the ladder he was standing on. Regaining his composure after a momentary pause, he asked the police officer why he was arresting him. The man refused to tell him this and insisted that all questions would be answered at the police station.

This marked the beginning of several trips to Mutoko Police Station, where Mr. Mazanhi later discovered that he was being charged with a criminal offence called extortion. The Forum expeditiously dispatched a lawyer to



represent Mr. Mazanhi. When the matter was brought before the Mutoko Magistrates Court, it emerged that the relatives of the imprisoned perpetrators were accusing Mr. Mazanhi of extorting or forcing them to give him their cattle. The criminal trial spanned from March to July 2011, and Mr. Mazanhi had to appear at the court on several occasions as the prosecution slowly tried to build a case against him.

The Forum represented him throughout the lengthy trial. In his defence, the human rights organisation argued that Mr. Mazanhi had not committed any criminal offence as he had not forced the perpetrators' families to give him any beasts. In his judgment, the Magistrate who presided over the case said that there was nothing wrong in what Mr. Mazanhi has done. He also stated that the compensation was due to the accused as he had been wronged by the perpetrators. The Magistrate stated further that, even though the wrongdoers were in prison, their property was not, and as such Mr. Mazanhi was justified in claiming compensation from the



families of the perpetrators.

After Mr. Mazanhi's acquittal, the Forum also secured an order from the court for the relatives of the perpetrators to keep the peace and to desist from harassing and threatening him. The victory in end was not only for Mr. Mazanhi but for the whole community in Chimango Village. The people in this remote area, who were hitherto almost forgotten and had very little access to justice, found an outlet through the Forum to air their grievances.

News of Mr. Mazanhi's story permeated throughout the village. It galvanized the resolve of intimidated villagers and deterred potential perpetrators from committing human rights violations. The long walk of one man in pursuit of justice lifted the veil of impunity from Chimango Village and sowed seeds for a culture of accountability in the community. The firm foundation of justice was laid on which sustainable peace was to be built.

Musasa

Overview

Musasa is a non-governmental organisation that works to reduce gender based violence in Zimbabwe, including politically motivated violence. At the same time, it aims to strengthen women's capacity to deal with such violence. The organisation was established in 1988 in response to an increase in cases of violence against women, especially domestic violence. Musasa is the Shona name for an umbrella shaped tree which traditionally was used as shelter because it provides cool refreshing shade for the weary and tired. In the same manner, Musasa as an organisation provides relief to survivors of gender based violence.

Musasa has its head office in Harare and regional offices in Bulawayo, Gweru and Chiredzi. Its operations are founded on the following pillars: prevention; response, protection and capacity building through its provision of counselling services; basic legal advice; temporary shelter and advocacy. The organisation's initiatives in addressing gender based violence culminated in the inception of the Domestic Violence Act in 2008.

It is darkest just before dawn

By Nyasha Mazango and Nobuhle Moyo

“Today I want your help. All this time, I’ve been unable to say this because I didn’t know where to start or whom to approach. All the systems are the same. It’s sad everyone is the same, and I doubt if I can get help.” The counsellor who was attending to this woman concluded that she was not able to talk about something that deeply troubled her; that she was complaining about untrustworthy systems, had no one to talk to and was in need of some kind of help. By the end of the counselling session, it was clear that this woman was off-loading from within and needed someone to listen.

Mobile counselling was not a common service in Buhera. The organisation Musasa had been conducting such sessions with female villagers and continued to receive stories from women who had experienced different forms of violence with different gravity. Musasa counsellors offered time and space where women could off-load their concerns and problems, and the latter took the opportunity to use this service. It was for them like putting an end to the darkest hours just before dawn, as one woman put it.



Given the prevalence and persistence of conflict in Buhera, Musasa strategically selected four wards to implement its peace building initiative. The effects of violence in this rural district in Manicaland Province have never really subsided. People are still scared of being victimised during future elections and other national processes that might instigate violence. In many cases, the victims were women, and it was their traumatic experiences and emotional sufferings that called for Musasa’s intervention.

