

SILENCE AS AN ENDOGENOUS MODE OF POST-
CONFLICT HEALING AND RECONCILIATION:
ZIMBABWE POST 2008 ELECTION VIOLENCE.

Obediah Dodo*

Chamunorwa Nyoni (PhD)**

Abstract

Zimbabwe has had several conflicts that impacted negatively on the societies' relationships. These broken relationships were addressed through a variety of means; legal court intervention, social mediation and forgiveness and compensation amongst others. Following the 2008 election violence in Zimbabwe, that saw thousands of people killed, maimed and displaced, there was a need for some redress of the relationships that were broken. However, that did not take place. A study was undertaken to analyse how the society had responded to the post-conflict effects and it was established from both the literature reviewed and interviews conducted that the society had generally adopted silence as an approach of healing and reconciliation following government's inaction towards achieving a sound national healing and reconciliation agenda. (121)

Key words: Silence, Endogenous, Post-Conflict Healing, Reconciliation and Violence

* Peace and Governance Lecturer at Bindura University of Science Education.

** Research Lecturer at Bindura University of Science Education.

Introduction

Whenever there is a conflict, it is expected that participants, later, at some point meet and make up their differences. However they make up their differences differs with cultures, customs and personalities brokering the talks. Lederach (1995) asserts that endogenous methods of conflict resolution are based on the belief that one's ability to understand a problem and develop a possible solution is based on one's respect for the cultural norms and practices. Zimbabwe has several of endogenous modes of conflict resolution and healing which can and have been applied differently ever since time immemorial. However, it seems, as part of these healing and reconciliation processes, the country has generally adopted silence as one of the best methods to address the post-conflict effects of the 2008 election violence that, according to government left over 200 people dead¹, 10 000 and over 50 000 maimed and displaced respectively².

Methodology

This discussion is a result of a research that was conducted in selected districts of Zimbabwe with a view to critically analysing the applicability and acceptability of silence as an alternative mode to post-conflict healing and reconciliation in Zimbabwe following the 2008 post-election violence. The study also sought to analyse why and how the Zimbabwean government had at various instances applied the strategy and how far it had managed to address the problems.

The study employed qualitative survey tools in gathering data (unstructured interviews, questionnaires and archival material). However due to financial and time constraints, the following districts were covered; Bindura, Mt Darwin, Rushinga, Chikomba, Esigodini, Insiza and Harare Metropolitan. These were basically selected from the four administrative provinces of Harare, Mashonaland Central (Bindura, Mt Darwin, Rushinga), Mashonaland East (Chikomba) and Matebeleland South (Esigodini, Insiza) for the following reasons;

- Harare is where most of the policy makers are resident.

¹ This figure does not account for the over 600 bodies that were discovered at Chibondo Mine shaft, Mt Darwin, allegedly killed during the 2008 election violence.

² Interview with an official from the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe in October 2010.

- Matebeleland South is one of the regions that were seriously affected by the Gukurahundi conflict and the silence approach applied.
- Mashonaland region is where most of the violence perpetrators hail from and that is where most of the 2008 violence was experienced.
- Mt Darwin is where Chibondo Mine shaft is located.

During the entire study, over 100 questionnaires were distributed and analysed while over 60 interviews were conducted and 4 focus group discussions were conducted in Matebeleland region comprised of 109 participants for the reason that people in this area really wanted to air their views unlike in other regions. There was a 100% response rate in the questionnaires as the researcher personally followed up on the questionnaires while the 100% response rate in the interviews was achieved courtesy of patience and determination on the part of the research team. In Matebeleland region, one of the scheduled focus group discussions failed to materialize as there was a low turn-out.

The interviews were had open-ended questions to allow respondents to open up as much as possible while questionnaires had both closed and open-ended questions. Overall, the two instruments sought to achieve the same objective as they solicited participants to respond to issues to do with the following;

- General understanding of the conflicts experienced in Zimbabwe since 1980 political independence.
- General understanding of the various modes of conflict resolution that are applicable in Zimbabwe.
- Their conception of silence as an alternative mode to conflict resolution, national healing and reconciliation.
- The possible way-forward.

Challenges of research bias were expected and so the use of triangulation methodology served to address and ensure that one method either confirmed or disproved the other. The methodology might not have been fool-proof but every measure was put in place to ensure accuracy and credibility in the end product.

