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**THE ECUMENICAL ROLE PLAYED BY THE CHURCH IN PROMOTING PEACE
IN ZIMBABWE: CASE OF THE ECUMENICAL PEACE OBSERVATION
INITIATIVE.**

BY

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APPROVAL FORM

This serves to confirm that the undersigned has read and recommended to the Midlands State University for acceptance of a dissertation entitled.

“The Ecumenical Role played by the Church in promoting Peace in Zimbabwe: Case of the Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative”

Submitted by Tendayi Bobo in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts Degree in Development Studies.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family especially my parents Mr. Philemon and Mrs. Jerita Bobo who made me who I am today.

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Having gone through eighteen months working hard for this Masters Degree, I look back and marvel at the goodness of the Lord who today I am so thankful to for His unfailing love. So much work and contributions by friends, colleagues, lecturers and family have been made for this study to be completed. Firstly I am indebted to thanking my supervisor Mr. R. Sillah for sound advice, critical feedback, guidance and encouragement you extended to me. You really were so patient and put in extra effort in shaping this research, only God can reward you. Credit also goes to all my lecturers for the seed they sowed in me; you surely shall reap a hundredfold. My appreciation goes to the Church for all the valuable information you shared with me to come up with this piece of work. My hope is that it will become a useful tool to advance your work. Special thanks go to the MADS 2:1 of 2014 Harare Block, with particular mention to Melody Kuture and Tapfuma Jongwe my friends for all the unwavering support and encouragement to run the race to the finish.... here we are. To my family and friends for allowing me to get into my cave to study, I thank you for that. Special mention goes to Mum, Dad, Mai Tatenda, Nyasha, Kudzie, Gerry, Mbongeni, Noku, Nakie, Sammy, Stephe, Aletha, Zanne, Dorothy, Gertie, Maggie, Ruth, Carol, Meloe, Kuda, Lindie, Nyarai, Rufaro, and Belinda. Lastly to my precious jewel, Tawanda thank you for your moral support and encouragement.

ACRONYMS

ACCZ	Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe
AIC	African Initiated Churches
CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
CCSF	Church and Civil Society Forum
COHRE	Center on Housing Rights and Evictions
EFZ	Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe
EPOIZ	Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative in Zimbabwe
GNU	Government of National Unity
GPA	Global Political Agreement
LRF	Legal Resources Foundation
MDC-T	Movement for Democratic Change - Tsvangirai
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDC-N	Movement for Democratic Change - Ncube
NCA	National Constitutional Assembly
NCCCK	National Council of Churches of Kenya
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NPRC	National Peace and Reconciliation Commission
ODM	Orange Democratic Movement
ONHRI	Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration
PNU	Party for National Unity
POSA	Public Order and Security Act
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission

UDACIZA	Union for the Development of Apostolic Churches in Zimbabwe
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union, Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People' Union
ZCBC	Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference
ZCC	Zimbabwe Council of Churches
ZESN	Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network
ZHOCD	Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations
ZLHR	Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights
ZPP	Zimbabwe Peace Project ZPP

ABSTRACT

The research sought to assess the Ecumenical role of the Church in promoting Peace using the Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative in Zimbabwe as a case study. In a qualitative outlook, the study critically unpacks the trends and dynamics of the nature of conflicts that have occurred in Zimbabwe at a national scale, post independence. The research then gives a detailed outline on the role of the Church in Peacebuilding in Zimbabwe in general as a means of addressing the conflicts identified. Zooming in, the study went on to analyse the joint initiatives of the Church implemented under the EPOIZ project in a bid to promote peace. Successes of the initiative were identified as well as challenges. In addressing the identified challenges, the study offers recommendations to strengthen the EPOIZ joint effort of the Church in Peacebuilding. In summing up this research based on all these discussions, a conclusion was given.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

RELEASE FORM	ii
APPROVAL FORM	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
ACRONYMS	vi
ABSTRACT	viii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
Background of Study	1
Statement of the Problem	4
Research Objectives	4
Research Questions	5
Significance of Study	5
Theoretical Framework	6
Conceptual Framework	7
Literature Review	8
Research Methodology	20
<i>Research Approach</i>	20
<i>Research Design</i>	20
<i>Population and Sampling</i>	21
<i>Data Collection</i>	21
<i>Data Analysis</i>	22
<i>Ethical Considerations</i>	22
CHAPTER 1: THE CHURCH AND PEACEBUILDING IN ZIMBABWE	24
Introduction	24
Conflict in Zimbabwe since 1980: Trends and Dynamics	24
<i>The Gukurahundi Era</i>	25
<i>Political Violence during Elections</i>	26
<i>The Fast Track Land Reform Program</i>	27
<i>Operation Murambatsvina</i>	28
<i>The June 2008 Presidential Run-Off</i>	29

<i>Religious Intolerance</i>	30
What has the Church been doing?	31
Strengths and Weaknesses of the Church’s interventions	39
<i>Weaknesses and Challenges</i>	39
<i>Strengths and Successes</i>	42
Chapter Conclusion	45
CHAPTER 2: THE ECUMENICAL PEACE OBSERVATION INITIATIVES	
CONTRIBUTION TO PEACEBUILDING IN ZIMBABWE.....	46
Introduction	46
Respondents’ Conflict Mapping of Post Independent Zimbabwe	47
Initiatives Done by the Church	48
<i>Pastoral Letters and Press Statement</i>	49
<i>Work on the Elections and Referendum</i>	58
<i>Engagements with Political Leaders</i>	58
<i>National Engagements with Stakeholders</i>	61
<i>Peace Celebrations and National Days of Prayer</i>	65
<i>Regional Engagements</i>	68
<i>Capacity Building Initiatives</i>	70
<i>Research Papers</i>	73
Chapter Conclusion	78
CHAPTER 3: ENHANCING THE PEACEBUILDING PROCESS OF EPOIZ	81
Introduction	81
Challenges faced by the Church in the Promotion of Peace	81
<i>Who is or can be part of the Church?</i>	81
<i>Operating Environment juxtaposed with the Legal and Policy Framework</i>	83
<i>Funding the Initiatives</i>	84
<i>EPOIZ’s Lean Structure</i>	85
<i>Coordination of Member Bodies’ Efforts</i>	86
<i>Response Rate to situations due to Bureaucracies and different Doctrines of Member</i> <i>Bodies</i>	87
Strengthening the Ecumenical Role of the Church in Promoting Sustainable Peace	88
Chapter Conclusion	96
CONCLUSION	97

BIBLIOGRAPHY	101
APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE.....	106
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE	111
APPENDIX C: PEACE CELEBRATION PHOTOS	113
APPENDIX D: PRESS STATEMENTS, LETTER AND ARTICLES	115

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The Zimbabwean history of political violence has tainted the Church and other actors' efforts in trying to achieve peace and justice as it has repeatedly manifested itself in dynamic locations and in different natures. The country's turbulent history of conflict has evinced itself in copious phases of violence resulting in people living lives filled with disturbances and anguish and more so, others losing their lives. Phases of violent political conflicts post its independence in 1980 that had an impact at a national scale include the Gukurahundi massacres in the Matebeleland and Midlands Provinces between 1982-1987, the unplanned and chaotic land grabs of 2000, Operation Murambatsvina of 2005 and the political violence prior to and post the electoral periods of 2000, 2005 and 2008 and religious violence in 2007 within the Anglican Church and the *Vapostori* and police violence of 2014. On the other hand, structural violence has also manifested itself in the form of unjust allocation of wealth and natural resources, forced displacement of families to pave way for development without reparation and free prior informed consent; abuse of children, poor service delivery, politicising the processes of food distribution by non-governmental organisations, gender based violence in social spaces, gross contravention of human rights and the cancerous deceitfulness that shrouds the public and private sectors (Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations 2014).

Youths during the campaigning periods have been used as instruments of violence, intimidation and or intolerance to canvas for support using coercive methods for political parties to gain momentum. Additionally, the extractive industry is no exception from all these

problems; it has also had its own fair share of turmoil and hostility that has fuelled hatred and divisions within its people. The extraction of mineral deposits such as gold, diamond, platinum, nickel and black granite among others have resulted in families having their environmental economic, social and cultural rights grossly violated by Multinational Corporations operating in the area without compensation being paid.

Resultantly this assortment of conflicts has not just splintered the relations and perceptions between the Government and its citizenry, but also among the populace itself, and not just for political reasons, but for scores of reasons. It has disoriented the societal fabric which had an order of how people should relate and in turn given birth to revolts within families, communities and the nation at large therefore inflaming the social strain as well as reshuffling the kin structure which is a key communal protection web in a Zimbabwean community (ibid).

Against this backdrop, the churches in Zimbabwe amalgamated under the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations, represented by four major groupings of the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) and the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC) together with its associate member, Union for Development of the Apostolic and Zionist Churches In Zimbabwe Africa have made laudable achievements towards the promotion of a non violent political culture in Zimbabwe (Church and Civil Society Forum 2012). They have acknowledged both the depth and longevity of the problem of conflict in Zimbabwe and are aware of the damaging and pernicious impact of conflict at the personal, family, community, province and national levels which has resulted in them expressing their distress at the prevalence of violence in the country. Different churches have had their calculated contributions in trying to rebuild a peaceful and tolerant

terrain in different societies learning from the experiences of the contributions made by the church bodies in other African countries such as Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Nigeria, Burundi and Malawi.

Post independence, the high-flying work done by the Church to curtail violence was but not limited to; documenting the atrocities caused by ethnic differences in a book titled 'Breaking the silence on the disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands', coming up with its social blueprint "The Zimbabwe We Want: Towards a National Vision Discussion Document", resisting and criticising the Zimbabwe Non-Governmental Organisation Bill, Fast Track Land Reform Programme and the Operation Restore Order/Murambatsvina; holding engagement meetings with political party leaders, the Government of National Unity mediator and principals, the Regional groupings and the international community; convening Peace celebrations in commemoration of the International Day of Peace in selected provinces around the country, facilitating prayer meetings on peace, writing and publishing Press Statements and Pastoral letters against violence, oppression and other predominant issues and also its work mainly centred on the elections among others (CCSF 2012).

Based on this testament of initiatives, it can greatly be noted that the Church has made use of a number of initiatives in seeking to pursue peace and justice which this research needed to locate whether the ecumenical efforts made by the Church to build peace under the Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative in Zimbabwe (EPOIZ) have been effective or not and further suggest recommendations on what can be done to strengthen the Church's work under EPOIZ.

Statement of the Problem

In the past 34 years of attaining independence, Zimbabwe has still remained a country marred by serious conflicts. Conflict in the form of political violence expressed through physical confrontation between opposing political interests, has been endemic in the country particularly before, during and after election periods of 2000, 2005 and 2008. These led to the loss of human lives, fractured relations within the families and society which resulted in the breeding of mistrust and hatred. In a bid to respond to these conflicts the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations (ZHOCD) has instituted a series of peacebuilding initiatives under its project titled the Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative in Zimbabwe (EPOIZ) in order to achieve sustainable peace. There was therefore need to assess whether the ecumenical initiatives by the Church were effective or not towards fostering sustainable peace in Zimbabwe by conducting this research.

Research Objectives

The objectives of research were:

1. To assess the ecumenical role that the Church has played in promoting peace post 2006 under the Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative in Zimbabwe.
2. To undertake a conflict analysis of Zimbabwe.
3. To give an overview of the role of the Church in peacebuilding in Zimbabwe
4. To recommend ways to strengthen the Church's ecumenical initiatives in promoting sustainable peace in Zimbabwe under its EPOIZ project.

Research Questions

1. What ecumenical role has the Church played in a bid to promote peace post 2006 under the Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative in Zimbabwe?
2. What are the natures of conflicts that existed in Zimbabwe?
3. How has the Church in Zimbabwe as a whole contributed to peace building?
4. How should the Church strengthen its ecumenical initiatives to promote sustainable peace in Zimbabwe under the EPOIZ project?

Significance of the Study

Zimbabwe's decades-long period of repression, human rights abuse, hostility and impunity has left deep-seated differences, a sense of mistrust, fear and resentment that must be addressed if the country is to achieve democracy, nation building, true reconciliation and peace. In as much as the Church has been labelled as a peace broker, neutral arbiter and a mediator, a key question that may remain is why is it that after all its efforts there still exists conflicts? Are its efforts relevant and effective, what more could be done? The central significance in carrying out this study was to provide valuable information to the Church represented by ZHOCD and the entire peace advocates in Zimbabwe on how they can strengthen their initiatives to promote sustainable peace. Another basis of conducting this research was to provide objective information to be used by the Church, Peacebuilding and Development Practitioners, Non-Governmental Organisations, Government, Policy Makers, Security Sector, Community leaders, the Academia and communities in identifying and designing relevant peace promoting initiatives that are peculiar to the needs of communities. The research was done at a *Kairos* moment in which the Constitution of Zimbabwe provides

for the establishment of Commissions in Chapter 12 (Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No. 20 Act 2013) and specifically the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission. Among the 10 functions of the Commissions, is engraved the need for it to bring about national reconciliation, healing and to promote peace. The research therefore has become a tool of engagement by the Church under its Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative in Zimbabwe with this Commission to forge a fruitful and inclusive reconciliation process that promotes peace in the country. The contribution made by this research has facilitated the provision of a comprehensive assessment of the ecumenical efforts by the Church on how to improve and design long term interventions towards promoting a culture of peace in Zimbabwe. Since there is very little information on ecumenical initiatives done by the Church to promote peace in Zimbabwe in the public domain, the research has become a fundamental contribution to the body of knowledge that the Academia can use as literature in the discourse of Peacebuilding.

Theoretical Framework

There is a strong correlation between theory and practice in the field of peacebuilding. In conducting this study, the theoretical framework that guided this assessment was based on the Individual Change Theory. The theory's notion is that if there is a significant change of behaviours, beliefs, attitudes and characters of a collective group made up of individuals, then it is possible to obtain peace in a society. In order for those individuals to transform and change there would be need for the third party to invest in civic education, dialogue, trauma healing and capacity building of individual on good governance among other initiatives. For such an arrangement to effectively work, the third party or facilitator needs to have more

ground in offering information, skills and solutions to enable the individuals to remorsefully transform from previous habitual violent acts (Pruitt and Carneval 1993).

Mirroring back to the Zimbabwean context, the Church has been regarded as a neutral facilitator that is apolitically aligned to any party but has the interests of her members at heart from all quarters. She has the spiritual influence to sit down individuals from any fraternity given that all of them at a point in time are congregants of a particular denomination which make up the greater body of the Church, again which has an estimated 80% of the total population of the country (Munetsi 2008). In the wake of all the ecumenical efforts made by the Church to promote peace in Zimbabwe, this research therefore sought to confirm or reject the perspective that ecumenically investing in the transformation of individuals results in the guaranteeing of peace in a society or a country.

Conceptual Framework

Bearing in mind that peace has a varied number of definitions; the underpinning conceptual framework in conducting this research was guided by Galtung's Peace concept which has two aspects namely Positive and Negative Peace (Galtung 1964). Positive peace is when there is optimum functioning of relationships and structures or systems within the society which bring satisfaction to the populace whilst on one end be still able to resolve conflicts in a transformative mode. Negative peace is the nonexistence of hostility and fighting. Having these two classifications, this assessment's definition of peace broadened further to not only mean the omission of physical violence but also to include to absence of violence within the structures of society.

The aspect of promoting peace entails all the activities and processes undergone to ensure that physical and structural violence ends within the country or community. In this research, all the activities implemented by the Church in a bid to promote a peaceful co-existence of a culture of peace in Zimbabwe contribute to the actions on promoting peace. These could be in the form of engagements, letters or prayers among other initiatives.

The concept of Ecumenism in this research means the coming together of Christian Churches across denominational boundaries to promote peacebuilding but not at the compromise of their doctrines values and believes. The central theme of ecumenism is the unity that brings together the churches in their witness and mission with their diversity. The coming together of ZCC, EFZ, ZCBC and UDACIZA is regarded an ecumenical union as it comprises of churches with different statements of faith, doctrines, principles and beliefs working together to transform the nation for Christ through promoting an enduring culture of peace.

In the context of Zimbabwe, the research mainly centred on physical and structural violence demonstrated in acts such as abduction, rape, assaults, torture, forced displacements triggered by the destruction of property and enactment of stringent laws. The yardsticks used by this research to ascertain the presence of peace included the presence of dialogue, tolerance and co-existence.

Literature Review

Peace can either be violated through physical and or structural violence (Galtung 1969). Physical violence is when a perpetrator or actor commits a deliberate and targeted aggressive action towards a person or people e.g. the genocide in Rwanda of 1994 and the current

attacks on people of Nigeria by the Islamic group Boko Haram while with structural violence, no person directly harms another but rather violence or harm is infused into the structures of a society e.g. poor service delivery, food insecurity, corruption, ill structured policies of a country and unequal access to wealth and resource (ibid). The history of violence in many African countries is not farfetched from Galtung's underpinnings of violence. Most African countries in order to gain independence from their colonisers had to succumb to violence so as to liberate themselves. This meant that these were deliberate choices made to go to war to liberate the people of Africa though thereafter, it became a habitual act of solving any issues through violence. This gave the Church more reason to exercise its prophetic voice in exposing social injustices and human rights violations.

In an analysis done by Mwangupili (2007) on the role of the Catholic Church in Political Conflict Resolution in Malawi, there was clear cut evidence that structural violence existed in the country in the period 2004-2008. Human rights were infringed upon such as the right to health, food and service delivery yet in turn justice was not served. Political conflict was ignited shortly after the inaugural speech of Bingu wa Mutharika in 2004 as a result of political dominance stemming from the disputed election of 2004. Divisions racked the country and led the country to plunge into a crisis. The Public Affairs Committee tried to mediate the conflicts between the Government and the opposition but failed to bring them to a point of reconciliation by 2008. Only when the Church leaders guided by Archbishop Tarcizio Ziyaye were tasked to offer mediation at the 2008 budget deadlock, only then did they get the country moving. A theological reflection on why the Church has a critical role to play in the resolution of political disputes was outlined. In as much as a clear outline of the conflict in Malawi was shared and how the Church intervened as a sacrament of peace, reconciliation and mediation between two conflicting parties, the paper did not give an

introspection of the conflicts in Zimbabwe and the ecumenical role that the Church has played to ensure peace and justice is promoted beyond the Catholic Church.