Musasa began to support women in Buhera to access services in a gender sensitive manner and strengthen their capacity to deal with violence. The organisation provided direct psycho-social support which besides mobile counselling included basic legal services, basic health support and temporary shelter. Musasa’s work unveiled a number of underlying causes and effects of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Violence Against Women (VAW). There obviously was a need for continued holistic psycho-social support to female survivors of violence. In order to verify this need, a study was carried

It is darkest just before dawn



out. Residents and stakeholders that were consulted suggested a response strategy on how to address the effects of violence in their vicinity.

Musasa facilitated community dialogues as a platform for experience sharing, suggesting ways of addressing problems and developing an action plan. The platforms also enabled the communities to learn more about cross-cutting issues such as GBV, HIV/Aids, Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) and conflict resolution.

Prior to these community dialogues, people were totally divided along political party lines. In one ward, seven people refused to participate in an activity that had been mobilised by one opposing party member. Some women would not collect water from the same borehole with women who supported another party. In another ward, a traditional leader judged one particular case and co-incidentally favoured his female relative -

consequently fuelling a conflict between families. After the community dialogues, it was evident that divisions along political lines became more subtle, since women and men could now work together in peace building activities. Owing to dialogue sessions on conflict resolution and management, conflicting families were able to reach a mutual understanding on how to allocate land.

Deviating from traditionally prescribed gender roles, such as cooking and speaking at public meetings, previously caused conflict. After community dialogues on GBV and SRHR, women and men paid attention to a more sensible distribution of roles. This was evidenced on one occasion when men offered to cook while women attended a life skills workshop. After acquiring such skills like confidence building, assertiveness, basic entrepreneurship and conflict management, women were able to organise themselves peacefully into support groups for economic development.

Twelve support groups have already embarked on income generating activities like chicken rearing, buying and selling, and most of the women involved were able to pay school fees for the third term. Buhera being a drought stricken district, the women hailed income generating activities to buy basic food for their families. The trainings also opened up pathways for wronged women to take up their cases for legal and justice recourse. A total of 80 cases have been reported, and five perpetrators have been convicted. The support groups continue to offer therapeutic spaces for women to meet without fear of being victimised by men.

Additionally, Musasa managed to establish 25 peace clubs consisting of 15 women and 8 men. The predominance of woman was due to the fact that they had been violated more often than men. The clubs offer basic counselling at the doorstep of violence survivors and have become their first point of reference as well as watchdogs of violence in the area. For instance, if they identify perpetrators, they can inform the local Chief who would take the necessary measures. The same clubs have a leading role in referring cases that need further assistance such as legal aid or social welfare. They are also the basis for local level advocacy to reduce violence against women.

Male involvement in some of the activities that promote peace from the home has strengthened support for community peace. Men have become more receptive of issues that affect women. This was acknowledged



by one man when he responded in Shona to why he would not want to be born as a woman: “Handikwanise kuti nditakure pamuviri, ndigoenda kumunda, ndochengeta vana, ndova muroora, nekupihwa mitemo yekuti ndikaityora ndinourayiwa nekurohwa. Kubva nhasi ndanzwisasa kuoma kwakaita hupenyu hwe madzimai” (I wouldn’t like to get pregnant, to go to the fields, to look after the children, to be a daughter-in-law, to be given rules and to be beaten if I break them) .

The wards have now evidenced sustainable community organisation to maintain peace. The newly created platforms have enabled them to mobilise themselves and organise development activities that will promote their area. Both male and female villagers have also learnt to consider women and men as equal citizens and abstain from violence, and this will result in promoting and maintaining peace. Demands are now coming from other wards for Musasa to replicate similar psycho-social services and peace building activities in their areas.

