

## **Zimbabwe: Towards a Comprehensive Peace Infrastructure**

**Donwell Dube**

Lecturer in Peace and Leadership  
Lupane State University  
Box AC 255, Ascot, Bulawayo  
Zimbabwe

**David Makwerere**

Lecturer in Peace and Governance  
Bindura University of Science Education  
Bag 1020, Bindura  
Zimbabwe

### **Abstract**

*Zimbabwe has experienced a number of conflicts since the attainment of independence in 1980. Various conflict resolution mechanisms were put in place to resolve the conflicts which included the Gukurahundi atrocities of the early 1980s and the 2008 election conflicts. Although the conflict resolution mechanisms had limited success they lacked a comprehensive and inclusive approach. Using Lederach's Holistic Peacebuilding approach the paper explores the need for the establishment of a comprehensive peace infrastructure in Zimbabwe. The creation of an infrastructure for peace will provide a platform for cooperation among stakeholders to bring peace to a country where conflict fault-lines are present at all levels of society. The argument is in line with African Union and United Nations Resolutions which call for African countries to establish national frameworks for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. The major argument of the paper is that without a comprehensive peace infrastructure which has at its core in Local Peace Committees Zimbabwe will find it difficult to move from a state of peacelessness to one characterized by positive peace.*

**Key words:** Peace, Conflict Prevention, Resolution, Transformation, Peace Infrastructure, Local Peace Committees

### **Introduction**

Years of violent conflict have left a mark on the people of Zimbabwe. The country has experienced a number of conflicts since attaining independence in 1980. These conflicts include the Gukurahundi, Operation Murambatsvina and election violence. Conflicts have left the country socially and politically divided. Zimbabwe has to deal with victims of conflict who include internally displaced people (IDPs), the widowed, orphaned, maimed and traumatized. Efforts have been made to deal with these issues but what seems to be lacking is a comprehensive peace infrastructure that can take a holistic approach to peacebuilding. Dress (2005) argues that security and peacebuilding issues should not be a sole preserve of governments. He calls for a strong horizontal and vertical synergy between peacebuilding structures and a creation of a formal structural relationship. The establishment of a government of national unity (GNU) opened new opportunities for peacebuilding in Zimbabwe.

The establishment of the Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration (ONHRI) provided a window of opportunity for the creation of a comprehensive peace infrastructure although it would appear the organ has remained purely political in its approach. There is a growing interest in building Infrastructures for Peace in many countries which include the setting up of Local Peace Councils (LPCs). A number of countries have established Ministries dealing with peace issues. Tongeren (2011) argues that countries at risk of instability and civil war need mechanisms for cooperation amongst all relevant stakeholders in peacebuilding.

According to Dress (2005), there is growing consensus among practitioners and researchers on the need for a multi- sectoral approach to peacebuilding.

One of the first countries that established an 'Infrastructure for Peace' was South Africa. In the two years prior to the historic 1994 elections, this peace infrastructure contributed substantively to containing the spiral of violence at that time. A National Peace Council was also established in Ghana in 2006. This council played a major role in ensuring peaceful elections in 2008, and a smooth transfer of power after the elections. This was achieved through discreet meetings with stakeholders that proactively diffused the considerable tension.

During the highly destructive violent conflict in the Wajir district in Kenya in the 1990s, civil society actors helped to set up the Wajir Peace and Development Committee. This committee brought peace to the region, and the model spread throughout Northern Kenya. When post-election violence broke out at the end of 2007, far less violence was recorded in the districts where a District Peace Council was present.

In Zimbabwe the development of a comprehensive peace infrastructure is still embryonic. The establishment of a National Peace Council has been mooted in government circles but this paper argues that having only a National Peace Council will not be able to build sustainable peace in the country. There is need to institutionalize peacebuilding processes at grassroots level.

The paper looks at the history of conflict in Zimbabwe and then explores the theoretical underpinnings of the concepts of peacebuilding and Local Peace Councils. A part is devoted to a discussion of the nature and typology of LPC while another section discusses the need for LPCs in Zimbabwe. A model for the establishment of a comprehensive peace framework is presented in the last part of the paper.