The South African Truth and Reconciliation process is another case in point in which the Church demonstrated its role in promoting peace. Whilst there is a debate on whether it was a bottom-up process or more of a top-down, that is another issue, but having a detail of what the Church did gives the Church under EPIOZ a draft framework to work from in influencing the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) still to be established as provided for in the new Constitution (Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No. 20 of Act 2013). According to Solstad (2011) the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was on the basis of solving a decade of human injustices, atrocities and violations of rights. Domination and control of resources, wealth and the means of production was now in the hands of a few who made political decisions for the majority. Its birthing was supposed to facilitate the truth telling and reconciliation process by having professions of a varied background bringing together people from different races, tribes and colour to come together, see each other and dialogue as well as to develop trust in each other regardless of them being previously in conflict.

The TRC chaired by the Archbishop Desmond Tutu made great strides in shaping a new democratic South Africa and confirmed that it is achievable to have a peaceful transition. The Church was central in fighting for human dignity and mobilising the public to transform from the apartheid tenet to believing yet again that all people are equal and created in the image of God to what Tutu referred to as God's viceroy (Tutu 1999). As part of the process leading towards reconciliation, the Church facilitated dialogue and emphasised that all meetings start and end with a word of prayer to remind everyone that when all has been said and done there

is a Maker who judges the unjudged and forgives the sinner who shows remorse. People confessed of their wrong doings including some of the Church leaders who had deviated from their mandate and roles of promoting justice and human dignity to contributing towards human rights abuses (van der Merwe 2003). As much as the commission was celebrated, it was regarded as controversial too.

Being that as it may, the research paper was elaborate about the role of the Church in ushering South Africa into a new democratic dispensation however the ecumenism aspect was not made a standalone effort. Much attribute of the process is actually given to the Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu for chairing the process well. Other denominations like the Catholic Church were only mentioned through its former priest Cosmas Desmond who was of the view that the Churches were more dominantly represented in the process (Solstad 2011). Further the research did not zoom in to unpack the ecumenical Church's role within the grassroots where most of the violent cases are prominent and where deliberate restorative justice needed to be enforced.

Again fuelled by political wrangles tied to the emotive electoral period, is the case of Kenya's violence that left thousands dead and others internally displaced without shelter. The country's long history of ethnic and land clashes, violence and internal displacement only got worse with the country's General elections of 2007 leaving the people in deep trauma and grief; fuelled the plunging of the country's economy into a downturn thereby resulting in the reduction in agricultural production and subsequently food insecurity (Klopp et al 2010). The use of inflammatory language by politicians from the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) and the Party for National Unity (PNU) became more eminent just as the recruitment of the military to commit atrocities and carnage and the police by Government to intimidate the

opposition by brutally attacking their strongholds, evicting them from their homes and releasing live ammunitions on protesters (Klopp et al 2010). Mistrust, suspicion, intimidation, trauma, destruction of infrastructure such as bridges and even Churches continued to mark the existence of waves of violence in Kenya. On one hand the civil society had taken political sides and had become disjointed resulting in their failure to solve the disputes. On the other hand, some Church leaders had begun meddling into politics and giving prophecies of on the winning candidates for the 2007 general elections to which when the violence broke out, they could not play a neutral role in condemning it resulting in over 300 Churches being burnt by violence inciters out of their disrespect for the Church's malpractices (Kilonzo 2009).

The Church through the National Council of Churches of Kenya and the Catholic Peace and Justice Commission and specifically the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru in the midst of all this anarchy, persevered in assisting the internally displaced people (ibid). It ecumenically increased its peace building initiatives with the Hindu leaders, Muslim and Christians to broaden in horizons of reach for example the one million signature campaign that sought to mobilise Kenyans to back up the prosecution of leaders who had initiated violence after the 2007 elections (Kilonzo 2009). Micro finance loans to initiate business were obtained for the youths by NCCCK so as to economically contribute to their livelihood. Peace meetings and tournaments were other initiatives used by the Church coupled with offering peace education which facilitated the coming together of people to iron out their differences.

There is however a loop in Klopp's paper of focusing more on internal displacements and very little on the peacebuilding innovations let alone the Church's joint efforts. The efforts of the Church in this paper are said to have been centred more on the middle class and urban populace than compared to the rural populace such as women and youth who in Zimbabwe

are prime targets mobilised to canvas support for political parties. This leaves a gap to which my research addressed by looking at the joint efforts of the Church to promote peacebuilding in Zimbabwe.

Not only in Southern Africa has the Church played its neutral role in promoting peace, justice and reconciliation but even as far as East Africa in the Great Lakes Region. In a paper written by Katunga (2008) on the Great Lakes Region made up of former Belgian colonies namely Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi and Rwanda, it outlines the complex ethnic and cultural diversity conflicts that the Church has had to interject. During the Burundi and Rwandan genocides, there were thousands and thousands of abuses such as the raping of women and girls, brutal attacks on men and displacement due to destruction of infrastructure accelerated by ethnic differences between the Hutus and Tutsis. In DRC the lack of transparency and accountability of the extractive industries resulted in the creation of blood diamonds and corrupt deals which became a resource curse as opposed to an economic benefit. In the midst of this turmoil, the Church opened up its premises to house victims of abuses and atrocities to give them solace and healing (ibid). It facilitated dialogue between conflicting parties by creating listening centres for psychological counselling. Due to its capacity to mobilise numbers taking cognisance of the fact that the majority of the population in the 3 countries are Catholics, the Catholic Church played a lucrative role of offering civic education to citizens on human rights, good governance, democracy, electoral observation and reporting together with the legal and policy frameworks thereof to its constituency so as to ensure there is transparency, credibility and accountability of the entire process. These efforts culminated to a peaceful co-existence of the ethnic groups which began the process of healing, forgiveness and reconciliation. However this intervention was custom specific to the

Great Lakes Region countries and their peculiar conflicts to which the Catholic Church intervened and not as an ecumenical intervention.

In West Africa, a research was done by Chukwudi (2013) on the impact of Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum on Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding in Nigeria. Despite Nigeria being a country with a plethora of natural resources, it has had no exception in going through serious conflicts. Most of the conflicts have been on religious lines while others were a scramble over resources such as land, oil, gas, gold, coal and other mineral deposits. The first example of a religious based conflict was that of a Muslim who converted to Christianity and was asked to preach at a campus crusade. In his sermon he made mention of the good things Jesus had done in his life to eulogising Jesus' virtues more at the disadvantage of Prophet Muhammad which led the Muslim students to disrupt the crusade and breaking into violence (ibid). Another religious violence case was that of Maiduguri which occurred after an address by Borno Muslim Forum on the traits of Prophet Mohammed and condemning the blasphemous cartoons published allegedly by Christians. As the address was underway, there was an uproar when a thief was caught and handed to the police. Grabbing the chance to expel their bitterness of the cartoons, Muslims began killing Christians, raiding in shops and burning Churches. Factors that contributed to these conflicts and others were the country's poor economic performance which fuelled the ethnic conflicts, the appointment of federal posts based on patronage instead of merit, gross human rights abuses, inequality in the distribution of wealth and resources as well as religious and ethnic difference.

In order to solve these conflicts and others, the Muslim Christian Dialogue Forum organised a series of activities to bring stakeholders together such as traditional leadership, policy makers, business sector, women and youth among others. The involvement of these

stakeholders was deliberate in the sense that as women are the educators of peace in the home, youths have been used as perpetrators of violence whilst the traditional leaders have played a key role in mediating some of the conflicts. Capacity building programmes, Cultural events, development of the Kaduna Peace Declaration and trauma counselling sessions were some of the activities done to facilitate forgiveness, reconciliation and peacebuilding. By doing such activities these successfully brought together two previously warring communities to forgive each other and learn to co-exist. Though the mediating role of the Church can be learnt from this paper and the nature of activities the Church can undertake, the Zimbabwean conflicts are different from those of Nigeria. Conflicts exist in Zimbabwe not predominantly on religious lines of Muslims and Christians but mostly because of political lines.

In the Zimbabwean situation, different pieces of work have been written around peacebuilding and the role of the Church. Dodo et al (2014) wrote an article in the Journal of Religion and Society titled African Initiated Church, Pivotal in Peace-Building: A Case of the Johane Masowe Chishanu. The paper describes African Initiated Churches as those general grassroots Churches that provide religious, social and moral services as their primary agenda. According to Dodo et al (2014) these Churches were formed to respond to traditional African cultures, dissent colonialisms and to provide optimistic responses to contemporary religion. They play a fundamental role in promoting peace building which includes advisers, intermediates, educators and observers (ibid).

Realising that in different societies there exist conflict from the homes, to the community and the nation at large such as poverty, economic inequality, broken marriages due to infidelity and rituals done on people, the AICs promoted activities such as confession of sins, prophesying people's future plans, failures and downfalls or giving them employment

prophecies (which has helped many according to this paper), use of hymns to cleanse worshippers of bad spirits and for everyone to be remorseful and tolerant to show remorse and tolerance. Marriages have also been a tool of controlling youthful lust and adultery and a control measure of keeping families intact by not allowing divorces. All these activities are said to have instilled a measure of discipline in the midst of the congregants and those who come to benefit from the services (*vanouya kuzoshandirwa*) of the Johane Masowe Chishanu Church which has contributed to a peaceful Zimbabwe. A good thing to note about this research is that it tries to understand each nature of activities that the Johane Masowe Chishanu Church does in promoting peace. However its gap is that it only ends at Johane Masowe Chishanu and leaves out the other membership of UDACIZA as well as the other bodies, EFZ, ZCC and ZCBC to which this study will assess the efforts of the 4 bodies combined.

The Church and Civil Society Forum (CCSF), a coalition of Church and Civil Society Organisations conducted a study in 2012 on the role of the Church in violence in Zimbabwe. The research gives an outline of the violence history in Zimbabwe; the anticipated role of the Church, what it has managed to do to denounce violence and an analysis of whether it can stop violence (CCSF 2012). The Church according to this research are the people of God constituting the 3 umbrella bodies namely the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference, Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches which make up 80% of the total population (Munetsi 2008). Its mandate is not solely to preach the gospel on a pulpit but to promote human dignity, social justice and peace within the society and facilitate healing, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Pre and post-independent Zimbabwe, the Church has made its fair contribution towards ensuring that peace is achieved and violence is ended. Violence that had a national effect included the Matebeleland and Midlands massacres popularly referred to as Gukurahundi, the proposed introduction of the NGO Bill, the state sponsored Operation Murambatsvina and the gross human right violations during the electoral periods of 2000, 2005 and 2008 (CCSF). The Gukurahundi massacres were more of an ethnic conflict fuelled by ethnic tensions that had build up from as way back as the pre-independence days between the Ndebele and the Shona speaking people. Their failure to reintegrate resulted in the outbreak of violence first in the army barracks which later then spread to what is widely known as the Gukurahundi which when translated means “the early rains that washes away the chaff before the onset of the summer rains” (CCJP 1997). The violence resulted in loss of lives, torture, human rights abuses and use of military against civilians. The Church according to this research was heavily involved in analysing, documenting, confronting and “resolving” of the Gukurahundi’s horrendous massacres. A thorough documentation of all the atrocities that perpetuated the Matebeleland and the Midlands bloodbath was done by the Catholic Church through its CCJP arm. To date, this chronicle of clear evidence still speaks on the impassive actions that resulted in thousands of thousands losing their lives. Church leaders approached the then President Canaan Banana to act as a mediator between ZAPU and ZANU PF (CCJP 1997) in which the Catholic Church continued to play a vital role in the talks. Despite the fact that the talks to end violence took long (1983-1987), their ending with the signing of the Unity Accord in 1987 in December awards the Church’s initiatives a credit.

A contested area normally characterised by violence in which the Church has intervened is that on elections. The country’s electoral periods have often been highly emotive and marred by a series of contestation one way or the other. Destruction of property, loss of lives,

assaults, rape cases and kidnappings have been the “tale tell” signs that the country was surely advancing towards its elections. The elections of 2000, 2002, 2005 and of 2008 were seriously flawed by physical political violence. The political playing field wasn’t level as it was somewhat skewed in favour of a political party in terms of access to campaigning resources, access to media coverage and the voters’ roll. In the landscape leading towards the holding of elections, the Church played a watchdog role in ensuring that constitutionalism was promoted. The holding of elections in the Church’s lens of envisioning democracy, is not just a mere event of candidates registering to vote, marking and dropping their ballots, counting of votes and announcing the winner, but rather it is a process that embraces the social, political and economic atmosphere of selecting by ballot leaders that apprehend nation building and development.

Another historical phase of violence identified in the CCSF research was that of the 2005, conflict between the state and its people which manifested in a government-driven “cleaning” exercise known as Operation Murambatsvina. This exercise resulted in the destruction of homes and livelihoods of an estimated 500,000 Zimbabwean citizens, mainly in urban centres (Mlambo and Raftopoulos 2010). While the Government claimed this was simply an attempt to enforce existing by-laws, the move was interpreted by others as an attempt to pre-empt the ability of the MDC to mobilise people to rise up on urban streets. In the days and weeks after Operation Murambatsvina was launched, police burned and destroyed tens of thousands of properties around the country forcing them to relocate to rural areas where many had no homes or family and where social service provisions such as healthcare, education, clean water and economic opportunities were minimal (Human Rights Watch 2005). The exercise caused untold hardships, and was widely condemned by all the Zimbabwean Church coalitions (EFZ, ZCBC and ZCC 2006). Meetings were held by the Church with the President

of Zimbabwe and other stakeholder to register their concerns over the flawed process (Dube 2005). The Church also convened a peaceful protest march and public prayers a year after as a commemoration of the tragic manmade disaster.

In all these circumstances, the Churches have been firm to amplify the voice of morality by condemning political violence against individuals, families and communities who were accused, abducted, bashed, humiliated and or assassinated for campaigning or voting for the opposition political parties. As detailed as the research is, it had a mixture of the contributions made by civil society and the Church as they both form the CCSF coalition and Government and not the Church's ecumenical efforts specifically. Further to this, during the time of the research, the Union for the Development of the Apostolic and Zionist Churches in Zimbabwe Africa had not yet officially become an associate member of the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations which now contributes an approximate 33% of the total number of Christians in Zimbabwe. Therefore this gave impetus to my research to include ecumenical interventions made by the four member bodies.

From the above literature of the immense work done by previous researchers in the peacebuilding arena, it stresses out the unique and pivotal role the Church has in promoting a culture of peace around the world. They go to lengths in outlining the work done by the Church in ensuring peace was of prime importance to the countries mentioned. Notwithstanding that the researches on the peacebuilding efforts have been done in different countries in the region by different Churches in solving different conflicts, with others even locating their discourse in Zimbabwe, there was very diminutive information on the ecumenical role that the Church has played in promoting sustainable peace in Zimbabwe which became the thrust of carrying out this research to fill this gap.

Research Methodology

Research Approach

The research approach used in conducting this study in order to fully speak to the research questions was Qualitative in nature. The researcher employed a qualitative outlook in order to place herself in the Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative Project and the stakeholders involved in peacebuilding and get an understanding of their varied opinions on the social context. It was also for the researcher to feel a lived experience with the Church in celebrating the gains of promoting a culture of peace jointly whilst on the other hand identifying what could be strengthened in their initiatives. By using this research approach, this enabled the researcher to flexibly explore and understand the peculiarities of Zimbabwe's political violence history and then dissecting what ecumenical initiatives worked and what did not work in transforming the conflicts.

Research Design

An Evaluative Research design was used to intrinsically examine the contributions to peace that have been made ecumenically by the Church through its different initiatives. Zimbabwe in past years has been regarded as a political hot bed in terms of human rights violations and political violence resulting in a high number of people affected and others losing their lives (CCJP 2008). As a neutral broker of peace, the Church has intervened through the implementation of an ecumenical project on peacebuilding. The research therefore assessed what was done right and what needed to be strengthened and in the same breadth ascertain what significant change the initiatives have contributed to.

Population and Sampling

For the sake of this research, the population comprised of key informants from Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations Executive, Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative staff, Parliamentary Liaison Officer, ZHOCD Taskforce representative, Church leaders from the pastors' fraternal, Animators (who have been responsible in training the communities on peace), EPOIZ's funding partners, Civil Society representatives that have worked with the Church in promoting a culture of peace, selected Government institutions, traditional leaders and Justice and Peace Commissions whilst focus group discussions were done with Justice and Peace Commission Officers from member bodies and Coordinators of Provincial Peace Celebrations,

Purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants in the research who constituted the key informants and focus group discussions. The selected respondents for interrogation were based on prior and guided knowledge of their work with the Church to restore peace. The main aim of using this sampling method was not to cherry pick participants who constituted the sample and make generalisations but rather it was to be purposeful and meticulous in focusing on the characteristics of the population which were critical in achieving the objectives and responding to the research questions.

Data Collection

The data collection process considered both primary and secondary data to answer the research questions. Secondary data was acquired from EPOIZ's reports, Churches' reports, previous researches, articles and other publications.

In terms of primary data collection, in depth interviews were used to which they were comprised of the Heads of Christian Denominations and employees from EPOIZ and key people from different sectors but mainly drawing from the Church structures who have implemented activities that culminated into peace, whilst focus group discussions were made up of the JPCs of the 4 umbrella bodies and provincial coordinators who organised peace celebrations. The interviews were ideal in consolidating individuals' personal experiences, expectations and opinions on the research topic whilst focus group discussions were for groups to jointly outline their assorted perspective on their ecumenical efforts in peacebuilding. Observation was again used as a data mining instrument during the peace celebrations held in selected provinces in Zimbabwe so as to ascertain the availability of dialogue, co-existence and unity

Data Analysis

Every bit of the collected data was analysed using the notes and themes approach in which this involved reading the field transcripts and listening to the recordings a couple of times and transcribing the shona versions to English so as to produce notes that are phenomenal to EPOIZ. Thereafter I came up with themes which I then analysed in line with the theoretical framework used in this research.