Overview

The Centre for Conflict Management and Transformation (CCMT) works to transform the ways in which societies deal with conflict away from adversarial approaches and towards collaborative problem solving. Formed in 2002, CCMT envisions a society where people actively participate in creating social and economic justice by managing and transforming all forms of conflict constructively. As a learning organisation, CCMT aims to ensure that all aspects of its work are informed by research into the key drivers of conflict within communities.

CCMT focuses on:

- Conflict issues that affect large parts of a community and cause polarisation of community groups.
- Conflict issues that have been or have the potential to be destructive or violent.

CCMT conducts interventions which see it partnering and working with Zimbabwean communities at all levels, from civil society right through to traditional leaders and local government. It is CCMT's intention that by the end of the intervention process, skills will have been transferred, and communities will lead better lives, characterised by increased harmony and tolerance. CCMT's work thus contributes to the attainment of peace in Zimbabwe.

A school site as a bone of contention

By Chiedza Zororo and Farai Mazikana



Three different locations have been pegged as potential sites for a new secondary school. However, five years later all three plots lie vacant and redundant. No building has taken place as the ultimate site is yet to be chosen. Children are still walking more than 22 kilometers a day to the nearest school. There are reports that some children are being raped on their way.

The former councillor had selected the three potential sites, but the current councillor has selected some additional sites for the school. The community is divided into two camps: One camp is in favour of the sites chosen by the former councillor, the other camp supports the current councillor, both of whom happen to belong to different political parties. Conflict is rife in the community and relationships between the leaders are broken. What can be done?

Following a sensitisation process, the respective Rural District Council (RDC) in this Zimbabwean province requested the Centre for Conflict Management and Transformation (CCMT) to assist them in resolving the

conflict. The RDC had partnered with an international developmental NGO which had already helped with providing funds for a new primary school in the area. Because the community managed to complete that project within stipulated deadlines, the NGO pledged to provide further resources to build a secondary school as well. This time, however, things just didn't move forward.

During an intervention planning meeting, CCMT identified district leaders and other stakeholders, and it was agreed that consultations on the issue be held in the community to get a deeper understanding of the conflict. Consultations with the Chief revealed that he was suspicious of such an intervention process. He thought he had already resolved the issue through the Ward Assembly and was not sure what these "conflict people" (CCMT) wanted to do. The Headman, on the other hand, was of the opinion that the Ward Assembly was not representative.

A further consultation meeting took place with the Village Heads who first denied that there was a conflict. They too said that the



issue had been resolved. They appeared to be constrained, until one Village Head opened up to explain that indeed there were some community members who were not happy with the sites that had been selected. Eventually, they all agreed that CCMT's intervention process could go ahead. Dialogue meetings were held, providing the community with a space in which they could discuss their issues and vent their anger and frustrations.

The dialogue approach emphasises the building and restructuring of relationships as a long term process, involving 15 to 20 people. One of the challenges faced by the intervention team (composed of CCMT staff and district leaders) in this particular case was having to contend with a tight deadline: It was important for the district to decide on a site within a month in order to meet the funding requirements. What further compounded the problem was that instead of a small group, there were about 150 community members attending the meetings, making it difficult to moderate the discussions.

Following three dialogue meetings, there was still no resolution. This led the Chief to suddenly stand up in frustration at one meeting and ask the community if they wanted him to make a decision, as he felt they were going round in circles. The community members who appeared to have a deep respect for their Chief gladly agreed. However, CCMT warned the Chief that if he made a lone decision, this would not end the conflict, due to there being no consensus. The Chief was instead advised to consider the arguments of the people as well as the technical information that had been provided by the planning department. The Chief took this into account when he finally chose a site for the community.

Following his declaration, CCMT recognised the need for a relationship building process involving Chief, Headman, former councillor, current councillor and two community members. At first it seemed as if the process would fail. On the first day, the Chief did not turn up at the agreed venue, and the Head-

man only came after lunch. However, much to the facilitator's relief, on the second day the Chief was there in the morning and the workshop could finally begin.