2008 Election Violence in Context

As soon as election dates were announced, Zimbabwe entered into a tragic and devastating stage in its history, with enormous human, material and moral costs. The political landscape was characterised by violence allegedly perpetrated by the state-sponsored militia against political opposition groups and anyone considered an enemy of the state. In addition, the violent political and electoral campaigns were characterised by arbitrary arrests, detention, torture, disappearances and the deaths of political opponents and activists. Reports of abduction, rape, torture, murder and inhuman and degrading treatment of people were recorded. Innocent civilians were illegally detained and harassed by members of the military as well as the ZANU PF youth and militia all over Harare, Mutoko, Chitungwiza and Epworth, Bikita, Nyanga North, Gokwe, Mudzi, Chegutu and Mt Darwin, Bubi, Bindura, Buhera and Rusape amongst others. The security sector led by the Zimbabwe National Army³ (ZNA) in conjunction with ZANU PF members set up torture camps to systematically target, kill, beat, intimidate and torture people suspected of having voted for the MDC in the previous 29 March 2008 election. This was a national campaign exercise though its magnitude differed with areas largely determined by the levels of political threats prevailing and the over-zealousness of the implementing agents. The aim of these torture activities was, to punish those who had supported the MDC in the elections and to intimidate people to vote for Robert Mugabe if there was to be a presidential run-off election. The police generally refused to intervene arguing that they were apolitical and therefore could not intervene in any political conflict. Thousands of MDC activists who fled the violence in the weeks before the vote remained in hiding, while armed ZANU-PF supporters and government-backed “war veterans” and “youth militia” continued to terrorize villagers in both the rural areas and urban areas.

According to a human rights organisation, Zimbabwe Peace Project, Afrik-News (2008), from January to June 2008, there had been a total of 16 400 cases of human rights abuses recorded with 593 in January, 685 in February, 806 in March, 4 375 in April, 6 288 in May, 3 653 in June. Major injuries noted during the period were characterised by lacerations, head injuries, gun-shot

³ Interview with a member of the Special Air Service in the ZNA in 2010.

wounds, stabs, rib, leg, and arm fractures, severe burns, and severe tissue injuries, indicative of the use of knives, fire, sharp weapons, guns, metal rods, knobkerries and logs.

The Catholic Church reported that priests and laypeople were targeted for violence by soldiers and militia groups as perceived opposition supporters, especially in the rural areas, and that many had been forced into hiding, (CISA 2008). The church was also prevented from distributing food in areas where famine was prevalent. There were also reports from remote rural areas, where there was no immediate access to health care and of victims of violence being prevented from accessing treatment.

In 2011, the Zimbabwe Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa blocked calls for an independent probe into election violence during the 2008 presidential election run-off when he was presenting the Zimbabwe human rights report to the United Nations Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review Session in Geneva, Switzerland.

National Healing and Reconciliation

Following the 2008 conflict that, according to government left over 200 innocent civilians brutally murdered and 16000 other human rights related cases recorded, the new government established a Ministry called National Healing and Reconciliation. It was tasked with the responsibility to attend to the people's concerns in as far as national healing and reconciliation was concerned and is headed by Moses Mzila-Ndlovu of the MDC and Sekai Holland of the MDC-T who are the co-Ministers.

According to Machakanja (2010), the process of developing a framework and legislation for national healing and reconciliation in Zimbabwe remains clear on paper, whilst it appears to be devoid of a coherent, inclusive, consultative and participatory guided process. The relevant Ministry has also been inactive in as far as developing deliberate policies and mechanisms towards reconciliation and national healing. Similarly, there has been very little progress made in trying to engage institutions such as parliament in debate that will pave a way in formulating

reconciliation and national healing policies and legislative bills. As if there were no casualties during the 2008 election violence, the ministry has remained a white elephant.

Data from my survey⁴ indicate that the majority of people are looking for reconciliation and national healing initiatives that highlight interplay between state-orchestrated initiatives such as the National Healing and Reconciliation programme, individual-orientated and community based programmes that ultimately address the suspicions and mistrust within the society. Others have argued as to whether the national healing and reconciliation project should be led by politicians, given the politics of partisanship that have characterised the political landscape of Zimbabwe. Instead, they were of the idea that the Ministry should have been headed by a neutral figure like what happened in South Africa during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that was led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Gukurahundi⁵: A Comparison

After Zimbabwe's political independence in 1980, there was an internal conflict between the Ndebele based Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and the Shona-based Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) political formations that had apparently collaborated in the liberation struggle. The conflict was largely based on mistrust and tribalism so much so that when the disturbances erupted, government responded heavy-handed. Some ZAPU members defected from a unified army made up of ZAPU, ZANU, and the former colonizer, Rhodesian Army and embarked on dissidency. In response, the government unleashed terror through a specially-trained army brigade called 5 Brigade and other related security services.