Ethical Considerations

The entire process of conducting this research was closely dependent on information shared by people involved or the work of other forerunner researchers. Therefore in order to meet

the research ethics, standards and considerations, the following ethics were upheld and respected:-

- The background of the study and its expectations was shared with the respondents to give them a full insight of the research.
- The right for respondents to consent freely and prior to participating in the research without coercion was sought and respected and those who felt they need to drop out from the study were allowed to do so.
- Confidentiality- due to the fragility and sensitiveness of some of the issues discussed, respect for respondents' request to remain unidentified so as to activate their security was made.
- Acknowledging the use of the work done by for-researchers in the field of peacebuilding was done.
- The results of this research upon completion of all University procedures will be shared with the participants and the beneficiaries of the research in order to inform future interventions

CHAPTER 1: THE CHURCH AND PEACE BUILDING IN ZIMBABWE

Introduction

While post independent Zimbabwe has generally been peaceful it should be noted that the country's three and a half decades of political independence have also been punctuated by both physical and structural violence. The Matebeleland massacres of 1982-87, politically motivated violence during elections, the violent land seizures of 2000, Operation Murambatsvina of 2005 and the 2008 electoral violence are some poignant cases that bear testimony to the notion that Zimbabwe has had its fair share of conflicts. The general notion is that most of these conflicts have been politically motivated or can be traced back to political decisions and policies. It is within this vein that the research sought to take a critical look at the said conflicts and tried to establish the underlying patterns and dynamics of the conflicts. As such this chapter will also locate the ecumenical role of the Church in brokering peace initiatives in all the said conflicts as well as offer a critique of the strengths and weaknesses of such initiatives.

Conflict in Zimbabwe since 1980: Trends and Dynamics

In order to place and critique the ecumenical role of the Church in the peace building processes in Zimbabwe and specifically zero in on its peace building initiatives under the Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative, it is essential for the research to chiefly give an overview of the post independent conflicts in Zimbabwe as such memoirs will help the research to have a clear understanding of the trends and dynamics of conflict in post independent Zimbabwe thus adding value to the research process.

The Gukurahundi Era

Makina (2001) avers that any discussion about conflict in Zimbabwe that does not take into account the period between 1980 to 1988 is not a true account of Zimbabwe's history. This assertion is based on the viewpoint that the period in question has occupied a paramount place in the history of the country as it was a period where many lives were lost in the Midlands and Matebeleland Provinces. The CCSF (2012) notes that this phase was code named Gukurahundi where they posit that the Gukurahundi refers to a military operation that was executed by the Zimbabwe National Army's North Korean trained Fifth Brigade between 1982 and 1987. Scholars like Mashingaigze (2009) have noted that the Gukurahundi conflict can be classified as a civil and ethnic conflict as it was drawn on ethnic lines, with the Shona being on the Government's side as represented by the ruling party ZANU PF while the Ndebele people as represented by Joshua Nkomo and the former ZIPRA combatants were regarded as enemies of the state, Makumbe (2001).

While the death toll of the Gukurahundi Operation has never been officially published estimates from independent sources like the CCJP (1997) have placed the casualties of this gory phase at 20 000. The Gukurahundi era was brought to an end through the Unity Accord of 1987 which was signed by ZANU and ZAPU to come up with one party known as ZANU PF. It should be noted that the Unity Accord of 1987 came with a blanket amnesty for all perpetrators of the massacres that is the members of the 5th Brigade, the ZAPU aligned dissidents, all their allies and any state functionaries that may have been involved in the Gukurahundi operation. Given that the Church plays a pivotal role in promoting peace, justice and non violence, it was thus imperative for the research to unpack and discuss the

involvement of the Church as well as the role and strategies that the Church played and used respectively in trying to foster a peaceful resolution to the Gukurahundi phase.

Political Violence during Elections

Alexander (1999) notes that whereas the Gukurahundi massacres occupied a greater space in terms of conflict and human rights violations in the 1980's, it should be borne in mind that, sporadic cases of violence were still being recorded especially during election time. The same sentiments are also shared by Reeler (2004) when he summarises that the general elections of 1985, 1990, 1995 and 2000 saw ZANU PF carrying out politically motivated violence against its political detractors. Perhaps the most important factor to note is that violence and conflict against those that were perceived to be anti-ZANU PF continued with such violations reaching their zenith during election time. It is however important to note that more than often the perpetrators of the violent acts were pardoned by the President. For example Mashingaidze (2009) notes that a presidential amnesty was given to the ZANU (PF) perpetrators of politically motivated violence during the 1995 elections and in October 2000 the President issued another amnesty to pardon politically motivated crimes committed during the election campaign. Within this vein one poignant case is the shooting of Patrick Kombayi in Gweru in 1990. Kombayi was a former ZANU PF activist but had voyaged to the newly established Zimbabwe Unity Movement. While his assailants were convicted to 7 years in prison they were pardoned under the said amnesties with one of them, one Elias Kanengoni later on being declared a national hero in 2013 yet having committed such violent acts (News Day May 27, 2013).

This loathness to chastise perpetrators of violence at election time or any such moment of political turmoil has outstandingly contributed to the creation of a culture of impunity in Zimbabwe, and birthed a misplaced conception that violence and coercion of political opponents are the most effective ways of dealing with political differences. Feltoe (2004) underscores that President Mugabe's clemency order of October 2000 granted amnesty to individuals who kidnapped, tortured and assaulted people, and destroyed houses and other possessions in the run-up to the June 2000 legislative elections. Feltoe (ibid) goes on to posit that this has had catastrophic effects upon the Zimbabwean society because, apart from the victims watching their assailants going scot-free the perpetrators have also gone on to commit further violations. Such a background thus create an interesting paradigm for the Church 's ecumenical intervention in building peace as the Church has a key role to play in fostering peaceful communities by openly condemning injustice, violence of any sort, human rights abuses and indignity.

The Fast Track Land Reform Program

The Fast track land reform of 2000 is also another violent phase in the history of Zimbabwe that was never dealt with in a reconciliatory manner. This was a phase that was characterised by violent seizures of farms from white commercial farmers under the pretext that the land did not belong to them and also that the black majority was living in unproductive areas while the fertile land was still under the control of the white minorities. In justifying the land takeover of 2000 Robert Mugabe quoted in Meredith (2007) notes that: "*If any white farmers resisted the takeover of their land I would not flinch but declare a fight to be on and it would be a fight to the finish...and they won't win the fight, we will win it.*" Raftopoulos (2003) notes that while Mugabe sought to justify himself through compensation issues as well as

correcting a historical imbalance the real matter behind the 2000 land acquisition was that the emergency of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999 had posed a serious threat to Mugabe's powerbase thus he needed a strategy to survival and the land issue did the trick as most of the peasant farmers were still practicing subsistence farming in small pieces of land.

According to Sachikonye (2003) the fast track land reform involved the acquisition of 11 million hectares of land from white commercial farmers for redistribution in a process marked by considerable coercion, violence and general lawlessness. The invasions were characterised by unstructured and unplanned takeovers that were very violent with the white commercial farmers being ejected out of their farm houses without any prior notice or consent. A lot of human rights were violated such as the right to property ownership, shelter, social injustices were perpetrated and there was a severe lack of respect for human dignity. The period after these violent seizures were characterised by food shortages and foot riots due to the fact that most of the people who has seized the farms or those who had been allocated grabbed land did not have the financial, human resource and technical capacity to run the farms as was previously the arrangement. Poverty levels in Zimbabwe rose up just the inflation rates shot up.

Operation Murambatsvina

With minimal warning, in May 2005, the Government of Zimbabwe launched a mass eviction and demolitions program, code named 'Operation Murambatsvina'. The operation was implemented across the country especially in urban centres of Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) and Center on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE)

(2007) highlight that while the Government justified the operation as a measure to rid the cities of ‘illegal structures and activities’, it led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, destruction of homes, businesses and property, widespread loss of livelihoods and the injury and deaths of some residents. The said figures are also concurred by the United Nations (UN) Special envoy Dr Tibaijuka (2005) in her report of the displacements when she noted that “...around 700,000 people had their homes destroyed or left without a livelihood, men, women and children were made homeless, left without food, water, sanitation or health care...a further 2.4 million were indirectly affected.” ZLHR and COHRE (2007) have noted that the operation was a state sanctioned conflict and was in direct violation of some sections of the Rome Statute as it “caused great suffering or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health”

The June 2008 Presidential Run-off

The period after the 2008 Presidential Election first round which failed to come up with an outright winner drastically became characterised by political violence as ZANU-PF and the Movement for Democratic Change (Tsvangirai led) (MDC-T) were preparing themselves for the Election runoff since neither of their presidential candidates that is Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai respectively, had managed to garner the required 51% minimum votes. The violence was stimulated by the delay by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission in the announcement of the outright winner which therefore stimulated curiosity, frustration and anger. According to the ZLHR (2009) this build up phase was characterised by heavy victimisation, torturing, assaults, maiming and killing of activist linked to the MDC-T at the instigation of ZANU PF through a well-oiled coterie of party militia, war veterans and the soldiers. The ZLHR (ibid) notes that between April and June 2008 more than 200 MDC

activists were abducted and killed with more than 3000 being internally displaced as they fled ZANU PFs terror campaign. The campaign was meant to viciously deal with those people who are believed to have voted for the “wrong” political parties. Families and communities from different parts of the country especially in urban centres and the countryside were bashed, humiliated, tortured and were made to chant slogans of a political party so as to assess whether they were opponents or not.

Religious Intolerance

In Zimbabwe, the Churches have acknowledged that there exist vicious conflicts among them caused by their own religious intolerance and competitiveness around doctrines, resources and reputation. A recent case was the violence involving one of the Apostolic Sects which is under the UDACIZA grouping (Johane Masowe eChishanu), Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe (ACCZ) and the police in Budiriro (The Newsday Newspaper 2014). The violence in discussion involved the burning of the Vapostori’s shrine by politically aligned youths after the visit by the ACCZ representatives with the escort of the police and journalists to ban the congregants from meeting to worship at their shrine. This was an evident breach of the Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms as provided for in the Constitution. Due to this confrontation, the apostolic stormed and attacked the police and journalists leading to the arrests of suspects. Another case which is the most public of intra Church violence was the long running conflict between self appointed Bishop Kunonga and the established Anglican Church, which resulted in the violent seizure of assets and the forcible exclusion of Christians from Churches during the last decade. The issue was ultimately resolved in the courts, with the return to the Anglican Church of its properties.

A closer look at the given violent phases elaborated that most if not all of these phases cannot be divorced from politics and political decisions as all the given phases are linked to politics in one way or the other. The research thus concluded that the trends and dynamics of violence in Zimbabwe especially at a national scale trace their roots back to politics and political decisions. The given scenarios which were gathered through secondary data sources during the research processes indeed bear testimony to the urgent role that the Church has to play in the peace building process especially coming from an inevitable background where the Church's work on violence can never be detached from its work on the promotion of respect for human dignity, sustainable peace and social justice. The CCSF (2012) notes that over the years, "The Church in Zimbabwe has been engaging both the colonial and the post-colonial state in an attempt to avert violence that has claimed many lives, destroyed valuable property, fuelled hatred and divisions within the nation". Given the perceived role of the Church in preserving a culture of peace and tolerance as well as advocating for the respect for human dignity it became imperative for this research to take stock of the role of the Church in all the said conflicts. As such, the proceeding sections of this Chapter will endeavour to critically locate what the Church has been doing in the identified different conflicts and also identify and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the Church's interventions in the said conflicts

What has the Church been doing?

In outlining the symbiotic relationship between the Church, peace building, social justice and human dignity Mutume (1988:463) underscores that the fundamental role of the Church is "to be the moral conscience of the nation, the sign and safeguard of the supreme value of a human person". Against this backdrop it becomes barely clear that the Church should be the

prime institution to condemn violence of any sort and be the fulcrum of peace building as it pursues its role of being the “moral conscience” of the nation.

Within the same vein the Churches in Manicaland (2006) aver that the Church’s role is to wield a robust moral influence upon the state by advocating for and supporting programmes and policies that promote human dignity and social justice as well as speaking out against such policies that may be in direct violation of the said virtues. Based on such a resonant background were the Church serves as the moral conscience of the state as advocated for by Mutume (1988:463) and Churches in Manicaland (ibid) it became imperative for the research process to critically examine the Church’s interventions in the violent phases identified and discussed earlier on. This critical assessment of the Church’s intervention was mainly done through gathering data from secondary sources by way of reviewing existing literature on the ecumenical role of the Church in peace building processes in Zimbabwe

The CCSF (2012) notes that the Church in Zimbabwe has indeed tried to maintain its role as the conscience of the nation as well as advocate for a just society and also play a watchdog role on the Government especially in spaces where the Government may be seen to be violating fundamental people’s rights. In supporting this assertion the CCSF (ibid) notes that the major ecumenical groupings and umbrella Church organisations namely the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) and the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops’ Conference (ZCBC) and their affiliate and partner organisations have overtly denounced violation of human rights, violence in general and repressive legislation in Zimbabwe albeit with little success as such violations continue with the Government insisting that the Church should not be involved in matters related to politics and governance.

While the Church played a pivotal role in advocating for peace and human rights in pre-independence Zimbabwe their ecumenical role in fostering peaceful societies also continued in post independent Zimbabwe. Matikiti (2009) notes that during the Gukurahundi era the Church as represented by the Catholic Church petitioned the Government over the brutality that was being exhibited by the Fifth Brigade to the civilians. Matikiti (ibid) highlights that in March 1983, the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference (ZCBC) through the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) presented a paper titled “Reconciliation is Still Possible” to the then Prime Minister of Zimbabwe with the aim of building peace and to intervene between the two warring parties.

The united intervention of the Church in trying to broker peace was also seen when the Heads of Denominations met the then Prime Minister in April 1983. Matikiti (ibid) notes that meetings did not yield much result as the Gukurahundi violations continued all the way into 1987. The Prime Minister however insisted and encouraged the Church to continue playing an active role in working with the state to promote national development. While the Church’s interventions in 1983 did not bring an end to the Gukurahundi era perhaps it is important to acknowledge the initiatives the Church undertook as they were able to seek audience and confront the highest office in the country about the Gukurahundi era.

While the Unity Accord of 1987 brought an end to the Gukurahundi era it should be noted that there was never any form of apology or justice that was pursued in regard to the violations that had been committed during the period in question. Against this backdrop the Church again played a pivotal role in trying to make the Government at least acknowledge the severity of the Gukurahundi as the CCJP published a report in February 1997 titled,

Breaking the Silence: Building True Peace. The report gave a full account of what transpired during the Gukurahundi era and stressed upon justice, respect for human dignity and truth telling as the beacons of a progressive healthy nation. The CCSF (2012) posits that the report provided possible room for psychological therapy for the victims of the Gukurahundi brutality, but above all, it insisted on pursuing healing, reconciliation, rehabilitation, and reconstruction as opposed to the current prevailing situation of silence and pretension. To date, this chronicle of clear evidence still speaks on the impassive actions that resulted in thousands of thousands losing their lives. Church leaders approached the then President Canaan Banana to act as a mediator between ZAPU and ZANU PF (CCJP 1997) in which the Church continued to play a vital role in the talks. Despite the fact that the talks to end violence took long (1983-1987), their ending with the signing of the Unity Accord in 1987 on December 22 gives the Church's initiatives a credit.

By and large, the research noted that while the Government turned a deaf ear to the calls of the Church there is enough evidence to conclude that some sections of the Church especially the Catholic Church indeed made efforts to mediate between the conflicting ZANU and ZAPU as well as caution the Government on the use of brutality against its own citizens thereby living up to the expectation that the Church should be a repository of morality, justice and the respect of human dignity even in situations involving the highest office in the country.

Matikiti (2009) maintains that the Church remained instrumental in taking the Government to task over issues related to bad governance and human rights violations. For example in May, 1998, a pastoral letter was issued titled "Working For The Common Good", in which it attacked the heavy handedness that the Government had exhibited in dealing with discerning

voices especially during the food riots of 1998. This Pastoral Letter (1998:3) noted that a Government that closes space and suppresses its own citizens through the use of arbitrary violence deserves no respect. The letter also noted that there was a need for genuine dialogue between the state and the civil society. Perhaps the key point to note from these submissions is that the Church endeavored to maintain its key role of advocating for peace by reminding the Government that it had an obligation to deal with its citizens in a non violent way even in circumstances where such citizens may have a different opinion from that of the state.

The Catholic Church's unwavering stance in advocating for justice and non violence was also brought to the fore by its pastoral letters that condemned political violence during the parliamentary elections of 2000, the presidential elections of 2002 as well as the fast track land reform of 2000. For example in its Easter Message which was published on the 17th of April 2000 the ZCBC cautioned that;

“The real problems of this country ...cannot be solved by violence... Even verbal violence must be avoided. Threatening, insulting and racist language cannot be tolerated. The laws of the country that protect people from abuse and physical assault must be enforced. The courts must be respected.”

Within the same vein in its May 2001 Pastoral Letter titled *Tolerance and Hope* the ZCBC lamented that “Violence intimidation and threats are the tools of failed politicians... they are engaging in unjust activity” and in 2003 it published another letter which noted that “We cannot have lasting peace without truth and justice, love and freedom”. Against the given backdrop, the research noted that the Church has been consistent in its common call for transparency, justice and non violence and has played a pivotal role in encouraging the

Government to use just and peaceful means in dealing with those that may share a different opinion from that of the government. Bonhoeffer (1974: 127) highlighted that the Church exists for the society and not for its own sake just as Christ existed for the Church. With this view in mind it becomes lucid that the Church in Zimbabwe through the identified interventions and many others that this research did not discuss has been operating within the auspices of Bonhoeffer's (ibid) thinking as it continues to speak out on behalf of the ordinary men and women.

While the research also tried to look at the efforts of umbrella bodies in isolation, it should be noted that the ZCBC was not solely operating in remoteness but other Church groupings like the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) also petitioned the Government to observe peace and tolerance on different occasions on behalf of the entire Church. Mpfu (2009) notes that, ZCC had significant programmes that aimed at the promotion of good governance, peace and tolerance whereas EFZ had programmes on promoting gender equality and peacebuilding. A pivotal role that the Church has played over the years from pre-colonial era is the setting up of specialized agencies to operate in different thematic issues and at different levels. The National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network (ZESN) and the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) all have the hand of the Church behind their establishment. ZESN is responsible for conducting voter education, monitoring and observing elections and it also advocates for violent free, credible and fair elections and continuous electoral reforms. ZPP's mandate is that of documenting and reporting all politically motivated acts of violence. Before NCA became a political party, ZCC made a contribution towards its formation with the idea of opening up space for comprehensive discussions with citizen's participation in constitutional reforms and to promote democratic people driven constitution. At its inception all its administrative work was done at the Zimbabwe Council of

Churches offices. The setting up of these institutions has facilitated the exposing of human rights violations and bad governance within the country's discourse of democracy and good governance.