It included team building activities, training in conflict transformation as well as evening dialogue sessions in which leaders could express their sentiments. It turned out that the current councillor was angry because, in his view, various government departments had contributed to the conflict. The Headman, on the other hand, felt disrespected by the Chief who had openly criticised him in front of community members. He wanted the Chief to explain why he had chosen site A and neglected the decision he had made at the Ward Assembly. He also wanted the former councillor to stop addressing the community on developmental issues and give the current councillor space. The Chief felt that the Headman did not understand the Chief's role, and if the Headman had grievances, he should have come to him personally and not speak in the workshop.

When all of these feelings came out in the open, the group was able to discuss them frankly and work on them. From this point began the relationship building process. The Headman was invited to the Chief's homestead to discuss issues of concern and map a way forward for the school as well as mend their relationship. This had never happened before. Previously, the Headman would make it a point to discuss issues with the Chief whenever they bumped into each other, whereas the normal protocol would



have been for the Headman to go to the Chief's house officially. The workshop ended with participants agreeing to speak with one voice and explain to the community why site A was chosen.

A workshop was then held with community members to come up with a work plan. This revealed all the steps that would be taken to ensure that the school was built. Unfortunately, when the village leaders went back to the NGO that had pledged funds, they discovered that this international organisation was no longer able to finance the school's construction but could provide reading materials instead. The council took the initiative to seek alternative support and a local mining company and local business have now agreed to fund the new school.

So after five years of stalemate, there was finally consensus on the site, meaning that the community can progress with plans to build the school. Relations between the various leaders, although not perfect, are being restored, and this will undoubtedly impact the whole community positively. Where the future will take this community, remains to be seen. However, to get to the present stage has been a great achievement in itself.

Radio Dialogue

Overview

Radio Dialogue is a community radio initiative owned and controlled by the community of Bulawayo. The initiative seeks to provide a radio broadcasting service to the people of Bulawayo, thereby bringing in an element of media diversity in Zimbabwe. Although lacking a broadcasting licence, the radio station organises studio discussions and live shows as if it was on air. Important in this context are truth telling focus group meetings where people can air their grievances, especially about politically motivated violence which they might have encountered in the past

The solid community base that Radio Dialogue has established encourages and allows community participation. There is an elected seven-member committee (Ward Committee) in each of Bulawayo's 29 wards. These committees are responsible for initiating and organising Radio Dialogue's activities in their vicinity. It is from Ward Committees that Radio Dialogue draws members of its General Council, the highest decision making body of the organisation.

Gukurahundi healing integrates Nkayi

By **Munyaradzi Gova and
Cleopatra Ndlovu**



After nearly three decades, ninety-two-year-old Jabuliso Mlotshwa (not his real name) is still haunted by the memories of the fateful death of his son Mangaliso. Mlotshwa narrated his story to Radio Dialogue, a community radio station initiative based in Bulawayo. He was one of the participants at a truth telling focus group meeting held in Nkayi, Matabeleland North Province. It was one in a series of many other such meetings organised in partnership with the Cultural Information Trust C.I.T., which seeks to unearth the truth about any forms of politically motivated violence in Matabeleland.

Mlotshwa, a survivor of the 1980s violent political disturbances, still has fresh memories of the atrocities. His son Mangaliso was killed by the so-called Fifth Brigade at his home-stand. The Fifth Brigade, a North Korean trained military force, is accused of causing the death of an estimated 20,000 civilians in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces. According to Mlotshwa, Mangaliso was killed after the Brigade accused him of being a dissident. This term referred to suspected members of a former ZIPRA cadre which was

alleged to be in possession of fire arms in order to overthrow the government of the ruling party ZANU-PF.

“They came here and dragged him out of the house, then ordered everyone to come out and sing while they interrogated a dissident”, said Mlotshwa who broke into tears while narrating. He emphasised that the ordeal is still fresh in his mind, although the opportunity to talk about it at meetings such as the one organised by Radio Dialogue helps him to deal with it better.