The conflict that stretched from 1982 to 1987 claimed over 20 000 people mainly in the Matebeleland and Midlands regions and also had over 10 000 detained and thousands more missing and permanently maimed, (CCJP 1987). In 1987, according to the CCJP report, on 27 December 1987, ZANU and ZAPU signed a Unity Accord uniting the two parties under Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF). On 18 April 1988, the then

⁴ Interviews conducted with relevant stakeholders, perpetrators and victims.

⁵ Gukurahundi is a Shona word meaning the first rains that clear the spring chaff before the summer season.

Prime Minister Robert Mugabe announced an amnesty for all dissidents before signing a Clemency Order No. 1 of 1988 on 28 April 1988. The Clemency Order indicated that all those who surrendered between 19 April and 31 May 1988 would be offered full pardon for any crimes and also included those already serving jail sentences and members of the security forces. Eventually, 122 dissidents handed themselves over to the authorities, (ibid). However, for those who had committed crimes and their victims, there was no deliberate programme to cater for their rehabilitation and integration. There was also no reconciliation programme whereby the two parties could reflect and possibly apologise and be able to forgive each other. Both perpetrators and victims were expected to simply forget about the conflict, the deaths and other economic losses and expected to move on with their lives. The ghosts of some of those ignored social processes seem to be haunting the society and politics of this day.

Other Healing Modes

Every community and society has its own way of attending to conflicts and disputes based on its traditions and social norms. It is these cultural and socially based methods of conflict resolution and management that have traditionally kept societies peacefully. In Africa, there have been situations where conflicts have erupted due to either political or ethnic differences. These have been attended to differently depending on the prevailing dynamics. However, for the sake of this analysis, it is imperative to look at the methods that were employed in the Rwandese post-genocide crisis and the Ugandan civil war effects. One of these methods that have been prominent in African societies is the *Gacaca* method that was applied in Rwanda after the 1994 genocide. According to Mutisi (2009), *Gacaca* is a traditional mechanism of conflict resolution originally practiced among the Banyarwanda to resolve conflicts. It is based on customs, traditions and social norms and is basically comprised of those methods that exist within a particular cultural context meant to attend to conflicts. In Banyarwanda, *Gacaca* means justice on the grass and it therefore follows the fact that it is conducted in rural communities while people will be gathered under trees and seated on the grass. *Gacaca* is based on voluntary confession, demonstration of remorse, and apology. It is run in communities by community members of high repute called '*inyangamugayo*'. On completion of the process, there is a

ceremony where parties share a traditional libation and a meal as a gesture of reconciliation, (Sabera et al 2009).

Following a protracted conflict that erupted in Uganda after a coup toppling the then President of Uganda Tito Okello by the incumbent President Yoweri Museveni, the local community adopted a traditional endogenous method of conflict resolution and healing called *Mato Oput* or 'drinking of bitter herbs made from the *oput* tree'. This is a traditional Acholi voluntary peace and justice process involving mediation, trust-building, acknowledgement of wrong-doing, compensation, reconciliation and restoration. The traditional method is based on the Acholi belief that crime violates relationships in society and therefore *Mato Oput* seeks to restore the broken relationships, (Wasonga 2009). According to Wasonga (2009), *Mato Oput* is based on the Acholi's understanding of conflict as a life threatening phenomenon; whereas life is taken to mean a network of relationships. Moral order is valued and therefore, all evil, immorality, and crime and violence are seen as breaking societal harmony. The process involved cleansing ceremonies on the part of the perpetrators of conflicts as a way of reconciling the two conflicting parties or families (ibid).

Zimbabwean Endogenous Modes

Zimbabwe has traditionally had its endogenous post-conflict healing methods that were tried and trusted over a period of time. Though these vary with regions, basically, there were some that were common and applicable to almost all the regions. Some of them are discussed below.