The collective role of the Church in calling for peace, justice, transparency and a more tolerant leadership was also evident in April 2005 when the ZCBC, the ZCC, the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) and the Heads of Christian Denominations (HOCD) published a Pastoral Letter titled: A Call to Conscience. This pastoral letter which was in reflection of Zimbabwe's 25th Independence anniversary cemented the collective responsibility of the Church in Zimbabwe in calling for a peaceful nation as one of the key issues it raised was the need for tolerance, reconciliation and hope. The pastoral letter (ZCBC, ZCC, EFZ and HOCD 2005:2) emphasized on the need for the nation to be inclined towards peace and tolerance through words and actions.

The research also noted that the Zimbabwe We Want document (2006) was also another notable collective action by the Church in trying to promote peace and tolerance in Zimbabwe. Among other key factors the Zimbabwe We Want touched on fundamental topics that had a bearing on lasting peace and sustainable development such as; a new people driven constitution, the land question, repressive laws and the national reconciliation in regard to the Gukurahundi era. In synopsis the Zimbabwe We Want (2006:5) lamented that "Unpleasant instances of political intolerance, violence, impunity and lack of transparency and accountability continue to rear their ugly head within our evolving National Democratic Culture". In synopsis the research processes noted that the Church in Zimbabwe through its umbrella bodies like the ZCBC, the ZCC and the EFZ has constantly maintained and played its role of speaking against intolerance, violence and injustice as evidenced by the diverse

interventions alluded to in this research report. While the powers that be have paid little attention to such calls it is imperative to acknowledge that the Church has not played the role of a silent observer but has indeed continued to petition the Government in matters related to violence, injustice and bad governance.

It is good to point out that the Church's efforts in ensuring the availability of peace has not only been limited to the four umbrella bodies under ZHOCD, but further includes interventions by faith based organisations although not restricted to Silvera House, Christian Care, Act Alliance, Christian Alliance, Ecumenical Leaders' Forum, the Habakkuk Trust and Grace to Heal. All these organisations under their different programmatic areas of focus, have championed towards the prevalence of peace through capacity building of Church leaders and other stakeholders, facilitated engagement platforms, compiled researches and publications on peacebuilding in Zimbabwe and continuously had peace messaging being sent out.

By and large the research noted that the Church has indeed played a pivotal ecumenical role in the promotion of peace as the ZHOCD (2014) notes that it is an institution mandated with the ministry of reconciliation and justice, the Church has promoted a lot of conflict resolution and peace building work from community to national level. Having said that, perhaps it is essential for this research report to identify some of the most common contributions by the Church or by Church affiliated organisations in post-independent Zimbabwe to ending violence and foster peaceful communities. Such common initiatives include but are not limited to the following; national prayer days like the Save Zimbabwe campaign, the report on Gukurahundi, joint press statements, pastoral letters, discussion documents, public condemnation of human rights violations, dialogue with political parties and one on one engagement with political leadership.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Church's interventions

While the research process centered on the interventions of the Church in promoting peace, reconciliation, tolerance, human dignity and justice as highlighted in the preceding section, it was imperative for the research process to also critique the strengths and weaknesses of such interventions. This was premised on the assertion that an understanding of the said weaknesses and strengths was going to inform the research process as it would help the researcher to not only have a better understanding of the Church's interventions in Zimbabwe under the EPOIZ project but to also enable the research process to come up with viable recommendations on how the Church could enhance its unified role in peace building in Zimbabwe thereby allowing this research to significantly contribute to existing literature on the ecumenical role of the Church in sustainable peace building in Zimbabwe.

Weaknesses and Challenges

The CCSF (2012) noted that there is a general feeling that the Church is heavily compromised and has failed to stand up to the state on issues of violence. Perhaps the key point that is brought to the fore here is that the Church has not done enough to foster for a peaceful nation. In support of this assertion, Mpofu (2009) notes that the greater Church community did not do much during the Gukurahundi. For example, while the Heads of Christian Denominations (HOCD) met the Prime Minister in 1983 to discuss the Gukurahundi crisis and try to broker a reconciliation deal between the warring parties, Mpofu (ibid) notes that nothing much was ever recorded on the efforts of the Church as they ended up being mere spectators as the violence continued. This in itself is a major weakness as the CCSF (ibid) notes that "If the Church does not take sides with the victims of violence it may

be unintentionally promoting the cause of the perpetrator.” It is against this backdrop that the research noted that for the period 1980-1987 while the ZCBC petition the Government more about the gross violence in the Midlands and the Matebeleland region perhaps there was a need for more collective action by the Church to speak out against the violence as this could have pushed the Government to act on the Gukurahundi petitions.

In outlining some of the Church’s weaknesses in dealing with the peace building process in Zimbabwe Wakatama (2012) averred that political inclination amongst Zimbabwe’s Church leaders became evident by the years and this watered down the validity of their opinions as such opinions tend to be viewed as appendages of certain political parties’ manifestos. He notes that some Church leaders had a tendency of “wining and dining” with the politicians and in the process cast a blind eye to the injustices that these politicians do including the use of violence for political gain. The crux of this argument is that the voice of the Church has been lessened as some Church leaders who are supposed to be the voice of the voiceless have become heavily compromised as they align themselves to political parties thus making it difficult for them to objectively differ with the Government especially in matters related to violence and bad governance or to ecumenically amplify the voice of the Church in calling for peace.

While recent years have seen the Church coming together and playing a collective role in advocating for peace and justice Mpofu (2009) highlights that there were disjointed efforts by the Church in the past and this lessened the impact of the Church’s interventions. In cementing this argument Mpofu (ibid) noted that “one is left to conclude that the Churches’ dialogue with the political environment which breeds intolerance has been less effective to a larger extent, but independent actors have attempted to engage in serious dialogue with those

who matter”. It thus became clear to the researcher that one major weakness of the Church in its past efforts before the EPOIZ project was the lack of collective coordination so as to speak with one voice especially during the early phases like the Gukurahundi era and during other isolated cases of political violence recorded during the turn of the new millennium. The research however noted that as the years progressed there have been more collective efforts by the Church through its umbrella bodies united under the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denomination’s EPOIZ project as well as through shared platforms like the Save Zimbabwe Campaign and the Zimbabwe We Want among others with such efforts yielding positive results as this research report will highlight later on.

In further highlighting the weaknesses of the Church’s unified interventions in peace building Pius Wakatama and Prof. Makumbe quoted by the CCSF (2009) argued that despite the numerous efforts that the Church had made in peace building through interventions like mediation, promotion of dialogue and open condemnation of violence, history should record that the Church leaders are profoundly compromised and as “...they have deliberately avoided doing anything that attracts incarceration and pain for standing against violence, especially that which is state-sponsored.”

Another major shortcoming in the Church’s intervention is that while it made efforts and strides to resolve the political crises that bedeviled the country in some instances it failed to rise above political patronage. In supporting this assertion Matikiti (ibid) and Mpofu (ibid) concur that over the years the ZCBC, the EFZ and the ZCC had been making initiatives of sponsoring talks between the country’s main political parties but the said talks collapsed in 2006 when some sections of the media accused some of the Church leaders for siding with the ruling party ZANU PF instead of maintaining a neutral position. In trying to elaborate

how the said Church leaders had betrayed the nation by failing to be neutral the Zimbabwean Newspaper (15-21 June 2006) had a headline that read, “Church Leaders Disappoint Nation” and went on to openly quote some leaders from the ZCC like Mr. Denson Mafinyane who declared that “the Church fully supports Government and its members were also in need of land...the two must consult and maintain their partnership”. Within the same vein, Chitando (2010) noted that some Church leaders like Bishop Trevor Manhanga and Reverend Obadiah Msindo of the Destiny of Africa Network are some Church leaders who have openly sided with ZANU PF and declared President Mugabe as a God-given leader who should rule unabated. The danger of such statements is that they tend to undermine joint efforts by other Church leaders to make the Government accountable for its actions as the Government can argue that the Church is on their side thus there is no need for them to act on peace building, Matikiti (2009). Based on the given scenarios the research concluded that one of the major weaknesses that the Church has exhibited in its role of building and advocating for a peaceful nation is that some of its leaders became compromised and sided with political parties thus defeating the notion of the Church being a neutral player in matters related to politics and peace building.

While the research has discussed some of the major weaknesses that have threatened and weakened the Church’s joint efforts in building peaceful communities, it is imperative to note that the Church has also recorded some strengths and successes in fostering for peaceful communities and has risen above the challenge as the next section of this research report is going to highlight.

Strengths and Successes

While the Church continues to face challenges in its role of being the conscience of the nation it should be noted that some of its interventions have been successful as they managed to draw the attention of the relevant stakeholders and in some instances promote peaceful communities and tolerance towards diverging views especially during national events like the 2013 Harmonised Elections. It is against this backdrop that this section of the research report will dwell on the strengths of the Church's interventions as well as the successes registered to date.

Makina (2002) argues that the major success in regard to the Gukurahundi period was the report which was published by the CCJP in 1997. Makina (ibid) noted that the Unity Accord of 1987 had brought a cosmetic finality to the Gukurahundi era but there was no room for closure and reconciliation and forgiveness on both the part of the victims and the perpetrators. Furthermore there was no room for acknowledgement by the Government and the dissidents as any matter related to the Gukurahundi were regarded as water under the bridge. Mashingaidze (ibid) notes that the unresolved Gukurahundi reconciliation and acknowledgement meant that we are developing a nation of bitter individuals that may seek revenge against each other. All having been said, the gist of the given argument is that in coming up with the report on the Gukurahundi era in 1997, the CCJP on behalf of the Church made a great milestone as it created an opportunity for the nation to relook at the Gukurahundi era with the intention of moving forward. The CCJP (1997:14) notes that the report "seeks merely to break the silence surrounding this phase in the nation's history, by allowing approximately one thousand people who have approached the report compilers...a chance to tell the stories they want told. It is hoped that greater openness will lead to greater reconciliation". By and large the CCJP played an instrumental role as it didn't only document violations that were committed during the period in question but also opened opportunities

for both victims and perpetrators to find closure in different ways thereby fostering for a peaceful nation.

The CCSF (ibid) underscores that the collective responsibility and effort of the Church was also seen in the late 1990s when the Church was a key stakeholder in campaigning for a new people driven constitution. The Church as represented by the ZCC was a key member of the pressure groups that were taking the Government to task over the need for a new constitution which was supposed to be democratic and people driven. While Matikiti (2009) notes that the ZCC eventually pulled out of this coalition it is the submission of this research that the Church's role in fighting for democracy in Zimbabwe as well as the respect of human dignity and peaceful resolution to conflict cannot be undermined as the ZCBC, the EFZ and the ZCC have continued to campaign for the said ideals through meetings with Government ministries, political parties, publishing pastoral letters and press statements, organizing national prayer days and also mediating between the country's main political rivals.

Maregere (2013) sums up the strength of the ecumenical role and collectiveness of the Church in building sustainable peace when he notes that "...the Church sought to strengthen, amplify and unify its advocacy voices, facilitate stronger coordination of various efforts for peace, promote free and peaceful citizen participation in national processes...". The key point to note here is that through collective Church action and engagement with different stakeholders and institutions, the Church managed to ensure that the country maintains a path of peace especially during elections. Coming from a background where the national elections of 2008 were marred by outright violence and coercion Maregere (ibid) acknowledges that the 2013 harmonized elections in Zimbabwe were very peaceful and this peaceful environment is largely linked to the efforts and strategies of the Church as the Zimbabwe

Head of Christian Denominations (ZHOCD) used its collective platform to “undertake a robust engagement strategy with key political institutions...the ZHOCD convened dialogue platforms and prayer meetings...to encourage political players to observe peace during campaigning as well as the polling period.” By and large the research noted that while the peace that prevailed during the 2013 harmonized elections can be attributed to a lot of factors, the collective efforts of the Church under the ZHOCD in promoting peace before, during and after elections cannot go unnoticed.

In summation, it is of the essence to note that there is still room for the Church to increase its efforts in peace building by ensuring that they engage into more ecumenical efforts under collective platforms like the ZHOCD as there is more success in combined efforts than isolated and uncoordinated individual Church efforts.

Chapter Conclusion

The Chapter gave an over view of conflict in post independent Zimbabwe with emphasis on the trends and dynamics of such conflicts as an understanding of such a background was deemed paramount for the attainment of the research objectives. A critique of the Church’s joint and solo interventions was also carried out and discussed with specific emphasis on the strengths and successes as well as the challenges and weaknesses of such interventions.

CHAPTER 2: THE ECUMENICAL PEACE OBSERVATION INITIATIVE'S CONTRIBUTION TO PEACEBUILDING IN ZIMBABWE

Introduction

As it can be located from the reviewed efforts made by the Church in ensuring the availability of peace, some of the solo initiatives fell in between the cracks to which they did not yield favoured outcomes. The other possible reason of failure could be partly due to the political affiliation of some of the Church leaders which resulted in the dilution of the Church leaders' efforts in brokering peace and prophesying as a neutral arbiter. Given this background of the disunity, solo and uncoordinated initiatives that the umbrella bodies have made in the past years highlighted in Chapter 1, this gave the Church an impetus to constitute the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations (ZHOCD) which is a conglomeration of four Church bodies namely EFZ, ZCBC, ZCC and UDACIZA as an affiliate member to establish the Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative in Zimbabwe (EPOIZ). The formation of such an ecumenical platform was aimed at amplifying the joint advocacy initiatives of the Church in the promotion of a culture of peace in Zimbabwe and in the same vein facilitate national healing and reconciliation. Subsequent to its formation, the platform to date has implemented a profusion of activities that seek to promote peace. Before delving into the initiatives laid down by the Church to uphold peace, there was need for this research to also give a background of the conflicts identified by the respondents (though somehow similar to those in the Introduction and Chapter 1) so as to locate the discourse on the interventions made by the Church .

Respondents' Conflict Mapping of Post Independent Zimbabwe

Emerging from the interviews and discussions, the research learnt that from the time the country gained its independence, Zimbabwe has gone through a chronic vicious cycle of conflicts which continued to unfold bringing untold suffering to its citizens. Several unjustifiable injustices have been committed against innocent lives leaving some dead, others living in poverty, disabilities due to the atrocious acts of the perpetrators during the Matebeleland and Midlands disturbances, during election periods, the chaotic land grabs of 2000 and other phases where violence broke out. Families have collapsed, women and girls have been raped or sexually abused, youths have been used to mobilise votes by violently attacking on people by political parties and the social classes' gaps have even wider such that the rich have become extremely rich while the poor have seen their worst. Of even more concern to the respondents was how some people have been unlawfully detained without committing crimes yet some of the perpetrators have not paid the price for their violations on human rights but instead have bribed the judiciary, others as a result of impunity have been pardoned and set free to go back and walk in the streets where they committed their crimes.

Repressive laws and policies have been enacted without the involvement of ordinary citizens who have had to only bear the consequences with the likes of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme which was hard hitting and turned the lives of Zimbabweans bitter as the phase of its enactment was characterised by the food shortages, massive layoffs from Government Institutions, the removal of subsidies and the introduction of school fees. Other policies that contributed to derailing the economy was the famous "Jambanja" (the violent land seizures) of 2000 where commercial farms were forcefully taken from white farmers by the war veterans under the disguise of redistributing land to indigenous blacks and the

Operation Murambatsvina that left thousands homeless and displace. These were followed by the food riots and food shortages in from 2007-2008 and climaxed with the irrefutable politically motivated violence of the 2008 Elections. The victims under all these circumstances have just been ordinary women, men youths, children, the elderly and the disabled whilst perpetrators have been political parties, war veterans, youth militia, military, Government, clergy men and ordinary men and women.

Though much of the physical violence that was seen and felt in the past years has slowly fizzled away, structural violence inbuilt in some of the institutions still exists to date and its tenacious impacts are being felt. Some of the problems mentioned included the mushrooming of corruption which has resulted in poor service delivery from Government institutions, unequal distribution of resources and wealth, secrecy in the extractive and business sector, infringement of community rights and the slowness of Government in responding to emergency issues among other.

In a bid to solve these unending conflicts, the Church jointly employed a series of initiatives using a multi pronged approach to which this Chapter will dwell on the uniqueness and relevance of each initiative in peacebuilding. Whilst there are other ecumenical bodies such as the Ecumenical Support Services, Ecumenical Church Leaders Forum and Zimbabwe National Pastors' Conference that have labored in also contributing to a peaceful Zimbabwe, this research will mainly dwell on the Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative in Zimbabwe (EPOIZ).

Initiatives Done by the Church

Pastoral Letters and Press Statement

The Church believes that it has been entrusted with a mandate of transforming the political, economic and social systems of a country which include developmental programmes, promoting good governance and committing to the social teaching of good citizenship. Just as the Church refers to it in the Zimbabwe We Want Vision Document discussed in research Introduction, the Church has a divine incarnation and mandate to promote social justice and peace in the world. Due to this weighty and multi pronged mandate the Church has, the research discovered that the most significant and often used tools by the Church in collectively speaking, rebuking, correcting, commending and envisioning a way for the nation have been Pastoral Letters and the publishing of Press Statements. Pastoral letters are any formal communication means issued out by the clergy to the congregation or the nation over a specific issue concerning discipline, morals, loyalty and doctrine. Press statements on the other hand encompass the broad, moral issues that lie at the heart of the Church's social teachings. These provide an important record of the Church acknowledging the suffering of its people over the years, and record its exhortations to Government and other sectors of society to change their behavior and support those in need. They are usually read from the pulpits across the country, ensuring that Church goers know that the Church is acknowledging and recognizing their hardships and are also shared in newspapers. It is important for the integrity and standing of the Churches that these statements continue to be released – the Church is the conscience and moral voice of the nation, and needs to play this role of speaking out.

Under the EPOIZ project, statements have been published both on a reactive and proactive basis for example case based statements on violence, solidarity messages have been written

after the occurrence of a tragedy whilst Easter, Christmas and International Days of commemoration statements have been more of routine communiqués.