The issue of the 1980s atrocities – otherwise known as Operation Gukurahundi – is still unresolved in Matabeleland, although many people have begun talking about compensation. Gukurahundi is a Shona term which refers to the first rains that wash away the dirt. This leaves many believing that it was set to wipe away the dissidents who were mainly Ndebele people.

The crucial question is what type of compensation should be rendered to the victims. Some activists are calling on the government



to pay out a lump sum to the families of those killed, although they are not clear on how the victims will be identified. Mlotshwa is sceptical: “Singalandela lendlela kuzakhuthaza ubugwelegwele, njalo abayibo kabatholi lutho” (if we pursue such a method, it will fuel corruption and the truly affected won’t benefit), he says in his native Ndebele language.

The ninety-two-year-old and fellow participants at the meeting organised by Radio Dialogue suggested the government should not pay out lump sums. They said that although most of them lost loved ones and about eight years of their lives due to the disturbances, they cannot put a price tag on this. Instead, these villagers saw it fit for the government



to implement development projects biased to Matabeleland. The projects should focus on building schools, hospitals, universities and roads, they said. Mlotshwa stressed that he would be very pleased with such developments, and his son's spirit could finally rest, seeing that his people have been repaid for the pain inflicted on them.

It is rare for people to consider others when they have an opportunity to benefit themselves. This selfless community, however, had developed a sense of togetherness through the truth telling focus group meetings. The disturbances were said to have divided people when they sold out each other for their own lives. Yet when they sat in dialogue and heard different stories, they were brought together and realised they all had shared pain and hope. Radio Dialogue continues to hear and compile more stories of survival, and each time this is done, communities encourage each other to reunite.

Overview

The Civic Education Network Trust (CIVNET) is a non-governmental organisation that is involved in civic education covering areas of peace building, citizen participation, voter education and human rights. It was initially formed as an ad-hoc network to run a voters' education project in order to overcome voter apathy and encourage citizen participation in the electoral processes. It then transformed itself into a permanent organisation. This happened after realising that there was a need for an entity which was going to specialise in civic education.

CIVNET has recently centred on the following programmes:

- Citizen Participation in the Constitution-making Process (CPCM) to secure a people-driven constitution
- Leadership Development Programme (LDP) to train conscientious community leaders
- Citizen Engagement and Participation Project (CEPP) to involve a wider public in development issues
- Citizen Participation in Peace-building (CPPB) to bring divided communities together in conversations around lasting peace on the basis of law

Water used as a political weapon



By Jabulisa Tshuma

Two adjacent villages in the Midlands Province were politically so divided that their inhabitants could not draw water from the same source situated nearby. As a result, the people from one settlement had to get water from a well about four kilometers away. The conflict had arisen during the June 2008 Presidential Run-off Elections and had not been reconciled ever since. Voters in one village supported one particular party whilst their political opponents had a stronghold in the other village.

After having heard of this polarisation, the Civic Education Network Trust (CIVNET) went into the relevant resettlement area and decided to run a mediation process through a workshop. CIVNET field officers invited participants from the adjacent villages through their respective Village Heads. This ensured that supporters of both political parties attended the workshop.

The gathering used a participatory methodology that encouraged those present to talk freely and bring out issues on their own. It ran under the theme “The Community and

the Law”. The main goal was educating people to respect the law and human rights so that they can live in peace and desist from engaging themselves in violent activities. The topics covered in this workshop included the Declaration of Human Rights in the Constitution, the role of the police and living peacefully together as communities, among others.

The villagers were required to look at and discuss things that brought about divisions in their communities. The CIVNET officers never mentioned the water issue, but inevitably the participants brought this problem up on their own. They cited the source of this conflict in their area as political violence, political polarisation, lack of respect for human rights, political intolerance and a lack of the rule of law in the country. Under the guidance of CIVNET, the participants then went further to look at the effects of the problem and its root causes.