Taboos

Taboos are social beliefs that are strongly adhered to by Africans especially those who believe in traditional religion, that an infringement of one custom can harm another custom. Taboos were put in place by traditional leaders as a way of controlling people's lives and regulating their behaviours. Gelfand (1979) calls taboos 'avoidance rules' put in place to control, guide and regulate the behaviour of its members. Similarly, Tatira (2000) and Pfukwa (2001) concur that taboos are in various categories for different purposes, some of which are particularized by Pfukwa as those that were used during the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe

by the freedom fighters. Taboos differ with regions and cultures and that the intensity of its beliefs is determined by the region's level of development. With taboos, crime is not a violation of a state rule, but a disruption of the spiritual harmony of the community so much so that any corrective measure requires that the same community be involved.

In the Zimbabwean tradition, taboos have preserved the culture and several other activities that could have been destroyed by the coming of modernity and European doctrines. Taboos have been used to control people's behavior and these are some of the beliefs that that were upheld as traditional Zimbabwean taboos.

Fig. 1 Taboos

Beating up a wife	One would be inflicted by the spirits of the wife's family (<i>Kuita ngozi</i>) and never be able to marry again. Corrective measures demanded that one paid huge sums of money or several cattle to the family of the wife.
Killing an innocent person	That would anger the spirits of the dead and invite misfortunes (<i>Kuita ngozi</i>). Corrective measures also demanded that the perpetrator's family paid a virgin girl to the family of the victim so that a new family could be initiated.
Taking one's property without permission (stealing).	That one continued to see the stolen goods in visions until they were returned to the owner.
Sitting on the public road.	One developed boils on the back.
Telling lies.	Rains would not fall as expected during that season and that the liar could risk getting struck by lightning.

Compensation (*Kuripa*)

In the Zimbabwean customs, compensation or reparation is a common method of settling disputes especially where one or the perpetrator would have caused the victim to lose his/her valuable. In such cases, negotiations are held before an agreement is reached as to how much is supposed to be paid as appropriate repayment or compensation. In Shona culture, it is called *kuripa* and is highly recognized as a long-term cultural method of healing. Traditionally, this

method has been used to deter or keep cases of murder low as people feared to compensate through appeasing the spirits of the dead. This is a tedious and expensive process that in some cases requires the family of the perpetrator to surrender a virgin girl as compensation to the family of the victim. Compensation as a form of restorative justice can sometimes come in the form of public testimony and apology. In other situations, it involves monetary exchange in addition to public acknowledgement of responsibility for the crimes committed.

Wormer (2004) views restorative justice as very closely related to social justice or fairness in that the victims and offenders each have their interests represented in the proceedings. Restorative initiatives are not limited to work with individuals and families but can also be successfully applied to the unjust treatment of whole populations. Wartime persecutions, rape of the people, slave labor, and mass murder are forms of crimes against humanity that demand some form of compensation for survivors and their families, even generations later, as long as the wounds are palpable, (Wormer 2004). This simply indicates that whenever a society decides to ignore post-conflict disturbances especially where human blood is lost and humanity is maimed, the memories will not easily erase from the victims' minds and the offence will not also fall away till some form of justice is delivered.

Traditional court systems

The contemporary world now believes that the use of the law is the best way to deal with all social problems, especially crime and delinquency. It is believed that without law, the people would not control themselves and a state of anarchy would exist. According to Jenkins (2004), the rule of law concept lies in the Eurocentric paradigm that assumes that the state, rather than the community, carries the responsibility of dealing with crime and other social problems. This approach, which is derived from English common law, uses the state as the primary agent in dealing with the behavior of individuals, treatment of offenders, and compensation for victims. However, prior to that, there was the traditional court system that operated effectively and efficiently.

Traditional leaders are hereditary local community leaders who are selected through rules of succession. These have been in existence since time immemorial as they have been the governing structures on the ground that were solemnized by the spirit mediums of the local areas in consultation with the local elders and the generality of the community. Resultantly, they commanded profound respect among rural communities. Traditional leaders' role in the pre-colonial period was to administer all the resources, human and natural and to adjudicate over any disputes within their area of jurisdiction.

In Zimbabwe, traditional authorities were incorporated into government system based on the Westminster model. They exist through the Traditional Leaders Act No. 29 of 1982, (www.mlgpwud.gov.zw). Traditional courts are also deemed to be fair, cheap and by the community' door step, are culture bound and take more lenient and fair way of dispute resolution which is preferred by the communities rather than going to the modern and elitist courts. This system is people centred and allows participatory governance. The Chief's policies are reviewed through general meetings, village councils and by other interested special groups.