After the 2008 Elections, ZHOCD published a press statement titled “Concern over the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe”. The statement was published in reaction to the gross human rights violations that perpetrated the country the period in between the March elections and the Presidential Run-off. Surfacing from the focus group discussions with the Justice and Peace Commissions from the different member bodies was information around the emotive and violent period after these elections. The political, economic and social atmosphere abruptly changed after the completion of the balloting process due to the prolonged time lag and delay in the announcement of the results thereby causing anxiety, aggravation, ambiguity and rage among citizens of different political parties. The politically motivated violence was popularly termed as “operation wakavhotera papi (Operation who did you vote for)?” It was a political exercise of assaulting, torturing, abducting and raping communities in different quarters of the country who were viewed with suspicion of having voted for the “wrong” political candidate. The economic situation of the country also plunged down characterised by long queues, empty shops and food riots leaving the victims with little or no drugs to aid their healing. In this statement, the Church jointly called for the intervention of regional bodies such as SADC, UN and AU to ensure that peace is fostered in the country so as to circumvent the tragedies that befell other countries like Burundi, Rwanda and Kenya. It further ordered the closing of military and youth militia bases that were being used as torture camps and in the same vein for ZEC to release the results of the poll devoid of any further delays or postponements. The writing of this statement clearly denouncing the violence that had erupted in the country with one voice as the Church gave the political parties a disciplinary warning from the shepherds and the need for settling for talks as

opposed to militarizing key state institutions and bashing citizens who are said to be of a “wrong” political party.

The research confirmed from the Church what ZLHR (2009) wrote about the political violence that shrouded this phase as described earlier on in the previous Chapter. The Church availed itself to speak with an amplified, united and stronger voice to the perpetrators of violence on behalf of the voiceless and the suffering flock, to desist from such inhuman acts and instead initiate dialogue to solve this calamity so as to aim for the resuscitation of the shrunk economy. The nudge given by the Church came to fruition as the political parties gave in to the involvement of SADC as a regional grouping to solve the political wrangles between ZANU PF and MDC which birthed the Government of National Unity (GNU) and the signing of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) which was somewhat a power sharing arrangement.

Prior to the holding of the July 2013 Harmonised elections, EPOIZ published a press statement in The Standard Newspaper (private-owned) and The Herald Newspaper (state-owned) making mention of the prayer meeting the Church had held concerning the nation of Zimbabwe and the 14 prayer points it was encouraging the nations to pray for towards the election and the period after. The prayer points included God fearing leaders, a responsible media, a constitutionally responsible electoral commission, fearless law enforcement agencies and truthful election observers among others. Stemming from an interview with one of the Reverends in the ZHOCD Taskforce Team responsible for the planning of national events like prayer meetings and celebrations, the press statement was not mere talk of what the Church leaders were tasking the nation to do which they themselves could not do. Rather it was their quest for peace to be a burden of every citizen which if put together changes the entire society. The press statement prayer points were sent to the different Church structures

under ZHOCD to pray for the nation on Sunday the 28th of July in the services. It can be noted that the Church ecumenically summoned the congregant including political parties, the youth militia and war veterans to be sober minded and join them in praying for a peaceful environment before, during and after the elections as well as to pray for the leadership to be elected by the people to be God fearing and honest.

Another press statement furnished for the sake of this research was the statement read out by the former ZHOCD Chairman, General Secretaries of the 4 umbrella bodies and the EPOIZ directorate at a Press Conference immediately after the announcement of the election results. The press conference was said to be attended by numerous media houses, civil society, faith based organisations, academics and state actors. One of the key tenets of the project was the integration of efforts by the Churches in promoting a peaceful election process and beyond which involved the deploying of trained election observers in designated polling stations to document the entire electoral process. The basis for the Church participating in the observation process was that the Church leadership has the ear of political leaders locally and regionally which has worked as leverage in strengthening advocacy structures and the lacking critical voice of the Church in working to promote free and peaceful citizen participation in the electoral and other national processes in Zimbabwe. In the previous years, different voices had spoken on behalf of the Church guided by what each body would have observed from the elections. Further to this, while there have been efforts by other actors in promoting and supporting an environment that elicits free and fair elections, these have not been complete as they lacked the coordinated Church's face and voice. Therefore the EPOIZ platform addressed these shortcomings as the Church managed to speak with one voice thereby giving a balanced view on how the elections progressed.

The statement clarified the Church's position and perspective on the harmonised elections which were regarded as generally peaceful though shrouded by a series of anomalies and discrepancies such as the inaccessibility of the voter's roll, lack of transparency during the special voting process, and voting irregularities such as people's names appearing in areas where they did not register or people who had registered and had slips but their names were not found on the voters' roll. Notwithstanding the contestations by the some political parties against the electoral outcomes, the Church through the press statement and conference made clear its ecumenical position of how it viewed the entire electoral process and further urged the aggrieved parties to take action that is restrained from violence such as dialogue that ultimately promotes nation building for the common cause. To that effect this was achieved as evidenced by the absence of violence from the distressed parties in place of engagements with the Constitutional Court for rectification. The research also learnt that as a contribution made by this statement, political parties forged towards attaining a common understanding in terms of results acceptance and sustainable nation building which has seen the nation moving forward.

The period after the opening of the 8th Parliament and swearing in of the Cabinet presented itself as though the country was stagnant in nation building and economic development and there wasn't clear direction as to where the country was heading towards. In order to break the silence and usher the country into a new political dispensation, EPOIZ developed an Easter Pastoral Letter in April 2014 and distributed it to key strategic leaders, placed it as an insert in the Herald, Chronicle and the Manica Post, shared it with its structures and also its social media pages. The letter was encumbered with concerns around the physical and structural violence that exists in the country as alluded to in the Introduction learning from Galtung's work. The conflicts mentioned in this statement were said to have been

extrapolated from a Conflict Mapping Exercise report that was undertaken by EPOIZ in March 2014 with the JPCs of the 4 member bodies. The conflict mapping exercise sought to establish the nature of conflicts that people have had to grapple with and what different stakeholders need to do to restore peace. Through the issuing out of this pastoral letter, the Church registered its distress on how the social fabric has been torn apart by issues such as poor service delivery, corruption, unfair food distribution, domestic violence and sexual abuse of women and girls and unequal distribution of wealth and resources. The Church underscored the need for forgiveness and reconciliation among the people of Zimbabwe just as much as they also sought to be reconciled to Christ during the Easter time. By going through this statement, the research managed to discern the ecumenical role of the Church in articulating its moral and upright voice to the state of affairs of the nation that are tangent with the word of God in the search for workable solutions that weave the strands of the country together.

As the Church speaks, not only does it castigate what politicians are doing wrong but even when the members of its body and those in authority do wrong it rebukes. This is in accordance with the bible in John 15 verse 2 which says “Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes that it may bear more fruit”. This means there are branches on the tree that may not bear fruit whilst there are others that need pruning. The Church acts on behalf of God in pruning, rebuking and correcting the branches which in this case are members of the Church so that they may bear more and rich fruit. Under the EPOIZ project, the Church wrote a press statement toned with great sadness and regret denouncing the religious violence that took place in Budiriro in June 2014 involving one of the Apostolic Sects under its membership (*Johane Masowe eChishanu*), ACCZ officials and the police and the subsequent burning of the shrine by political party

youths. The ACCZ officials had gone with an escort of police to “close down” the Johane Masowe eChishanu’s shrine in Budiriro on allegations that they were contributing grossly to women and girls’ sexual abuse and that their religious practices of early child marriages were not in tandem with the new Constitution. They did this with the thought that they had a political backing from the Vice President Cde. J. Mujuru to which it later appeared otherwise. In light of this, the Church used the statement to express its disapproval of the violence perpetrated by politically affiliated youths of burning the shrines in the presence and escort of police officers which is in clear violation of the Constitution. In shaping the vineyard into what God wants it to be, the Church does not cherry pick which branch to prune but instead it prunes every deadly habits and violent acts within the body of Christ so that more pleasant fruits are visible and enjoyed. In this incident, the Church clearly condemned unreservedly any and all acts of violence or processes that may trigger violence from any and whatever quarter and more so from the Church and gatekeepers. This goes to show that the Church is not only pursuing to promote peace from the political field but even within the body of Christ, it is working to promote an enduring culture of peace.

To demonstrate that the Church is on the outlook for any issues that affect the congregants and the nation at large, EPOIZ issued again a statement on the violence that occurred in the Chingwizi transit Camp between members of the public and law enforcement agencies. Chingwizi Transit Camp is an area where families who were affected by the Tokwe Mukosi floods have temporarily been settled awaiting their resettlement to another communal piece of land to be given to them by Government. The heavy rains that hit the area left thousands of people homeless and at health risk due to the denting of infrastructure such as sewer and solid waste systems, bridges and dams. After their resettlement from Tokwe Mukosi to the Chingwizi Camp, violence broke out when police vehicles were torched by villagers as a

means of protesting against a relocation that had been planned by Government without their involvement as well as compensation of lost property. After this incident of burning vehicles, this was subsequently followed by morning raids by law enforcement agencies that in the process burnt down the villagers' tents and indiscriminately arrested them.

In light of this background the Church issued a statement denouncing in equal measure the violence caused by both the villagers and the law enforcement agencies as a response to solving a problem at hand. The ZHOCD leadership was convinced that this could have been avoided if Government had over the past months, been more proactive in prioritizing the deteriorating living conditions at the Chingwizi Transit Camp. After it being declared a national disaster, the Government's pace in responding to the case has not mirrored their defining it as a "disaster" since people have remained in a "transit" camp for over 8 months and still seem to be forever in transit. EPOIZ staff also felt that the reason why villagers in Chingwizi have ended up taking the matter into their own hands is also because the Government has been reluctant to come up with an agreed legal and policy framework on issues of compensation to people who have been affected by development induced displacements or relocations. In an efforts to confirm the absence of a legal and policy framework on relocation and compensation, the research learnt from a civil society organisation working on the extractives that this has also been the case of the Chiadzwa families who were relocated to Arda Transau who still to date have only received a disturbance allowance and food handouts and not compensation of their valuable property and graves they lost and left behind. There is no guiding framework on compensation and relocation models.

Another issue the Church tried to deal with in this statement was the conduct of the law enforcement agencies. The boorish behavior they displayed in this incident was tangent to what the constitution says about their conduct. According to the Constitution, law enforcement agencies are mandated to maintain law and order, provide security and deal with any and all kinds of breach of law including violence whilst their conduct must be prudent, and circumspect. They must enforce the law without, fear, favour or prejudice but in a circumspect and judicious manner, lending themselves to the strengthening of peaceful engagement rather than confrontation which was not the case which the violence in Chingwizi. From this statement it can be noted that the Church has not only utterly denounced the acts of violence in the political field but has gone ahead to voice and seek redress of the violation of people's socio-economic rights from whichever perpetrator. As the Church speaks in such cases it alerts the nation that the Church has an all seeing eye on whatever is going on in the different places.

From all these press statements and pastoral letters, the research learnt that the Church has spoken to the nation imploring its citizens to contribute to a peaceful environment in the diverse situations the country has gone through. The EPOIZ project throughout these turbulent violent phases has consistently echoed the same position on how it condemns violent acts that infringe the rights of peoples to peace. It has urged all its citizens to desist from resorting to violence as a tool for resolving the challenges befalling them but rather seek peaceful and constructive engagements with responsible authorities for their concerns to be heard. A selected number of the above mentioned articles are attached to this research as Appendixes.

Work on the Elections and Referendum

As noted in the Literature Review section of the Introduction, the Church played a pivotal role in the formation of the NCA, which had the idea of promoting a people driven constitution, under its collective platform. Having laboured to get the NCA functioning and coupled with the closed door meetings with the GNU to facilitate a constitutional reform process, the Church massively mobilised its congregants to contribute in the constitution making process so as to make it a people driven document. Bearing in mind that the Church is one institution whose constituency is largest than any grouping with political parties included, it can be noted that it played a pivotal role in the mobilising for a constitutional vote for the Referendum which was held in March 2013 and yielded a Yes vote of 94.5%. Then before the Harmonised Elections, the Church combined resources to have its membership trained on election observation with the assistance of organisations like Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network to show its commitment in achieving democracy, good governance and peace in Zimbabwe.. After the training sessions, the Church deployed its electoral observers in the numerous polling stations in Zimbabwe to which they were representing ZHOCD and information was channelled to the Church's Command Centre. From the information collated at the Command Centre, that is where the Church managed to draw up the conclusion that the 2013 elections were generally peaceful though they were flawed by a series of anomalies

Engagements with Political Leaders

In Zimbabwe, face-to-face meetings with senior politicians and public advocacy of findings linked to human rights abuses both regionally and internationally have proved to be effective ways of curbing abuses. This partly explains the dramatically reduced levels of violence in

2013. The Church played a strategic role in both the 1980s and in 2008, in bringing awareness and condemnation to events and now it has played an ecumenical role in advancing peace.

From the discussions with the ZHOCD Executive, it emerged that the Church jointly facilitated engagement meetings with political party leaders both openly and behind doors. After the General and Presidential Elections of 2008, the political landscape was gravely stained by politically motivated violence whose end result was the withdrawal of the MDC-T President Morgan Tsvangirai from the presidential contestation. On that basis, Robert Mugabe was declared the winning candidate but immediately suffered a legitimacy dilemma which forced him and Morgan Tsvangirai to enter into a GNU together with MDC N and therefore signing the GPA. The rationale behind the signing of the GPA and establishment of the inclusive Government was to provide a platform for national dialogue and reconciliation among Zimbabweans in the quest for peace and political stability in Zimbabwe. There were phases of “talks” in which the GPA mediator, former President of South Africa Thabo Mbeki had to frequently visit Zimbabwe to facilitate dialogue. Behind such closed door meetings the Church played a pivotal role in ensuring that all the parties to the GPA participate in the meetings as well as compromise in some of their principles for the sake of the general populace. In one of the key informants’ words, “there was a moment when the talks almost broke down and as the Church we had to swiftly sit down the two main political party leaders and get them to a point of renegotiation until the agreement was signed. This engagement was behind closed doors”. From this assertion it can thus be noted that the Church ecumenically played a key role in the moulding of the GNU which to date has been labelled to be a Government that made an effort in stabilising and ushering the country into a new political dispensation.

Realising how emotive the electoral periods of Zimbabwe have been, the ZHOCD Executive under the EPOIZ project deliberately engaged the political party leaders in 2013 prior to the Harmonised Election held on the 31st of July 2013. The research revealed that the ZHOCD Executive paid a courtesy visit to the President Robert Mugabe (ZANU PF) at State House in March 2013 to, *inter alia*, introduce the initiative and to get a buy-in from Government on the call for peace and non-violence before, during and after the elections. The President was said to have encouraged the Church to, not only sermonise peace in Churches, but to play an ecumenical role in reconciling Zimbabweans torn apart by violence through the facilitation of engagement and ministry to individuals so as to change the society for a better cause. In their meeting, he was said to have acknowledged that although there are issues of convergence and divergence within the inclusive Government, it was essential for the Church to treat the 2013 elections with utmost care and diligence. In May 2013, the Executive also met with the ZAPU Federal Party and the Patriotic Union of Matabeleland (PUMA) in Bulawayo to reinforce the need for political parties to campaign peacefully without canvassing for votes forcefully from citizens. Another engagement meeting mentioned by the ZHOCD Executive was one held in July 2013 with the Former Prime Minister Mr Morgan Tsvangirai to call on his party (MDC) to promote peace during the election period and not canvas for votes violently. Other political parties that the Executive met before the elections mentioned included the United People's Party, Matabeleland Liberation Front and MDC N.

From these engagements the research can safely point out that the EPOIZ project managed to contribute to a peaceful environment through the engagement meetings with the political party leaders who are often referred to as inciters of violence within their camps to attack supporters of opposing parties. This also supports the article written by Maregere (2013) referred to in Chapter 1 on the ecumenical role that the Church has played in contributing to

an electoral landscape that was violent free. The Church managed to jointly amplify its voice and advocacy initiatives for peace and the need to promote free and peaceful citizen participation in national processes such as elections.

Emerging from the focus group discussion with the Justice and Peace Commissions of the four umbrella bodies was also another Post Election Dialogue Meeting held in November 2013 by Church leaders and political party leaders to dialogue and commit towards nation building. The political party leaders engaged were mentioned as Prof. Jonathan Moyo (ZANU PF), Prof. Lovemore Madhuku (NCA), Dr. Dumiso Dhabengwa (ZAPU), Dr. Simba Makoni (Mavambo/ Kusile/ Dawn), Ms Priscilla Misihairambwi (MDC) and Mr. Elton Mangoma (MDC T). The political leaders shared their perspectives on nation building and inter-party relations and how each of them will contribute a building block for lasting peace. Whilst it can be noted that the Church has ecumenically made efforts to engage the political party leaders and amplified their voice on the need for peaceful existence, there still exists intra party political violence which the Church has not commented on or rebuked openly. Recently within the MDC T, there was infighting between Morgan Tsvangirai and Tendai Biti whilst in ZANU PF there was also violence amid of reports on the wrangles around the legitimacy of the poll violated by allegations of electoral fraud, vote buying, physical attacks and kidnappings of Women's League members as means of canvassing for ballots. It depicts the fact that the Church needs still to ecumenically denounce violence from whatever quarter.

National Engagements with Stakeholders

Outside the engagements done by the Church with the political parties, the Church managed to engage and work closely with the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community

Development to jointly fight against Sexual Abuse and Rape as an antecedent to attaining peace. ZHOCD Executive, the EPOIZ secretariat, JPCs and Gender Desks from umbrella bodies and congregants mobilised through the Church's structures actively participated at the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development's launch of the National Action Plan on Rape and Sexual Violence. The launch was attended by, inter alia the Church, Civil Society, Traditional Leadership, Ministers from Government Ministries and other representatives, the Police, and Prison Services, the media, the academia and the Vice President Hon. J. Mujuru. The role of ZHOCD through its former Chairman in the meeting was to share its contributions in fighting against rape and sexual violence and what it intends to do in the future as an ecumenical effort to promote peace by preventing or redressing such distressing abuses.

As one of the discussions unfolded with a Gender Desk Officer of one umbrella body, the research picked the Church's concern over shocking statistics, provided by the Zimbabwe Republic Police at their Launch of females who have been raped or sexually abused. Statistics of the raped survivors in the period between January 2012 to the April 2014 were said to be reaching an approximate total of 7 411 female juveniles and 3571 women. What was more disconcerting was that these were only a fraction of the total number of cases that had not been brought to the attention of the law enforcement agencies. In an effort to ensure the voice of women and girl children is heard, the Church has sent through a message within its structures to cascade a message that calls upon all stakeholders to put every effort into breaking the silence and ensuring that the rights of women and children are protected and respected as well as for people to shift from the paradigm that allows for the resolution of conflict through violence. During the Launch Meeting, the UDACIZA grouping was said to have been mentioned frequently as the contributor of these abuse cases by them allowing

child marriages and men dominating and oppressing women and children in the Church yet the country is on a gender equality promotion drive.