It was clear from their submissions that they realised it was them who suffered most because of this conflict. They had not lived

“Water is one of the most important natural resources that should be accessible to all, and its access should never be politicised.”

peacefully for some years, yet their political leaders formed an Inclusive Government in Harare. The villagers realised that they had the same common problems that affected them equally as a community. They all have to use the hardly passable dirt track to the main road 20 kilometers away. There are no shops in their area, no clinic, and the nearest school is 10 kilometers away. Due to the conflict, the villagers could no longer attend funerals in the other settlement nor assist each other when sick, even though they were related. And it seemed even worse to them that some people had to walk four kilometers to fetch water, only because supporters of another political party denied them access to the nearest well.

After some deep reflections the communities

began to regret their acts and their political immaturity, as they called it themselves. Now the process required them to pave the way forward in addressing their conflict. Participants in the workshop were then asked to stand up one by one and talk openly about what they thought was the best way forward. People freely talked and suggested ways on what they thought they should do as individuals and as a community.

After serious deliberations, the participants asked the Village Heads to allow them to apologise to each other. They did so by shaking hands and acknowledging that they had wronged each other for political reasons – when politics were not supposed to divide them as a community. In the end, they all agreed that they were now going to live to-

gether in peace and start drawing water from the same source, irrespective of their political differences. To show their seriousness, the Village Heads asked everybody in the workshop to go straight away to the well and drink the water together. This was going to be a sign to the whole community, including those that had not attended the workshop, that the two villages had now reunited again.

The intervention process by CIVNET brought about a change and transformation in the area. Women and girls who used to walk four kilometers to fetch water are now getting it from the well nearby. This is saving them time and effort as they can do other things than spend hours looking for water. Water is one of the most important natural resources that should be accessible to all, and its access should never be politicised.

Overview

The National Association of Youth Organisations (NAYO) is an umbrella body of youth groupings in Zimbabwe. Its members believe that youth have an integral role to play in the development of the nation. By coming together, more can be achieved through shared resources, and youth will have a stronger voice throughout the spectrum of Zimbabwean societal concerns. NAYO places great value on diversity of people and ideas in order to achieve the highest possible standards. Above all, NAYO believes that by positively transforming youth, the whole country will be transformed for the better.

All member organisations implement projects and programmes in various developmental areas such as entrepreneurship, social transformation, human rights, peace building, HIV/Aids, gender mainstreaming and climate change, among others. Through the coordination by the NAYO Secretariat all members are implementing a Civil Peace Service youth rehabilitation programme which is focusing on addressing direct and structural causes of violence. The intended outcome is a prosperous and violence free Zimbabwe.

Young people using art to build peace in Zimbabwe

By MacDonald Munyoro and Vincent
Tafirenyika



In the midst of celebrating the victory of his friend and colleague who had just been elected councillor, terror struck. Hordes of people could be seen scattering in the mist that engulfed the community as rubble burned, and Chishuwo (not his real name) could not hold back his tears and rage. Homeless and bitter at the age of 23, he could not grasp the new reality – a world with no home! About three years on, as part of a lively arts festival, the young man is at the centre of the stage, as onlookers are ecstatically reciting peace chants.

Epworth south-east of Harare is a semi-formal settlement characterised by a bulging population. The area is prone to a lot of delinquent behaviour, especially amongst unemployed youth. Epworth has been at the epicenter of various conflicts with regards to property rights, freedom of association and the abuse of human rights, given the political polarisation of communities across Zimbabwe. Against this background, the National Association of Youth Organisations (NAYO), through its annual Jacaranda Youth Festival of Arts, has created a window of hope in a

divided and vulnerable community in dire need of transformation.