Silence

In Shona it is said that "*kunyarara kunokunda zvese*" meaning that maintaining silence is the best solution. CCJP (1997: 25);

"The policy of forgetting the past as well as the general amnesties granted by the Governor during the interregnum before independence, meant that those who had committed crimes and human rights abuses in the 1970s, were not made answerable for their actions".

However, this policy followed the Amnesty Ordinance 3 of 1979 and the Amnesty (General Pardon) Ordinance 12 of 1980, both of which had been passed during the interregnum of Lord Soames⁶ and ensured that no prosecution could lawfully take place for any acts done by anyone, (ibid). Traditionally, silence has been used by victims of injustices as a way of keeping away from constant reminders of the past and possibly, buttressed by the 1979 approach by the liberation and former colonial movements; it has now become an official mode of healing and reconciliation.

⁶ Lord Soames was a transitional British governor during the period when Rhodesia transitioned to Zimbabwe.

Silence has often been associated with the coward, ignorant or the weaker part that fear that continued arguments can invite more conflicts which they are not able to contain. However, that is not correct as sometimes people maintain silence simply because there is no room for any talks or discussions. This is quite common with autocratic governance when people do not raise any concerns or complain and that is considered either contentment or loyalty. Such a situation was witnessed in Libya when the people got the slightest opportunity to turn against a government that had not allowed anyone to air any concern. The masses capitalized on that slightest chance and their cause prevailed.

Silence is traditionally known to pile up emotions as aptly noted by the CCJP in its 1997 report where it urges people to break the silence as one possible way towards national healing and reconciliation. Silence also forces people to lock their concerns and feelings deep down their hearts so much so that there will not be any one to hear, console and possibly forgive. Forgiveness and the reconstruction of relationships are only possible when former rivals dialogue, apologise and forgive each other. Historian Arnold Toynbee once wrote that many survivors suffer alone and in silence. The silence that surrounds them often complicates the healing that comes from being encouraged to mourn.

Zimbabweans, being a peaceful nation that they are, have for a long time accepted to heal and reconcile without venting out their emotions through dialogue, not because of their making, but because the political environment would not allow. Resultantly, the 1982 Gukurahundi conflict, the 2002 political violence and the 2008 election violence have had to rest silently and everyone of the leadership seems content. Against the background that everyone is questioning the wisdom in adopting silence as a method of national healing and reconciliation, how lasting could this measure be? It is important that silence be taken as a workable model despite the fact that it may not be long-lasting. My argument is in light of the fact that it has been applied in Zimbabwe for over 32 years now and no signs of any cracks are visible yet, the society has continually been forced to lump up their feelings and anger against each other.

Interestingly, it has been observed that even amongst those who used to champion other modes of national healing like traditional leadership, are also embracing silence. Chief Makope of Chiweshe, Chief Chisunga and Chief Chapoto of Guruve and Chief Neshangwe of Chikomba⁷ expressed that they had to lump up their feelings for political reasons otherwise they know that at some point in life, people will have to account for their past criminal behavior and the death of some people in their communities otherwise the spirits of the dead will haunt them and their families. Similarly, chief Sigola of and Sinqobile Mabhena of Umzingwane and Nonhlanhla Sibanda of Insiza⁸ also expressed reservations on the approach that the government did take in as far as the concerns of the people are concerned. The three indicated that their fellow Ndebele people in the inclusive government had betrayed their cause and were wining and dining with the erstwhile enemy. The Ndebele chiefs and some of the ordinary respondents from Esigodini Agricultural College, Mbalabala military camp and civil servants from Esigodini and Insiza indicated that the silence approach to the conflict effects in Zimbabwe had not availed a permanent solution to the problem. They indicated that should an opportunity arise for retaliation, the Ndebele are the most prepared people to vent out their anger against the majority Shona people. Separately, the District Administrator for Mzingwane, Midard Khumalo indicated that the formation of such political movements like the Mtwakazi Movement⁹ and the resuscitation of Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) by the Ndebele was an indication that the Ndebele families whose relatives were brutally murdered by the 5 Brigade were still bitter and that at some point in life these families were going to retaliate.