## **The History of conflict in Zimbabwe**

### **The Dissident/ Gukurahundi conflict**

Between 1982 and 1986, Zimbabwe experienced the most damaging intra-conflict after the attainment of independence. The conflict was mainly concentrated in the Matabeleland North and South Provinces of Zimbabwe as well as some parts of Midlands. The Gukurahundi left a lot of challenges on the survivors of the conflict. The challenges are numerous and multi-faceted. According to the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe, 2003; the full scale of the impact of the civil conflict on those who survived it has yet to be forensically established. However, from interviews now on record, it is apparent that those years have left people with a legacy of problems which include physical, psychological and practical difficulties.

Effects of the conflict are many and complex and some are short term while some are long term. Survivors of Gukurahundi showed both physical and psychological effects. CCJP posits that the effects were individual, familial or community as the conflict resulted in the deaths of hundreds of people. Many were either tortured, witnessed killings, were abducted, or had their relatives abducted (CCJP). Research has shown that victims of atrocities and civil wars are more often than not caught up in a vicious cycle of poverty. The poverty is usually a direct result of loss of property, the death of a bread winner or a disruption of economic activities.

### **1987 Unity Accord**

The church played a major role in facilitating peace talks between ZANU PF and PF ZAPU. The CCJP was instrumental in beginning dialogue between the two parties. Church leaders from Christian organizations approached the late former President Canaan Sodindo Banana to act as mediator.

The talks began in 1983 and came to a close with the signing of the Unity Accord on 22 December 1987. The accord brought to end to the dissident issue and Gukurahundi operations which had left many either dead, maimed or traumatized. According to the Centre for Peace Initiatives in Africa (CPIA) (2005) the accord was elitist and failed to deal with the effects of the Gukurahundi era especially at grassroots level. The guilty were covered by a general amnesty and escaped justice. CPIA go on to state that "something by way of addressing some of the pertinent issues in this regard should ideally be done so as to prevent the undesirable (CPIA 2005 p43).

Many voices have recently been raised in the provinces of Midlands and Matabeleland calling for the government to address the issue and lay it to rest for good.

At the 12<sup>th</sup> ZANU PF National Conference held in Bulawayo in December 2011 many people advocated for the Gukurahundi issue to be discussed openly (The Patriot 2011). Human rights violations of the era continue to haunt the country's psyche.

### **Operation Murambatsvina**

On 25 May, Africa Day, the Government of Zimbabwe began an operation labelled "Operation Murambatsvina". The Government translated this to mean "Operation Clean-up". The operation was meant to clean up cities by removing illegal structures with the ultimate aim of getting rid of criminal elements from communities around the country. The operation continued throughout the month of June, and affected virtually every part of the country. According to Sokwanele (2005) critics of the operation labelled it a retributive exercise targeting MDC constituencies which had shunned ZANU PF during the 2005 general elections. In many parts of the country many dwellings were destroyed and many people were left homeless. The destruction of buildings included vending stalls and other small to medium enterprises.

Across the width and breadth of Zimbabwe, families were now to be seen sleeping under trees or on pavements, trying to protect small children, the elderly and the ill from winter weather and thieves, with no access to ablutions, and nowhere to cook or store food properly. Tiny babies, days old, and people on their deathbeds alike are sleeping at the mercy of the elements

The Government had made no contingency plans to move people, or to create new housing for them. The deliberate destruction of homes in a nation that faced unemployment, hunger and collapsing resources, greatly traumatized the nation. Many people were displaced and were left to fend for themselves.

### **Election violence**

Zimbabwe's elections have generally been marred by violence. Since 2000 the major political parties ZANU PF and MDC have been involved in violence targeting primarily political opponents before, during and after elections. Human rights violations during these periods have included imprisonment, enforced disappearance, murder, torture, and rape.

According to the International Coalition For the Responsibility to Protect(2012), Prior to the run-off presidential election in June, the security services and ZANU-PF militia unleashed a campaign of intimidation, torture and murder against opposition activists, journalists, polling agents, public servants, civic leaders and ordinary citizens suspected of voting for the opposition party, Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The violence came to a climax when, after losing the March 2008 presidential election, President Mugabe carried out widespread state-sponsored violence and terror

Victims of political violence suffered a series of physical, social and psychological consequences which had short and long term effects. Communities and families were destabilized by the violence that was unleashed on the people. This has left the country in need of a comprehensive peacebuilding framework.