To demonstrate its implementation of the commitments it made at the Launch Meeting, EPOIZ collated the feedback from umbrella bodies on what they have done to fight against Rape and Sexual Violence and future action plans on what it will do and presented it at a follow-up meeting hosted by Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development in September 2014. Some of the activities shared in light of what the Church has implemented jointly included but not restricted to: giving feedback in meetings within Church structures on the launch of the National Action Plan, sensitising of school heads and teachers on Rape and Sexual Violence using the Education, HIV/AIDS, Gender and the Justice and Peace Commission Desks within the different umbrella bodies, civic education training of trainers in different provinces around the country who then further cascade the trainings to communities on issues of rape and sexual violence and design strategies on how cases that have gone unreported can be handled. The Church therefore reported on the Peace Celebrations that were done in 6 Provinces in Zimbabwe where rape and sexual abuse was denounced in speeches, drama and poems. Already, the Church is planning on publishing a press release calling the nation to a lifetime fight against rape and sexual abuse pointing out the statistics shared at the Launch Meeting. This symbolises that, the Church is also on the guard in trying to protect women and children as vulnerable from violation of their Fundamental Rights and Freedoms as provided for by the Constitution, thereby promoting Constitutionalism in the country.

A dialogue meeting was held bringing together ZHOCD membership and the Churches in Manicaland membership to reflect together on what the Word of God says concerning issues

of domestic violence, corruption, political violence and the unequal distribution of resources from diamond mining. Churches in Manicaland has for the past 14 years served as an open, non-membership space where clergy and lay leaders of all denominations can come together to share vision and inspiration, analyse the daily challenges that people face, and plan joint action to ensure that God's just peace prevails in our society. It is in this meeting that the Churches in Manicaland and ZHOCD leadership are said to have realised the need for it to strengthen the social justice ministry of the denominations under an ecumenical platform by speaking with one voice.

In an effort to secure commitment from different stakeholders on unifying the efforts to ensure an enabling environment prior to the harmonised elections of 2013, EPOIZ facilitated the hosting of a Pre-Election Stakeholders' Meeting in July 2013. In attendance civil society organisations, umbrella Church bodies, representatives from business, security sector (police was represented by Senior Assistant Commissioner, Mrs Charity Charamba), ONHRI and Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee (JOMIC) among others. As a means of create synergies and a unified approach to election monitoring, the meeting resulted in the creation of a reference group with a total of 8 representatives from the Centre for Peace Initiatives in Africa (CPIA), Church and Civil Society Forum (CCSF), Commercial Farmers' Union (CFU), Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee (JOMIC), Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network (ZESN), Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), and ZHOCD with the responsibility to closely analyse the electoral environment and address some of the emerging challenges. The reference group convened three round table meetings facilitated by EPOIZ to discuss the electoral landscape, share updates on the observations made during the polling day and the post election outcomes.

In the view of this research, the convening of all these meetings enabled a synchronised approach to coming up with strategies to engage the different stakeholders and political parties around the elections. The engagements resulted in collective positions being taken by ZHOCD as outlined in its Press Statements on the Electoral Outcomes. The Church's idea of a reference group created a platform for sharing of information as a critical component for informed engagement and prompt responses that needed to be done by the Church ecumenically as was demonstrated by the press statement written and shared by ZHOCD on the 2nd of August 2013 in a press conference outlining the position and perspective of the Church with regards to the election outcomes.

Peace Celebrations and National Days of Prayer

The research was done at a *Kairos* moment when the EPOIZ project was convening Peace Celebrations in 7 selected provinces of Zimbabwe as commemorations of the International Day of Peace which is worldly observed on the 21st of September to which the research participated in. In the past years, ZHOCD has customarily held National Days of Prayer in Harare alone every 2nd Saturday of October until the EPOIZ project initiated the cascading of these prayers as celebrations in other provinces in the country.

Emanating from a discussion with the former ZHOCD President, the Church in 2010 jointly carried out a Trumpet Call on Prayer Day in Bulawayo, Gweru, Gwanda, Harare, Chegutu, Marondera, Masvingo, Glendale and Kadoma which brought together over 15,000 people from diverse denominations to unite in prayer. The Campaign was held under the theme "Churches together for transformation". The initiative was centered on ensuring the widespread of small scale farming skills to communities so as to increase their capacities of

producing food that is enough for their families and others around them with limited capacity to do so. Activities included praise and worship songs, choirs, speeches, training sessions and prayer items. Prayer items for these days of prayer included a plight by the people to God to send rain, peace, unity, healing and for the forgiveness of sins.

The 2013 celebrations were held in Chiredzi, Mutare, Masvingo, Bulawayo, Bindura, Glendale, Gweru, Buhera, Victoria Falls and Hwange in September under the theme “Promoting an enduring culture of peace” with an approximate number of 2500 people attending the celebrations. In Harare the Day of Prayer was held in October under the theme, “United Together in Christ for Peace, Development and Prosperity of Zimbabwe” which was said to be attended by an estimate of 2,000 Christians comprising of General Secretaries, JPCs, Bishops, Laity, Prophets, Pastors, Priests, Sisters, Reverends, Fathers, Apostles and congregants of the membership that make up the umbrella bodies constituting ZHOCD.

This year’s celebrations which the I managed to participate and observe so as to understand the nature of celebrations and to document for the sake of this research, were held in September in Karoi, Rusape, Hwange, Gokwe, Bikita and Bulawayo with one outstanding one in Harare to be held end of October. These joint celebrations were hosted under the theme, “Building the Zimbabwe We Want in Faith, Hope and Unity” and were attended by an estimate of 3,700 people comprising of the Government, Security Sector, traditional leadership, the media, the academia, EPOIZ secretariat, JPCs, Bishops, Laity, Prophets, Pastors, Reverends, Fathers, Apostles and congregants of the membership that make up the umbrella bodies that constitute ZHOCD. Activities on the days of celebrations included but were not limited to: traditional dances, speeches, dramas, poems, choirs and prayers around peace and other national issues of concern identified. Peace tournaments in the form of soccer

and netball also constituted part of the activities that were deliberately used to entrust a sense of teamwork, co-existence and tolerance among teams. Visibility material for these celebrations was printed and disseminated in the form of flyers, t-shirts, coffee mugs, posters and brochures whilst banners were displayed bearing the theme of the celebrations and the name of the organisation in all areas.

The idea behind the convening of these celebrations was said to be to bring people together of diverse cultures, backgrounds, denominations and social classes to peacefully co-exist, pray, sing, worship and commune together so as to establish an understanding within oneself that the next person maybe different from them but all of them make up the body of Christ as Paul wrote in the bible in 1 Corinthians 12 verse 12-31. When one gets an appreciation of such a relationship they have in Christ, it therefore becomes difficult to harm their neighbour. The Church believes that jointly, it has the will power to bring together people for a cause of promoting peace in a society. It is of the understanding that it has the capacity and mandate to speak, rebuke, correct, reconcile and facilitate a process for one to heal which at large brings healing, reconciliation and peace to the society.

From the speeches given in the celebrations it emerged that this was a welcome joint initiative that has managed to unite people from various religious backgrounds in speaking from the same platform. A case in point is the feedback from a key informant in Hwange who made mention to the fact that the chief made mention to the effect that as a result of the peace celebrations done in the province twice there has been a reduction in the number of cases of violence reported to him for mediation as the custodian of the land. This has strengthened the profile of the Church and ZHOCD in particular to champion a united front in the development of a culture of peace and tolerance in Zimbabwe. As a Church, it cannot afford

to speak from conflicting perspectives and therefore a joint platform like EPOIZ will ensure that the Church continues to build peace in a coordinated and structured way. There was further wider visibility of the celebrations through sharing of information and photos of these events on the organisation's Facebook (www.facebook.com/ZimbabweHeadsOfChristianDenominations) and Twitter (www.twitter.com/ZHOCD) Pages, the Website (www.epoiz.zhocd.org.zw) and articles published by journalists who attended the celebrations in papers such as The Standard Newspaper 21 September page 24, the Weekly Mirror dated 14 September 2014, The Standard dated 5 October 2014 and the Zimbabwean Mail of 7 October 2014.

It can thus be noted that the Church has ecumenically provided a platform for people to converse and co-exist peacefully in the different provinces in Zimbabwe and contribute to a culture of peace. Congregants and Church structures in Bulawayo and Rusape committed themselves to lobby the Government to infuse peace components in the curricula of children so that as they grow to be the future leaders of the country which leaves a trace of irreplaceable wisdom on peacebuilding and reconciliation within them.

Regional Engagements

A key component of the EPOIZ project that the research identified is the engagement of inter-governmental organisations at the sub-regional, regional, and international levels like Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), African Union (AU) and the UN. The central thesis of these engagements is to establish and strengthen regional and international ecumenical support for ZHOCD in its endeavour to develop a culture of peace in Zimbabwe. To this end, a couple of regional engagements undertaken were shared by the EPOIZ

directorate. A Church's Dialogue meeting with the Southern Africa Development Community Lawyers Association (SADC-LA) was undertaken to critique a draft country assessment report on Zimbabwe's preparedness regarding the holding of elections in July 2013, its constitutionality and legal framework. Key areas of interrogation were the constitutional and legislative framework, role of key institutions for electoral management (e.g. Zimbabwe Electoral Commission), voter registration, abuse of incumbency, observation by international organisations, alternative dispute resolution, role of inter-governmental organisations (SADC and AU), security sector reform, gender representation and manipulation of administrative bodies/Government structures. This meeting was followed up by an engagement meeting with the SADC Electoral Commissions Forum (SADC-ECF and SADC Electoral Observer Mission (SEOM) to appraise them on the Church's perspective on the electoral environment, and its concerns around a number of sticking issues which had the potential of derailing the holding of the election and contestations that could arise.

Further to these meetings, the research also noted that a mission to engage various AU officials, CSOs and ecumenical bodies working on peace and security in Ethiopia was undertaken in order to enhance the Church's knowledge on AU mechanisms for non-state actors' engagement and strengthen networks whilst exploring avenues to apply for accreditation with the AU. Jointly the ZHOCD Executive and EPOIZ secretariat again embarked on a comparative Study to Kenya to compare, learn, share knowledge, ideas, concerns and challenges around healing and reconciliation situations based on the transitional justice process in Kenya in order to strengthen its ecumenical role as the Church. In the advent of the establishment of the NPRC, it was vital that the Church up-scale its unified efforts on healing Zimbabweans of the violence-induced trauma of the last 30 years and set the nation on a path of true reconciliation. To that end, the seven member delegation met with

the National Council of Churches Kenya (NCCCK), Catholic Bishops Conference in Kenya, All Africa Conference of Churches, Association of Evangelicals in Africa, the National Steering Committee on Peace and Conflict Management, Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, Kenya Human Rights Commission, Kenya Peace Network, Kenya Transitional Justice Network, Nairobi Peace Initiative and the Partnership for Peace to equip itself with knowledge that it can use to advocate for an all inclusive reconciliation process in Zimbabwe.

Based on these engagements, it can be detected that EPOIZ has managed to establish relationships with three key SADC institutions which are SADC Lawyers Association (SADC-LA), SADC Electoral Commissions Forum (SADC-ECF) and the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation. It also made headway in establishing regional ecumenical support for peace promotion in Zimbabwe through its engagements in Kenya and Ethiopia. The regional engagement meetings were important in the creation of platforms of information gathering for SADC and AU and provide a contextual analysis which is essential for its work in Zimbabwe. Based on these engagements prior to the electoral period of 2013, it can be postulated that the Church managed to share information on the country's electoral landscape in terms of its preparedness for the Harmonised Elections which also assisted in the regional bodies making a conclusion of the elections.

Capacity Building Initiatives

Realizing that it does not operate in a vacuum but rather in a field filled with practitioners on peacebuilding and development, the Church has had to up its game in building the capacity of its structures on thematic areas that culminate into peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Reckoning the fact that civil society has an assortment of qualified and experienced peace

engineers and the same with some the Government institutions responsible for peace and security, it was a deliberate effort under this project for the ZHOCD Executive, JPCs, Provincial Coordinators and EPOIZ staff to undergo through immense training on Conflict Analysis and Transformation, the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission and on Peacebuilding, Research and Advocacy.

EPOIZ sought to develop a robust engagement and advocacy strategy which ensures that the role of the Church in peace building receives sufficient coverage. In a bid to achieve this, a Conflict Analysis and Advocacy Strategy Development training was organised for the JPCs, General Secretaries and Presidents of umbrella bodies, a Parliamentary Liaison Officer, EPOIZ staff and its development partners. The training imparted skills to the participants on how to analyse conflicts in order to prescribe the correct solutions as well as to advocate on key issues. The successful utilisation of the learnt skills was demonstrated by the joint engagement meeting later held by the Church leaders represented by the Catholic Parliamentary Liaison Officer and two General Secretaries with the Senate Thematic Committee on Gender and Development castigating domestic violence and rape within the Churches. In this meeting the Church was advocating for the regularising of stiffer penalties on clergymen who engage in criminal acts such as rape under the disguise of praying and solving their flock's problems.

Learning from the Parliamentary Liaison Officer, the training brought to the fore the wisdom on why it is important for the Church to carry out advocacy work on behalf of its congregants on a particular well researched issue. In the field of advocacy learning and comparing with the experiences of other countries can be done so as to enrich the interventions of the Church by drawing useful lessons and benchmarking its work based on previous experiences. From

this training, the Church was able to identify who the key advocates, followers, blockers, opponents and those with an indifferent position on the Church's ecumenical role to promote a culture of peace are. An advocacy strategy was developed after the training which centres on the need for the Church to accelerate its work on promoting Constitutionalism whilst also speaking to the challenges dominating in the political economy.

The New Zimbabwean Constitution provides for the establishment of a National Peace and Reconciliation Commission whose mandate is to be the principal instrument for institutionalizing peace, healing and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. The Constitution places a 10-year sunset clause on the NPRC though a year and almost a half have gone by without its establishment and operationalisation. The legislation to guide the operations of the Commission is still expected to be submitted before Parliament whilst the recruitment process for Commissioners has still not been finalised. In both of these processes, the Church saw a window of opportunity through which it can play a pivotal role in ensuring that the reconciliation framework in Zimbabwe is all inclusive and is regarded as a bottom-up process as opposed to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa which was regarded as a top-down process as shared in the Introduction of this research. Against this backdrop, the Church through the EPOIZ project organised a capacity building workshop for its leaders and partners to learn on the functions of the NPRC and the healing and reconciliation context of Zimbabwe so as to strategically situate ZHOCD in the formation, constitution and effective operation of this life changing national process. The training was viewed as an important undertaking for the religious leaders in developing a relevant conceptual framework for understanding peace, healing and reconciliation in the Zimbabwean context by EPOIZ partners whom this research engaged. One of the post-workshop follow-up activities for ZHOCD was to undertake an experience-sharing exchange visit to countries that have set

up similar institutions whose national experiences on healing and reconciliation either match or contrast the Zimbabwe experience. In light of this, a comparative study visit was made to Kenya as already shared.

In the same training, the Church identified the need for it to up-scale its efforts in engaging the existing structures that may feed into the NPRC for instance the Parliamentary Thematic Committee on Justice and Survey, the Justice Department on Legal Drafting and the Organ on National Healing and Reconciliation and Integration (ONHRI). ONHRI was established in 2008 during the GNU under the GPA Article VII phase and was supposed work towards an infrastructure for peace to end its life with the coming in of the new Constitution. However due to the delays in the realignment of laws by the different Ministries and the tasked Inter Ministerial Committee, this institution has continued to operate though now housed under the Office of the President and Cabinet (which by all standards compromises its neutrality). As a response to this direct need the Church partnered in the hosting of the International Day of Peace Commemorations in Mutare with ONHRI. A representative from ONHRI in confirmation highlighted the participation of the EPOIZ Director in the three planning meetings held for this event and the actual commemorations on behalf of the Church. Based on the lessons learnt from Kenya and other countries' mistakes in the reconciliation process coupled with the training received, the Church has been better equipped to make meaningful contributions to the Zimbabwe's reconciliation framework under the NPRC.

Research Papers

Realising that the previous research papers that had been published on existing conflicts were solo efforts of the Church, the EPOIZ project commissioned a Desk Review on the Peace and

Conflict Mapping in Zimbabwe. The research process involved the collation of previous work done by member bodies on Peace and Conflict in Zimbabwe juxtaposed with the current trends and dynamics of conflicts some of which have been shared in Chapter 1. An array of conflicts were identified under the mapping exercise some of which included the unfair distribution of wealth and resources, sexual abuse and raping of women and girl children, unavailability of transparency and accountability in business practices, poor service delivery, disputed elections, violent disposition of land or forced relocation without compensation and the rise of false prophets who masquerade to be the clergy using obscene doctrines that violate human rights. Added to this, incidents of high level corruption that threatens to corrode the moral fabric of the nation were also noted by the exercise which will need the attention of the Church. The research has learnt that conflict can be seen to have many causes that have a snowball effect of violence that begins within families into the broader community of schools, villages, political parties and businesses.

The research managed to consolidate the different recommendations that have been pencilled in for the Church to work on so that this becomes an ecumenical effort. Given the long standing history of Churches in Zimbabwe of quiet diplomacy and mediation that promotes a peaceful co-existence; they have initiated a process of identifying how the mentioned conflicts could be resolved under the EPOIZ project. The conflict mapping research document is now being used as a tool for engagement with different stakeholders imploring for their contribution to ending the vicious cycles of conflict. This was evidenced by the sharing of some of these conflicts at the Peace Celebrations and exhorting the traditional leaders, security sector, Government Ministries to make a contribution to building peace.

As a responsive mechanism in addressing the documented conflicts, EPOIZ subsequently conducted a Field Study on the Reconciliation Models which speak to the realities of the communities in Zimbabwe. The rationale of the study was based on the understanding that often times transitional justice processes tend to be elite-driven, elite-managed and elite-monopolised to the extent that the needs and interests of communities are seriously overlooked. Since reconciliation is not a one-size-fits-all process, it was essential to try and understand the needs of the communities in terms of the kind of models that would address their specific contextual peculiarities. The study was done in Honde Valley, Karoi, Buhera, Gutu, Bikita, Chiredzi, Tsholotsho and Hwange. The research managed to establish the history of violence incurred in the recent past by the communities and what responsive actions they have taken using their own community-based initiatives in attempts to build peace as well as to identifying key strategic interlocutors and/or mediators in the future. Issues of concern that emerged were to do with the general participation of the victims in the reconciliation process, perceived immunity of perpetrators given the lack of progress in the prosecution of those responsible for the violence, whilst others are released back into society without serving their full jail terms because of the Presidential Pardons just like the case of Kombayi referred to in Chapter 1, the use of locally based initiatives to redress the violations as a means to initiate peacebuilding and how far back the reconciliation process should go.