Silence as an approach to national healing and reconciliation had exposed weaknesses in the manner in which the government had planned to resolve the post-2008 election violence. The government had not put in place any mechanism for apologies and forgiveness to cater for the perpetrators and victims of the 2008 violence respectively. With silence, people are expected to maintain silence even when they feel that they are aggrieved. The silence is expected to last for

⁷ All the Chiefs were interviewed separately in 2011.

⁸ All the Chiefs were interviewed separately in 2011.

⁹ Mtwakazi Movement is a political group that is calling for a Ndebele state.

as long as the perpetrator is alive and both the perpetrator and the victim are expected to co-exist peacefully as if nothing would have happened.

Discussion

It has generally been observed from the above discussion that Zimbabwe has deliberately or otherwise employed silence as an alternative to conflict resolution in the conflicts that have been experienced so far. However, most of the scholars reviewed in this study indicated a need for a mechanism of venting out one's anger. Similarly, all the interview respondents except one indicated that a conflict cannot be said to be over without bringing together all the parties in that conflict to a discussion table where they are able to explain their positions, apologise, be forgiven and possibly compensate. The exceptional respondent was of the view that there are some cases where people do not necessarily need to vent out anger through talks or some formal forum, but buy simply avoiding the issues.

From the study in Matebeleland region, it was noted that there is still anger against all the parties considered to have played some role during the Gukurahundi conflict. Though the generality of the people might not have been able to say it out for fear of reprisals by the majority Shona through ZANU PF party, which they described as terrorist during the group discussions, the majority (over 70 of the 109 gathered) expressed their anger and attributed the voting for the opposition parties during the past plebiscites as a clear protest. Some respondents also showed their displeasure by calling for an independent Matebeleland region or for a federal government system. In Esigodini, according to a group met at Mzingwane High School, there is still fear and suspicion between the Shona and the Ndebele. This was visible whenever Gayigusu wanted to interact either at Esigodini Business centre (Jabula bar) or at Habane township bar; fellow Shona drinkers could not really accommodate him allegedly for his role during the Gukurahundi era. Apparently, Gayigusu was a notorious Ndebele dissident who killed ruthlessly. He also murdered 16 missionaries in November 1987 at New Adams farm, Matobo in Matebeleland South province, (CCJP 1988). He is now working as a security guard at Esigodini ZANU PF offices, an indication of reconciliation and clear avoidance of the past issues.

It was also observed from respondents in Matebeleland region that the generality of the Ndebele people thought that deliberately ZANU PF and President Robert Mugabe had shelved the issue for fear of the need to compensate the victims. The respondents especially civil servants indicated that the government had over-stepped in its efforts of resolving the Gukurahundi conflict by indiscriminately killing and attempting to exterminate the entire Ndebele nation. They however indicated that the unresolved conflict was simply a time bomb waiting to be detonated by a minor issue. Respondents (about 24 from two of the groups in Insiza that had a total of 38 people) also indicated that the government needed to compensate all the victims and at least set-up some forum where people could have been allowed to air out their concerns and grievances as a way of healing and reconciliation. Similarly, the post-2008 election conflict is yet to be formalized and no attempt has been made at instituting a healing and reconciliation process. Until that is done, the conflict is still hanging, according to Ndebele respondents from Insiza district.

In Mashonaland region, 72% of the questionnaire respondents and 84% (51 out of 60) of the interviewees indicated that silence has never been a permanent solution to any conflict let alone to the post-2008 election violence where victims know perpetrators of the conflict that cost their lives. It must be realized that most of the interviewees (67%) in this region including civil servants expressed the need for some forum where people could be tried for their roles during the 2008 conflict. There was an expression of a feeling that some of the perpetrators of violence took it personally against their perceived enemies while others sought to bring down some families or business-people that they felt had not helped them previously. In other words, it was taken as revenge for past misdeeds. These sentiments were expressed by 30% of questionnaires and 80% of interviewees from across the board. Therefore, most of the people in this region were not supportive of the torturous and terrorist activities that were experienced during the period under review. However, it could be observed that while the respondents were free and frank, there were some distant traits of partisanship and political alignment that could be heard and felt in the respondents. This was evident when respondents drawn from the former freedom fighters constituency and those from the most remote parts of the two regions, Mashonaland and Matebeleland.