### **Lederach's Holistic Peacebuilding Framework**

John Paul Lederach's approach to peacebuilding is based on practice rather than grounded theories, and supports the concepts and mechanisms for conflict transformation that are grounded in the local cultures and society involved in conflict (Obiekwe 2009). Lederach's definition of conflict transformation "is to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships" (Obiekwe 2009 p6).

Dr Obiekwe further explains that Lederach's definition of conflict transformation envisions conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships.

The emphasis on the need for proactive vision and approach to conflict is important, given that human life is a living-with-conflict life. It is the positive and meaningful way to embrace our humanness and transform conflict into positive energy, social change, and progress.

According to Lederach constructive social change seeks to change the flow of human interaction in social conflict from cycles of destructive relational violence toward cycles of relational dignity and respectful engagement. Mitchell (2012) echoes Lederach and Obiekwe (2009) when he posits that most writers agree on the fact that transformation goes beyond dealing with the cessation of violence, the achievement of a compromise settlement. Raimo Väyrynen in Mitchell (2012) argues that conflict transformation can take place through actor, issue, rule and structural transformation

The paper argues that the holistic transformational framework will allow for multi-level participation, empowerment of the grassroots, a focus on long standing traumas and hurts, and on any deep-rooted sense of past injustices and create and put in systems that will resolve the current conflicts and prevent others arising in future. Peace Councils are therefore viewed as transformative tools in this paper.

### **Conflict Transformation and Local Peace Councils (LPCs)**

According to Miall (2007) theories of conflict play an important part in underpinning and guiding practical interventions in conflict. The theory of conflict transformation emphasises on the need for systemic change in order to alter the social structures, conflict parties and institutions. Since LPCs aim to encourage and facilitate joint, inclusive peacemaking and peacebuilding processes they are indeed agents of transformation. As alluded to earlier they aim at transforming relations and issues within the conflict context.

The transformative role of LPCs can be achieved through the adoption of Väyrynen's (1991) framework which maintains that conflicts could be transformed by four types of change:

- i. actor transformations (the emergence of new actors or change in existing actors)
- ii. issue transformations (meaning a change in the way in which the parties frame their interests and goals),
- iii. rule transformations (meaning a change in the norms affecting the actors' interactions) and
- iv. Structural transformations (which involve a change in the relationship between the parties, a new power structure, or a change in the existing social structure).

Lederach (2003) echoes Väyrynen by asserting that there are four central modes in which conflict impacts situations and change things. The modes are as follows: the personal, the relational, the structural and the cultural. This framework fully captures the functions of LPCs and is applicable to all conflict contexts in Zimbabwe. Conflict transformation will provide the theoretical basis on which doctrine and practice can be anchored. LPCs by virtue of being all inclusive take care of the above mentioned modes and Lederach's concern that conflict transformation should not only concentrate on the top levels of society (track one diplomacy) but should involve the grassroots. LPCs can be rolled out to village or ward level since district level LPCs may not be able to address issues at ward level

Adam Curle (1999) compares conflict dynamics to the mythical Hydra, a many-headed water snake that grew a new head as soon as one was cut off. In this analogy each solution to a problem generates the emergence of another problem or issue. The authors of this paper believe that LPCs have the capacity to handle the complexity of the Zimbabwean conflict Hydra especially if they are viewed as mechanisms that go beyond the transitional period.

### **Characteristics of Local Peace Councils**

Local Peace Councils (LPC) is a generic name for committees or other structures formed at the level of a district, municipality, town or village with the aim to encourage and facilitate joint, inclusive peacemaking and peacebuilding processes within its own context. LPCs are either implemented as part of a national peace process, or by civil society organizations in contexts of debilitating conflict.

### **Typology of LPCs**

#### ***Nationally Mandated LPCs***

Nationally mandated LPCs receive their mandate from a national structure or process.