The research came up with a host of recommendations focusing on different sectors in society. Out of those recommendations, ZHOCD needed to develop an engagement plan geared towards targeting specific sectors which the EPOIZ staff mentioned that they have already done so and it will inform most of their future engagements. While the peacebuilding activities of the Churches might largely be funded by donors at present, they have an understanding that their ecumenical initiatives cannot be simply crafted in a project matrix

with easily discernible outcomes. The complexities of peace-building require a combination of processes and events to bring about the desired effect. One such process is the ecumenical role that Church can play in trying to ensure that people make peace with their past and can begin to have hope when they look ahead to the future. The Churches understand that reconciliation and peace building are a long haul process and therefore a well organized and well-resourced research facility is essential in ensuring that the intervention strategies are effective. It is through this introspection that the Church committed to influence the debate on healing and reconciliation in general and indeed the work of the NPRC and thrive to sustain itself as a united body especially after receiving training on the NPRC and its ten functions.

One of the most recent works of the Church done in a bid to promote peace is An Analysis of the Constitutional Provisions that guarantee Peace in Zimbabwe and how the Church in its entirety can significantly contribute to Constitutionalism. In order for EPOIZ's aim of a culture of peace to come to fruition, it desperately felt that it needed to ascertain its role in promoting constitutionalism which upholds fashionable notions of pluralism, liberalisation, democracy and human rights, rule of law, as well as good governance and peacebuilding. The aim of carrying out this analysis was for EPOIZ and the JPCs and other Church structures to understand where the Church needs to locate itself in lobbying and advocating for the respect of law as well as to inform the design of the engagements to be done by the Church that contribute to the building of lasting peace.

On March 16, 2013, 94.5% of the Zimbabweans that cast their ballots approved a new constitution in a referendum paving way for its endorsement by Parliament before being signed into law on May 22, 2013 which later came into full force on the 22nd of August 2013. In its preamble the constitution implores the guidance and support of the Almighty God. This

preamble places Churches and related faith-based institutions in good stead to positively influence the constitution and promote constitutionalism. Constitutionalism provides that an enacted Constitution should hold back or limit the powers a Government wields and protect fundamental rights that citizens enjoy, often through enshrining a bill of rights so that the nation views it with legitimacy. It is more about fulfilling the letter and spirit of the Constitution which requires a political climate that has respect of the primary values and freedoms enshrined therein. The new Constitution kindles hope in the hearts millions of Zimbabweans that it heralds the dawn of a positive era for constitutionalism and inclusive democracy. It also rekindles debate regarding the potential impact of the Constitution on development, peace, healing and reconciliation. According to the Church, it would be wishful thinking for Constitutionalism to take place without a demonstrable political will from Government and an enabling legislation and realignment of laws which in this context is an excess of 450 laws. This therefore leaves room for the Church to engage the relevant authorities in ensuring that the operating framework that breeds Constitutionality and Constitutionalism is made available.

This piece of work is expected to contribute to the pool of knowledge and understanding of the Church on the Constitution and its provisions that guarantee and/or enhance peace and most significantly how it can contribute to promoting Constitutionalism in Zimbabwe as a precursor of attaining a peaceful environment. There is scope for the Church through the Parliamentary Liaison Office, ZHOCD Executive and the EPOIZ directorate to engage Parliament and its various structures including the Portfolio Committees together with the Executive, Cabinet and Presidency level, to press for the setting up of a Parliamentary implementation mechanism for constitutional realignment.

Chapter Conclusion

Whilst the presence of peace in Zimbabwe cannot be attributed to one factor or the Church alone, it is the submission of this research that apart from the core mission of evangelizing, the Church in a united fashion has engaged meaningfully with stakeholders and stood out to speak for the truth, peace and justice in national matters. All these array of initiatives utilised by the Church through its ecumenical platform, EPOIZ, have managed to contribute to the prevailing peace context in Zimbabwe after decades of repeated violence. For instance, the electoral periods of 2000, 2005 and 2008 were profusely characterised by politically motivated violence which as a result of these engagements became absolutely contrary during the 2013 Harmonised elections as envisaged by the peaceful electoral landscape prior to, during and after the polls.

The EPOIZ platform has managed to revitalize the Church in realizing that there is an ecumenical role it can play to promote peace. As much as the Apostolic and Zionist Churches have what others call “weird doctrines” which promote child marriages and oppression of women in a society that is trying to promote gender equality, they have also stepped up and stretched their hands to join the ZHOCD grouping of the Church so as to rework their values and beliefs in order to integrate with the society. At the launch of the National Action Plan to fight against sexual abuse and rape almost all stakeholders were pointing their fingers at the Apostolic Churches as the main promoters of sexual abuse and rape within the Church. At this gathering the former ZHOCD Chairman committed that the other member bodies under ZHOCD will work closely with UDACIZA in building their capacity to be able to discern what doctrines violate human rights and what corrective measures can be taken. This clearly

shows the spirit of ecumenism and oneness in trying to promote peace in turn to have the Zimbabwe that its citizens want.

The contribution made by the Church in speaking with an amplified, united and stronger voice through the engagements with different stakeholders, peace celebrations and prayers as well as press statements and pastoral letters demonstrated that it greatly rewards when efforts are done collectively in building sustainable peace. This endorses the judgment made by Maregere (2013) that the ecumenical role and collectiveness of the Church managed to ensure that the country maintains a path of peace through its robust engagements. By and large the research insinuates that while the peace that has prevailed from the GNU era after the “talks” to date can be attributed to a lot of factors, the collective efforts of the Church under the ZHOCD’s Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative in Zimbabwe project in promoting peace before, during and after elections cannot go unnoticed. The initiatives were directed at working with individuals in promoting peace and then the society at large which in turn has resulted in the changing of behaviors and attitudes of some individuals and altogether the change of society thereby confirming the Individual Change Theory. Commitment has been made by political party leaders, Government Ministries and Organs, community leadership, security sector and congregants to work together in ensuring that there is peace, co-existence and tolerance in Zimbabwe. This has directly seen the conversion of perpetrators of violence in previous years of elections to be peace brokers such as youths who were used to canvas for votes have now become the actors of dramas and singers in choirs during the Peace Celebrations and Days of Prayer. The Church through all these actions has spoken for the voiceless majority, brought to the light invaluable information about the institutionalised injustices committed by perpetrators and sensitized the populace of their

rights and responsibilities thereby becoming active participants in political affairs of the nation.

CHAPTER 3: ENHANCING THE PEACEBUILDING PROCESS OF EPOIZ

Introduction

The preceding Chapter of this research has extensively outlined the key initiatives done by the Church under its collective platform, the Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative in Zimbabwe in a bid to promote sustainable peace. From the synthesis, it can be learnt that there has been a great improvement from the solo efforts of the Church published in the CCSF research to a united, amplified and stronger voice that promotes an enduring culture of peace from all quarters. While the list of initiative in not exhaustive of all that the Church has done, the cycle of violence that had become a norm and the silence on human rights violations has deliberately been broken and for things to get even better, more work is still to be done. As much as the research has applauded and analysed the achievements made by the Church in its endeavor to promote to peace, it could not turn a blind eye to the challenges that the Church has faced and what areas or processes can be strengthened to achieve lasting peace. This Chapter will highlight the challenges that the Church has faced on its journey of peacebuilding as well as delve into what strengthening needs to be done and in what areas or joint efforts.

Challenges faced by the Church in the Promotion of Peace

Who is or can be part of the Church?

The research noted that this question has been difficult to answer in drawing the line of who the Church is or not and who can speak on behalf of the Church or not. The sudden rise of the

prosperity gospel being preached by “Prophets or Anointed Man of God” has made it difficult for one to tell whether they are speaking on behalf of God and the Church to the nation or not. People have failed to separate when a Church leader speaks in their individual capacity and when they speak on behalf of the Church. To others who may not have an understanding of the composition of ZHOCD, when they hear anything about a Church leader that is not in line with his mandate, the whole Church is painted with a black brush. An example is when the founder of the United Family Interdenominational Ministries, Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa performed official duties at the ZANU PF Anti Sanctions March in his individual capacity, the Church was regarded as becoming politically aligned to ZANU PF and therefore the confidence entrusted upon the Church as a whole became diluted. This also applies to Bishop Kunonga who was excommunicated from the Anglican Church who overtly affirmed his support for ZANU PF. The media has become very good at picking such stories and labeling it as the Church that is endorsing the leader of a political party yet its obliged to remain apolitical and neutral.

Another challenge linked with this is that, as a result of the rise in Prosperity Gospel Speakers and Prophets good at delivering prophecies, the Prophets have issued prophecies that at times do not build the nation in faith, hope, love and peace but rather have instilled fear in people over what will happen next in the country or how will things be like. The famous all night prayer “Judgment Night” hosted in Harare every year by the UFIC Prophet, Makandiwa, has drawn people from all walks of life to attend this mammoth event. In the process, not only has it been widely received and enjoyed by some, to others it has instilled fear and a chill over what bad declaration or prophecy may be said and how it may turn up for people in the country. The Prophet before the event referenced the theme scripture of the Judgment Night to be coming from Exodus Chapter 12 which talks about the angel of death that was to appear

in Egypt killing people. When such words and declarations are spoken to fragile believers, and those of that other denominations, it creates a defragmented society and a calamity may strike. This has therefore become a challenge to the Church that whilst they are putting every effort they can towards nation building, some prophets seem to be dismantling their efforts.

Operating Environment juxtaposed with the Legal and Policy Framework

Even as much as the Church has the political ear of leaders nationally and regionally due to the large constituency that it serves and is able to influence, it does not operate in a vacuum. In the Zimbabwean context, the Government has made it hard for Church leaders to voice out their concerns and those it represents by setting up frameworks that hamper these efforts. The enacting of laws like The Public Order Security Act (POSA) and now the possible regulation of Churches in Zimbabwe has curtailed and interfered with the activities of the Church. An example mentioned from the discussions with the EPOIZ staff is during the peace Celebrations where they had to get police clearances for bringing people to meet and prayer for the country. During the celebrations, representatives from the Central Intelligence Office came to scout on whether the meetings were solely around praying for the nation or there were political discussions. One incident which the research witnessed while collecting this data was in Karoi where the Provincial Coordinator for the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, a Reverend was taken from the meeting to the police station to be quizzed on why the Church was praying for peace as if there is no peace in the country of which they were basing on the assumption that EPOIZ was a pressure group.

On the issue of Church Regulation, the Ministry of Home Affairs recently was on the record pushing for Government to regulate and control Church operations on the basis of trying to

curb the human rights violations in the form of sexual abuse of women and children. A draft Parliamentary Bill is already in circulation and it speaks on the how voluntary contributions in Church should be used for charity and not for profits and how they can make use of the media guided by the law among other provisions. The ZHOCD leadership is of the idea that whilst the registration may sound like a noble cause, what they are aware of is that this stance by Government is a way of trying to tune, control and spoon feed the Church on what to say and what not to say against the Government just as they try to do that with the Civil Society. Antagonism and sheer mistrust by Government on the work of the Church erects barriers of nation building dialogues that contribute to development and peace. There are several pieces of legislation that deal with perpetrators to which when the crime of sexual abuse is committed by a man of the cloth, it still would have been done by an individual and not the Church. The Church therefore feels that such pieces of legislation can still put to books what the Church leaders would have done wrong and not create separate new laws that restrain their effort to achieve lasting peace instead of putting much of their efforts to realign existing laws.

Funding the Initiatives

Another challenge that holds back to the achievement of the cause for this project is that while the efforts are of the Church , what gets brings them together is funding which comes from donors. Information obtained from one of its funding partners is that the EPOIZ project is funded by a consortium of donors such as the European Union, Hivos, Swiss Embassy, Tear Fund, Cafod and Hex Germany among others to initiate an ecumenical platform for Churches to speak together in a unified and amplified voice to promote an enduring culture of peace as well as citizen participation in key national processes such as the elections. The

funds are however supposed to last up to end of April 2015. Given the dwindling funds of the donor community, the Church has not yet been able to get more funds to continue this joint initiative after April 2015 which has a bearing on the sustainability of the Church's efforts made thus far.

The declining in the funds from donors has also resulted in competition over the few resources among the Church, civil society groups, Government institutions or organs and pseudo faith based organisations seeking to promote peace in the name of the Church. Acknowledging that the Government of Zimbabwe is not financially stable, organs like ONHRI and even the yet to be established NPRC need funding from donor agencies for instance the United Nations Development Programme is supporting the work of the Church and Civil Society Forum partnered together with ONHRI in promoting peace in Zimbabwe. The availability of competition has also contributed to the duplication of efforts by faith based organisations representing the Church. Findings from this research reveal that there are groupings like the Ecumenical Church Leaders Forum, Churches in Manicaland that also seek to promote peace, healing and national reconciliation in Zimbabwe. If these grouping's effort are joined together with those of ZHOCD under EPOIZ, a stronger, more united and amplified voice would emerge and be heard and the resources would be channeled to one institution with coordinated structures.

EPOIZ's Lean Structure

Further linked to the above challenge on finances, is that of a lean structure of EPOIZ. Though it managed to facilitate the implementation of all the initiatives mentioned in Chapter 2, EPOIZ only has a directorate made up of the Director, Research and Advocacy Officer and

the Finance and Administration Officer. In terms of programming, the Research and Advocacy officer is responsible for project implementation, report writing, budget monitoring and expenditure tracking, advocacy work, project monitoring and communication whilst the Finance and Administration Officer is responsible for budget monitoring and expenditure tracking, financial reporting, human resources management, administration logistics as well as being a driver whilst the Director oversees everything. Had there been provincial structures that support the work done by the Church through the EPOIZ project, the magnitude of the achievements made and impact would have been different. If the EPOIZ structure had not been this lean, the coordination of the work done by umbrella bodies would be manageable.

Additionally, since ZHOCD at the moment has only one running project which is EPOIZ, it does not have a secretariat that is solely for ZHOCD but instead uses the EPOIZ staff to oversee and double with other interventions the Church needs to make beyond peace. This therefore divides the time that is supposed to be dedicated to contributing to a peaceful fabric in Zimbabwe. It again slows the implementation of some project activities which reduces the impact of the ecumenical efforts of the Church.

Coordination of Member Bodies' Efforts

The research also managed to observe that outside the activities of EPOIZ that were listed in their proposal, very few other activities have been done stemming from feedback and input from the JPCs of the member bodies. The few activities include a Solidarity Visit the Church Leaders undertook to the families in Chingwizi affected by the floods and participation in the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development Launch Meeting of the National Action Plan against Sexual Abuse and Rape and the follow up meetings. Outside

these activities, the JPCs who are supposed to feed into the EPOIZ project have reluctantly done so to support this structure. What they have done to the best of their ability is to support the EPOIZ planned activities and not to provide extra information on what the Church needs to do jointly emanating from observations made. From a conversation with the EPOIZ staff, there is a possibility that the JPCs feel like EPOIZ was established to replace their efforts which could be a reason why they do not proactively feed information into the central system to speak on behalf of the Church. That could be an attribution to why the Church can release a press statement as ZHOCD but still find a member of ZHOCD releasing a statement on its own just like after the Harmonised Election results were announced, ZHOCD released a press statement whilst CCJP also released its own statement with almost the same information. EPOIZ has the Churches' mandate to coordinate their work and give a voice to the peace-building efforts on what direction the Church needs to take but if there is no information fed into the process, coordination of efforts fails in the long run.

Response Rate to situations due to Bureaucracies and different Doctrines of Member

Bodies

Due to the composite nature of the member bodies that make up the Church under ZHOCD, there are incidences where the Church has been slow to react or respond to prevailing situations. The member bodies have different doctrines, principles and perceptions but what only joints them together are their statements of faith which they submitted upon joining ZHOCD. For a decision or a statement to be made on behalf of the Church, the EPOIZ Directorate send information to the JPCs to contribute their thoughts, then it's forwarded to the General Secretaries and Presidents for their input then upon receiving feedback, it is finalised by the EPOIZ Directorate. No statement can be published by EPOIZ on behalf of

the Church without a nod especially from the General Secretaries. This in turn has made the Church sluggish in responding to issues making their effort somewhat irrelevant. Three examples given were on the Press Statements drafted; one condemning the intra party political violence that occurred in ZANU PF and in MDC, the second one congratulating the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development on the successful launch of the National Action Plan on fighting against sexual abuse and rape and urging all players to contribute towards a peace cause and the third statement which welcomed the call made to the public by the Standing Rules and Orders Committee of the Parliament of Zimbabwe for nominations of persons to serve on the Independent Constitutional Commissions namely the Electoral Commission, Human Rights Commission, Gender Commission, Media Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission and the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission. The research learnt that in all these circumstances press statements were written and shared within the structures of the Church but took longer than it was supposed to be which ultimately made the statements irrelevant in publishing them weeks after.

Strengthening the Ecumenical Role of the Church in Promoting Sustainable Peace

Having learnt that Peacebuilding as a process is not an easy one size fits all process and the nature and dynamics of conflicts are dissimilar, this research commends the Church for all the work it has done in ensuring that Zimbabwe breaks the chain of violence as a united front. It acknowledges the multi pronged approaches that have been utilised by the Church in the different phases of violence in denouncing and speaking the truth blatantly. The Church has stood in for the people in querying and shaming all wrong deeds that perpetuated social injustices, inequalities and uproar amidst of its congregants. However based on the findings from the research highlighted in Chapter 2 this section of the research will proffer

recommendations on how the Church can strengthen its ecumenical role in promoting peace that lasts and counter some of the indentified challenges mentioned above.