Generally 90% and 61% of the interviewees and questionnaires respectively felt and called for talks between former enemies and former victims and perpetrators as a long-term solution to the need for national healing and reconciliation post-2008 election violence. In the focus group discussions, 70% (76 of the 109) supported the idea of an open forum for talks, apologies and forgiveness while the other 23% (25 participants) and 7% (8 participants) opposed and abstained from the subject respectively.

The other category of technocrats and senior civil servants did appreciate that silence may not be the best solution for national healing. They (33% interviewees and 20% questionnaires) also admitted that the government through the relevant Ministry had literally failed to address the matter as expected. However, they indicated that given that the government had adopted silence as mode of national healing, there was now the need for concerted deliberate effort towards popularizing that strategy within the people. These respondents indicated that Zimbabweans needed to be focused on development and forget about past hostilities. They also indicated that the government seems to be ignorant of the fact that there are families that lost their bread-winners and loved ones, hence the need for an immediate establishment of some formal forum for talks and forgiveness. Therefore, failure to adopt a deliberate approach towards national healing and reconciliation may be keeping hostilities within the society until such time a new generation will be unable to really appreciate the conflict and failing to appropriately attend to it.

Conclusion

The belief that silence is a model in national healing and reconciliation in post-election violence has not been proved in this paper. However, it continues to work as an effective measure in the present day Zimbabwe. The paper focused on the other contemporary endogenous conflict resolution, healing and reconciliation methods before looking at silence as it is being applied in Zimbabwe. Despite the fact that the method is being used in Zimbabwe, it has invited more questions than answers from the stakeholders who never thought that silence could be used as a healing method. In summary, silence has worked wonders in Zimbabwe in as far as national healing and reconciliation is concerned, albeit through suppressive means. Will it be a question of time before the wonders are transformed into blunders?

References

- Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJP) (1997) *Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace: A Report on the Disturbances in Matebeleland and the Midlands 1980 and 1988*. Legal Resources Foundation, Harare.
- Gelfand, M. (1979). *Growing Up in Shona Society*. Gweru, Mambo Press.
- Lederach J. P. (1995) *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation across Cultures*. Syracuse University Press, New York.
- Sabera M. et al (2009) *The Gacaca Justice System: A Process for Reconciliation and Sustainable Peace*. Women's World, Kampala.
- Jenkins M. (2004): *Afrocentric Theory and Restorative Justice Process*. Journal of Societal and Social Policy, Vol. 3/2 (p16-32).
- Kilonzo S. M. et al (2009) *The Role of Taboos in the Management of Natural Resources and Peacebuilding: A Case Study of the Kakamega Forest in Western Kenya*. African Peace and Conflict Journal Vol. 2:1 June 2009, (p.39-54)
- Mutisi M. (2009) 'Gacaca Courts in Rwanda: An Endogenous Approach to Post-Conflict Justice and Reconciliation'. African Peace and Conflict Journal Vol. 2:1 June 2009, (p. 17-26).
- Pfukwa, C. (2001). "Unwritten Ethics and moral Values: The Human face of Chimurenga II", in Vambe, M.T. (ed) *Orality and Cultural Identities in Zimbabwe*, (pp 25-36). Gweru, Mambo Press.
- Tatira, L. (2000). *Zviera ZvaVaShona*. Gweru, Mambo Press.
- Wasonga J. (2009) 'Rediscovering Mato Oput: The Acholi Justice System and the Conflict in Northern Uganda'. African Peace and Conflict Journal Vol. 2:1 June 2009, (p. 27-38)
- Wormer K (2004) *Restorative Justice: An International Model of Empowerment*. Journal of Societal and Social Policy, Vol. 3/2 (p 3-16)
- Afrik-News (2008) 'Shocking statistics of election violence released in Zimbabwe' dated 01/08/08. www.afrik-news.com/article14194.html. Accessed on 25/02/12.

- Catholic Information Service For Africa (CISA) (2008) "*Catholic Clergy, Laity Targeted in Worsening State Terror*", dated 27 May 2008. www.swradioafrica.com/pages/catholics270508.htm Accessed on 24/02/12.
- Machakanja P. (2010) *National Healing and Reconciliation in Zimbabwe: Challenges and Opportunities*. Zimbabwe Monograph Series 1 of 2010. www.ijr.org.za Accessed on 24/02/12.
- Traditional Leaders in Zimbabwe (undated). www.mlgpwud.gov.zw/traditional-leaders.htm Accessed in 2009.