The festival is linked to the United Nations International Day of Peace observed on 21 September, when NAYO actively engages youth in non-violent processes. The blossoms of Jacaranda trees are a welcome sign of spring in Zimbabwe, emphasising new beginnings, a new harvest, new blossoms and coming fresh rains. The idea of a new start is important with regard to the reputation of Zimbabwean youths who are labelled as violent irresponsible rabble rousers, among other names. The Jacaranda Youth Festival of Arts is one of NAYO's initiatives to showcase that youths are in fact willing and able to be positive examples in their communities.

It was part of the 2011 festival that NAYO intervened in the Epworth community and came across Chishuwo. Mayhem began in the life of this politically conscious young man when he was forcibly evicted out of his home along with his family, namely his wife and three children, during the violent Presidential Run-off Elections campaign in June



2008. Township residents lost their plots due to intensified differences on political ideology within their community, as coercion and intimidation became the order of the day. Some of them were even threatened with death. NAYO interviewed locals who talked about repeated heavy clashes between various political factions, with youths being largely the victims and perpetrators. All this tore the community apart.

As narrated by Chishuwo: “It was on a Sunday evening when my wife said I was not safe to stay at home because some people were coming to destroy our house. I don’t understand why they chased us from our home when we had not done any wrong to them, and why they wanted to harm us. We had to hide in the tall grass in the dark until early morning.” Another family from the same ward was told that they were no longer welcome in the community. The invaders marched to their homesteads, ravishing houses and re-allocating land to residents sympathetic to their own political ideology.

The life of Chishuwo became a daily struggle as he sought to provide for his family and also articulate some of the issues within his community. In the midst of all this he saw a window of hope. As the world was crumbling around him, the potential of his talent to communicate through various forms of arts was ignited. His group was performing a play, when members from NAYO were getting ready to engage youths in a workshop to diagnose the growing polarisation in their township. Chishuwo realised the light that was seemingly at the end of his tunnel, as NAYO invited him to feature in the 2011 edition of the Jacaranda Arts Festival.

A discussion was held with his group members for a possible collaboration in peace messaging during this event. Initially, they were not willing to even talk about the word ‘peace’ because of the political connotations it had derived within their township. As Chishuwo noted, it was difficult enough to have youths with different political outlooks working together and have community

elders accepting arts as a form of communication – especially on socio-political topics when issues of justice were yet to be dealt with. Given Chishuwo's known political involvement, the community was not willing to accept peace messages from him, since all his statements were viewed within political lenses.

The group was also convinced that there was a surveillance system monitoring their activities, and any association with outsiders seemed totally unacceptable to them. However, through continued engagements, namely in community dialogue meetings, the group finally agreed to take the bull by its horns and partake in peace messaging. NAYO decided to use Chishuwo's plays in the streets of Harare where people did not know his group.

The team members were given a platform to perform from which they gained confidence. They articulately delivered messages on peace in dance, poetry and drama. Finally, they performed on the big festival stage together with other young artists to a thunderous applause from government ministers and other stakeholders that were present.

Chishuwo and his crew were an instant hit. Their confidence was boosted, and they decided to go back to their community Epworth to spread the message of peace and begin to speak to a torn-apart community. From small crowds to gathering hordes of people, the group – now dubbed “Vahombe Performing Theatre Arts” – has become a sensation



and a timely voice to community transformation, as tolerance, forgiveness and unity is now possible. They are also being hired by other organisations to perform at their functions which has opened up a channel for income in their previously poverty stricken lives.

In 2012 they became ambassadors of the Jacaranda Arts Festival and featured in the main event of the theatre category through a themed and well choreographed performance in Harare's Africa Unity Square. That year's festival coincided with a “Youth Fair” which brought together many youth organisations from across Zimbabwe, creating a chance for the group to perform in other marginalised communities and make a clarion call for peace and non-violence there as well.

NAYO's youth-led interventions are envisioned to foster peace and a sustainable future in Zimbabwean communities and the country as a whole. The organisation calls on all of us to be aware of the importance of youths in the national discourse. As “Vahombe Performing Theatre Arts” now say, “nothing for the youths without the youths”.

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