The first port of call for the Churches is that it needs to reclaim its vibrant and amplified prophetic voice and not to share it with or leave it for other actors. Only the Church has a prophetic voice and by it not being used by the Church in a way promotes violence (either structural or physical). When the Church does not use its voice to correct, rebuke, denounce, condemn and speak healing and peace, silently it will be approving of the status quo of things. In the past few months when there was violence within the ZANU PF and MDC political parties, the Church did not speak in the public domain which could wrongly imply that the Church only condemns inter political party violence but acknowledges and accepts intra-party violence taking place. Consistency in delivering its message against violence needs to be maintained and not to cherry pick the nature of conflicts it speaks out on and others it leaves out. Church leaders need not be afraid of the consequences of exercising their prophetic voice in wisdom as it is their mandate to be God's mouth piece in denouncing violence without considering what the political leaders, intelligence agencies, police or party militia will do to them

In as much as the EPOIZ directorate and funding partner mentioned that funding is dwindling and the current project is ending in April 2015, there is need for the Church's fundraising efforts to be increased. This must not be left only in the hands of the EPOIZ staff but contributions must be made by member bodies to signify the oneness amongst them. Ironically some of the well thriving business people in the country are congregants of the Churches that are under ZHOCD but have not been engaged to support the Church's efforts in promoting peace. The Church needs to domestically mobilise for resources as much as it

may fundraise from the traditional donors like European Union, United Development Programme, Hivos, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and others. However there will be need to put a disclaimer that the Church stands for what is right and in the event that there is a conflict of interest or compromise of principles, it vows to stand on the truth in pursuit of peace for the sake of the entirety of the nation.

Learning from the research done by the Church on promoting Constitutionalism, Constitutionalism can only come to realisation when the laws of the country have been realigned to the Constitution of Zimbabwe. A year and five months have gone past after the new Constitution was signed into law whilst one year two months have also lapsed after it came into full force yet there still remains an excess of 450 laws to be realigned. The new constitutional dispensation should not become a tyranny of the majority. Churches joined together need to help shape the shift from politics of polarization and bitterness, to that of inclusivity and pursuit of the common good. Promoting Constitutionalism encompasses a lot of factors as well as programmes to be done whilst it is also a lengthy process that can be attained over time. Firstly the Church needs to assert its non-partisanship, independence and autonomy for broader acceptance, integrity and credibility. Given its large constituency, the Church needs to play a complimentary role on the efforts made by the State in disseminating, raising awareness and building knowledge of the constitution through civic education programmes in schools, colleges and universities, through radio and television programmes and even in the Church at men and women's fellowships and youth meetings where the different Sections of the Constitution are discussed. Jointly the Church should promote Constitutionality and Constitutionalism through direct engagement with Parliament and its various structures including Portfolio Committees and this can make use of the Parliamentary Liaison Office. Article 141 of the Constitution provides that Parliament must facilitate public

involvement in its legislative processes and must ensure that interested parties are consulted about laws that come before Parliament as well as to conduct business in a transparent manner.

The research further recommends that notwithstanding the call for nominations of Commissioners made by the Standing Rules and Orders Committee of the Parliament of Zimbabwe, the Church should hastily lobby Parliament for the establishment of the NPRC and operationalisation of all the Commissions in an apolitical, transparent and accountable fashion. This comes from the background where the research noted the relationship that has been established by the Church with ONHRI (housed under the Office of the President and Cabinet) which under the new Constitution has no legal mandate to be operational. Of more concern is that the NPRC will only last for 10 years and a year has gone past to which learning from the experiences of South Africa's TRC and other countries, the process of reconciliation needs time for perpetrators to go through the process of truth telling whilst also allowing the victims to go through the forgiving and healing process so as to be reconciled together. This goes hand in hand with the need for the realignment of laws as these Commissions will need to execute their mandate guided by enabling legislation. The Church further needs to cascade down to its structures information on the roles and functions of these Commissions as they are interlinked.

ZHOCD has a key role to play in fostering a spirit of reconciliation in Zimbabwe. The leadership of the Christian Denominations are willing and able to engage fully in this national process. The setting up of a National Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism is provided for as a function of the NPRC in the Constitution, the Church therefore needs to already set up a coordinated conflict monitoring mechanism to complement the work of

NPRC. It can be a responsibility for different stakeholders and community based including media for the people to be capacitated and conscientise on possible future conflicts though the Church will play an oversight role. ZHOCD has achieved a vital first step of its vision in clearly understanding the role of the NPRC, ensuring consensual understanding of core concepts of healing, peace and reconciliation. What is also central to this national process is the citizens' understanding of the same Commission and its mandate so that reconciliation and peace is nationally achieved. Using its considerable resources of leadership, infrastructure, a broad constituency and its moral authority will be vital to moving forward a national reconciliation process.

Mainly the reach of the project has focused on trying to address national scale problems due to the lean structure of EPOIZ yet in the grassroots that is where conflicts breed and rupture into violence. ZHOCD'S interventions should focus on establishing a national office and provincial structures that address the concerns of locals and also feed into the national office so as not to only go to the grassroots to celebrate peace yet in actual fact there may be subtle conflicts that need mediation or the intervention of the Church but to ensure that a continuous process unfolds within the different provinces which supports and promotes peacebuilding at household level.

For people to have a correct view and impression of the Church, the Church should forever remain apolitical and speak with fear and favour. Some of the clips from the FGDs in the peace celebrations were stated as follow:-

“Most Church leaders are preoccupied with increasing their congregations and may find it difficult to lead reconciliation processes. Some of them hold political party positions, and are reluctant or afraid to address political matters.” (Hwange adults)

“Some of them [Church leaders] are too soft, reluctant or afraid to address political matters but in essence they should preach peace messages.” (Rusape women)

Whenever a Church leader or anyone openly discloses their political affiliation, the Church should abruptly excommunicate them from the structures of the Church so as not to dilute the integrity of the Church and also to send the correct signals to the audience. The bible instructs the Church to stand in moral uprightness and not to fall from the grace of God but to defend the oppressed, the widows, the orphans and the poor. Some leaders get bribed by politicians and later get dumped after being used and are later ridiculed. The Church should guard against corruption and being told what to say and what not to say.

Another fundamental recommendation that this research offers is the need for the Church to strengthen its partnerships with other faith based organisations working in the same field of peacebuilding and reconciliation so as to intensify efforts and reduce competition over few resources available. Such organisations include Christian Alliance of Zimbabwe, Silvera House, and the Ecumenical Leadership Forum. The Church needs not to go about criticizing other Churches and their effort in promoting peace by saying who has done much more than the other, because this is what then politicians use to divide and rule.

Ecumenism should also cascade among Church structures for example Silvera House as an agent of the Catholic Church should be able to work together with Christian Care an agent of

ZCC and other organisations similarly to make certain that ecumenism is not only at the top level but is also rooted down within the Church structures. Being that as it may the Church still needs to maintain its purity and neutrality and stay reachable to both the victims and perpetrators of violence so as to promote a restorative approach to peacebuilding as opposed to a retributive approach. ZHOCD needs to open lines of communication with the chiefs by organizing multid denominational meetings in rural areas, where conflict mediation and reconciliation can be discussed. The Churches can play a role in familiarizing the chiefs with their Constitutional responsibilities, which include their role as impartial mediators.

One thing that has tainted the efforts of the Church is the increase in the number of cases on sexual abuse and raping of women and girls by men of the clergy all in the name of “*kushandirwa*” (being assisted to get things right) with the likes of the famous Pastor Gumbura, the founder of End Times Message Church who was convicted of rape. Church leaders should work hard to fight against such conduct within the Church as this stirs conflict and division instead of peace and reconciliation. Churches must not hesitate to hold their own pastors and congregants accountable when they break the law. Before the Church is in a strong position to ecumenically resolve broader conflicts of any kind, there is clearly a case for introspection and attempts to resolve their own conflicts, both intra and inter-denominational. Reconciliation needs to begin at home. Certain denominations have a strong perception that they are looked down on by other Church groupings. All the Church bodies need to address this to ensure that all congregations on the ground are able to work together equally.

For successes to clearly be told and assessed there is need for a thorough documentation of the Church’s interventions in all aspects. The Church is said to have done magnificent work

in promoting a culture of peace over the years but the documentation by the Church itself excluding the researches done by other institutions or the academia does not mirror what is echoed. Most of the literature available in the public domain has been more of academic researches and newspaper articles based on the author's opinion than the Church documenting its work. An example is about the closed door engagement meetings the Church had with the political parties and the GPA facilitator, had it not been the interactions done with one of the Church leaders, this information would have remained hidden only in their hearts and not written elsewhere for public consumption. In making an assessment on the ecumenical role played by the Church in the promotion of peace without such vital information may make one underestimate the actual contributions made by the Church.

The Zimbabwe We Want document of 2006 picked a momentum on voicing the concerns of the Church to different stakeholders. There are now approximately 8 years since the document was published and disseminated. There is therefore need for the Church to revisit the Zimbabwe We Want juxtaposing with the research findings of all its research and lessons it has learnt from implementing the EPOIZ project. The Zimbabwe We Want was written before the violent elections of 2008, the GNU and the New Constitution which means that the country has been ushered into a new political dispensation. The Church now therefore needs to speak to the realities of the current environment so as to achieve promoting a peace culture in Zimbabwe. An All Stakeholders Conference can be organised to validate the process and get feedback on what needs to be included in the document developed by the Church. Stakeholders to be invited should not only be from within the Church but to include key strategic persons from Government, Political Parties, Traditional Leadership, Business Sector, Civil Society, the Academia, Security Sector and the Church among other important structures. This does not only pick up the momentum the Zimbabwe We Want Document had

but rather it makes visible what good the Church is doing for the sake of the nation and also promote joint nation building and peaceful co-existence.

Chapter Conclusion

The efforts towards peacebuilding can never be casting stone. This Chapter of the research only gave an outline of challenges shared by the respondents in the interviews and discussions to which the second section of the Chapter tried to proffer recommendations which the Church needs to assimilate to strengthen their interventions.

CONCLUSION

The journey of the Church in standing for peace and justice has been an exhausting one but worthwhile. The experiences of Zimbabwe and learning from other countries like Kenya South Africa and the Great Lakes Region, have put to the fore the paying back in nature of ecumenical efforts of the Church in promoting peace. The Church's large constituency and positioning in society has given it leverage to champion for a violence free country characterised by peaceful co-existence, tolerance and where previously conflicting parties are able to work together in building the Zimbabwe that its citizens want.

In an effort to assess the ecumenical role played by the Church in the promotion of peace in Zimbabwe, with the Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative as the focus area, the research began by giving an outline of the trends and dynamics of the conflicts in Zimbabwe. The conflict phases that had a national impact included: the Matebeleland and Midlands Provinces disturbances of 1982-1987, the unstructured and chaotic land grabs of 2000 under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme, Operation Murambatsvina of 2005 by Government, the political violence prior to and post the electoral periods of 2000, 2005 and 2008 and also the religious violence within and among Churches in 2007 and 2014. This mixed bag of conflicts resulted in the straining of the social fabric and causing divisions, intimidation, intolerance and societal disorientation.

In light of this context, the research further went on establish in general the role that has been played by the Church in Zimbabwe and this involved dissecting both solo and joint initiative of the Church to promote peace. The Church's role included documenting the atrocities of the Gukurahundi massacres, castigating violent seizures of farms and the destruction of the so

called “illegal structures” under Operation Murambatsvina by advocating for peace and justice, human rights protection and good governance. The prophetic voice of the Church became audible in denouncing politically motivated violence prior to, during and after the holding of elections in 2000, 2005 and 2008 thereby remaining the conscience of the nation. A critique of its effort to broker peace was discussed outlining both the strengths and weakness of these interventions.

Narrowing down the work done by the Church to promote peace, the research unpacked the initiatives of the Church under its joint platform called the Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative in Zimbabwe (EPOIZ). The Church realised that the Church’s effort in the previous year had been uncoordinated and were solitary in nature, it deliberately created the EPOIZ platform to jointly amplify its united and stronger voice in calling for peace. Under this initiative, the Church has undertaken a robust engagement strategy with key political and democratic institutions including but not limited to, political parties, civil society, business, media, traditional leaders and key Global Political Agreement institutions connected to issues of building peace such as the Organ for National Healing and Reconciliation Integration (ONHRI). It encouraged mediation and resolution as well as to highlight issues of concern and violence through press statements, pastoral letters, position papers, engagement meetings and preaching in its structures. The Church has been able to research on the nature and dynamics of conflict in Zimbabwe, the appropriate reconciliation models whilst also carrying out and analysis of how it can contribute to Constitutionalism as a precursor of peace. These tools have collectively been used to condemn the acts of violence and not the people, whilst promoting healing and peace.

From all the engagements made under this research and literature read, it can thus be noted that the Church has played an essential ecumenical role in the promotion of peace in Zimbabwe. It has managed to turn around what used to be emotive and violent election periods to what is now a process of peaceful selection of future leaders. It has promoted peaceful co-existence in communities through the convening of peace prayers and celebration whilst it also had exercised its prophetic voice in rebuking, correcting, denouncing and condemning violent acts. The research has learnt that due to that advantage of a large constituency and an ear inclined to be listened to by political leaders, the Church is better placed to act as a neutral arbiter and a broker of peace which however needs support from other institutions.

The successes of its work however have not come on a silver platter as the Church has faced a couple of challenges. Some of which include the lack of funding to support its initiatives and to broaden its structures to provincial level, the operating environment where its efforts are curtailed by existing and proposed pieces of legislation, the delays in responding to emerging issues due to protocols and the dilution of the Church leaders' voice due to the public disclosure of other Church leaders on their political affiliation.

For the Church to strengthen its ecumenical role in peacebuilding processes, the research recommended that there is need for the Church to reaffirm and reclaim its prophetic voice so as to speak consistently in criticizing violence from whatever quarters. The Church will need to do a self introspection and correct habits that distract its congregants in working for peace. It is the submission of this research that the Church should undergo a resource mobilisation drive both domestically and internationally so as to be able to finance its structures from national to provincial level. In order for the Church to continue having an ear from leaders

and to continue being regarded as a neutral arbiter, there is need to remain apolitical in all interventions and exercise neutrality at all times yet stating the facts as they are without fear and favour. The research is of the idea that peacebuilding is not a one size fits all process and therefore the Church needs to treat each case with a different and suitable approach and that for peace, reconciliation and justice to be attained, the participation of citizens; perpetrators and victims in a bottom–up process opens up windows of opportunities for tolerance, co-existence, forgiveness, reconciliation and ultimately lasting peace. Lastly, the Church therefore should prioritise ministering to individual to facilitate their change in behaviours and attitude which will result in the changing of a society thereby ultimately contributing to peace in the country and the region.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction

Tendayi Bobo is my name. I am a Master of Arts in Development Studies student studying with the Midlands State University. I am carrying out a research/ dissertation on **“The Ecumenical Role played by the Church in promoting Peace in Zimbabwe: Case of the Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative”**.

In order to collect data, I will administer the questions on the questionnaire whilst concurrently recording with an audio recorder so as not to miss any detail. In the process of recording all conversations, confidentiality and anonymity is guaranteed as part of the research ethics. The names of who says what is not for record only the content of opinions, which can help the Churches to understand what it is that they can do to promote peace and reconciliation in the country will be recorded. In the event that you do not feel comfortable in having the discussions recorded, please allow me to write down your responses as they are which will constitute a section of my research. Kindly note that there is no wrong or right answer as perceptions and experiences differ from person to person.

For any questions concerning this research, please do not hesitate to contact my Supervisor, Mr. R. Sillah from the University on: sillah@msu.ac.zw

SECTION A: Personal Information

Age.... > 18 19-30 31-40 41-50 51<

Sex Female Male

Marital Status..... Single Married Widow Divorced

Religion Christian Muslim African Tradition Other

SECTION B: Key Questions

Objective: To undertake a conflict analysis of Zimbabwe.

1. What are the natures of conflicts that have emerged in Zimbabwe at a national scale from 1980-2014 that you are aware of?

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2. Who have been the victims and the perpetrators in these cases and what became of them?

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3. What impact did these violent conflicts have on the nation?

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Objective: To give an overview of the role of the Church in peacebuilding in Zimbabwe.

4. What is your understanding of peacebuilding or how can peace be promoted within a society?

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5. What peacebuilding activities has the Church implemented in a bid to promote peace in your community or in the Country?

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6. Who were involved in these activities and what was your role if any, in the Church's initiatives to promote peace?

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Objective: To assess the ecumenical role that the Church has played in promoting peace post 2006 under the Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative in Zimbabwe.

7. Are you aware of the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations Project called the Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative in Zimbabwe?

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8. What joint initiatives has the Church done under this project to promote peace? Were you involved?

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9. How appropriate were the interventions or activities done?

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10. What challenges are being faced by the Church in the process of peacebuilding?

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Objective: To recommend ways strengthen the Church’s ecumenical initiatives in promoting sustainable peace in Zimbabwe under its EPOIZ project.

11. How should the Church strengthen its initiatives to promote sustainable peace in Zimbabwe under EPOIZ?

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12. Any recommendations you might want to give to contribute to the culture of peace that this questionnaire may not have asked?

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APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

Tendayi Bobo is my name. I am a Master of Arts in Development Studies student studying with the Midlands State University. I am carrying out a research/ dissertation on **“The Ecumenical Role played by the Church in promoting Peace in Zimbabwe: Case of the Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative”**.

In order to collect data, I will administer the questions on the interview guide whilst concurrently recording with an audio recorder so as not to miss any detail. As I ask you questions listed on this paper, your responses may guide me to further prompt for more information around that area so as to get intricate detail. In the process of recording all conversations, confidentiality and anonymity is guaranteed as part of the research ethics. The names of who says what is not for record only the content of opinions, which can help the Churches to understand what it is that they can do to promote peace and reconciliation in the country will be recorded. In the event that you do not feel comfortable in having the discussions recorded, please allow me to write down your responses as they are which will constitute a section of my research. Kindly note that there is no wrong or right answer as perceptions and experiences differ from person to person.

For any questions concerning this research, please do not hesitate to contact my Supervisor, Mr. R. Sillah from the University on: sillah@msu.ac.zw

KEY QUESTIONS

1. How has conflict manifested itself in Zimbabwe at a national scale from 1980-2014?
2. Of what impact were the conflicts of the general populace?
3. Under the Church's Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative in Zimbabwe project, what joint initiatives have been done to promote peace in Zimbabwe?
4. What role did you play in the initiatives mentioned?
5. What challenges are being faced by the Church in the process of peacebuilding?
6. What should the Church do to strengthen its initiative in order to promote sustainable peace in Zimbabwe under EPOIZ?

APPENDIX C: PEACE CELEBRATION PHOTOS



Group Photo of School Children at the Karoi Peace Celebrations 13/09/2014



Choir Photo of Women singing at the Bvekerwa Peace Celebrations 19/09/2014



Participants at the Hwange Peace Celebrations 25/09/2014



Church Leaders present at the Bulawayo National Day of Prayer 4/10/2014