This may include:

- i. a national peace accord (such as in South Africa, Macedonia or Northern Ireland) or
- ii. A mandate from a national statutory body (such as the Malawi Electoral Committee or the Sierra Leone Political Parties Registration Commission).

iii. It may also be mandated by a decision of Government (as in Ghana and Nepal). The composition of LPCs in this category normally includes political parties, relevant government bodies, security forces and civil society

### **Civil society initiatives**

The second category is LPCs that have been formed by civil society initiatives. Their characteristics include:

- i. Lack of a formal national mandate,
- ii. They are often the products of locally facilitated processes
- iii. They reflect a stronger civil society presence.
- iv. The participation of political parties, government and the security services depend on the LPC's ability to attract and interest individual representatives at local level.
- v. These LPCs are usually composed of individuals who have a personal passion and capacity for peacebuilding
- vi. They may focus on the more general objective of preventing violence and promoting peace (as in Burundi, Sri Lanka and Liberia)
- vii. They may also be established to focus on a particular issue (such as cattle rustling in Kenya).

Civil society LPCs are invariably dependent on NGOs that provide the initial facilitation and ongoing logistical and financial support

### **Objectives of LPCs**

According to Odendaal and Retief (no date) the objectives of LPCs include violence prevention, dialogue promotion, joint-problem solving and community building.

### **Pre- requisites for successful LPCs**

#### ***External support***

LPCs depend on support from outside. The quality of such a support system is a key ingredient of the success of LPCs. The support needed was not in the first place financial or in terms of a physical infrastructure – though in places that might have been helpful. The main areas of support needed were

- (i) Access to facilitation support. Local actors, while highly knowledgeable about their conflict and their needs, often lacked the emotional distance and knowledge of the broader context to mediate their own conflicts. At times it was necessary to receive support from facilitators who came from outside and who could work with the LPC to facilitate or mediate problem-solving processes;
- (ii) A basic orientation of the LPC regarding the role they should play. Such 'training' was necessary because the LPC role was a completely new phenomenon that operated on principles that represented, for most members, a paradigm shift from their more accustomed authoritative styles of decision-making;
- (iii) Access to national peacebuilding resources. The ability to request assistance from national actors or other resources to assist with complex local processes added a lot of value. It also meant that the national process was more informed of needs that existed at the local level.

### **Zimbabwe: Towards the Establishment of a Comprehensive Peace Infrastructure**

The word *peace* has been on the minds and tongues of many a Zimbabwean for a long time. Politicians, religious leaders and traditional leaders have all voiced the desire to steer the country towards the attainment of positive peace. It is encouraging to note that a new realization seems to have dawned on political leadership and the intelligentsia of the country, a realization that the attainment of peace is not a one day event but rather a long term process.

The peace infrastructure in Zimbabwe is still at the embryonic stage. It comprises the Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee (JOMIC) and ONHRI. JOMIC for instance is a recent creation which was set up by the Global Political Agreement. It has been widely criticized for failing to live up to its mandate due to inadequate monitoring capacity among other issues (Crisis Group Africa 2011). The ONHRI was established in February 2008 by elements of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

The Organ was created to deal with issues of transitional justice in the aftermath of political violence. It however is faced with serious challenges as it is operating in a transitional period without transition. Some of the challenges include the power asymmetry in the Government of National Unity (Mashingaidze, 2012) The major criticism levelled against both JOMIC and the Organ is that they are elitist and political in orientation. They however have continued to work despite the criticism.

According to a 17 October 2011 Newsday report the Organ for National Healing Reconciliation and Integration (ONHRI) has submitted to the government a draft document for the establishment of a National Peace Council. One of the co-ministers of the Organ Moses Mzila-Ndlovu, is quoted as having said that at present the country does not have a legally binding framework for national healing.

The establishment of the proposed National Peace Council being championed by the Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration (ONHRI) will certainly be a step in the right direction. It will become the cornerstone of a truly home grown peace infrastructure. The creation of an infrastructure for peace will provide a platform for cooperation among stakeholders to bring peace to a conflict weary country. The move is in line with African Union and United Nations Resolutions which call for African countries to establish national frameworks for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.

In a country where conflict fault-lines are present at all levels of society, there is need for peace councils to be established on both national and local levels. Peace Councils (PC) are defined as councils or committees formed at either national or local levels to facilitate peacemaking or peacebuilding.

On a conceptual level peace councils facilitate dialogue and joint problem-solving. The role of the proposed peace council should therefore include resolution of social, economic, religious and legal disputes in communities. The Peace Council should also be involved in transitional justice programmes such as identification of mass graves, reburials, the construction of memorials and the promotion of good governance.

Peace committees are not new to Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust established Local Peace committees in all the provinces. These committees were made up of ZANU PF, MDC, Traditional leaders, religious leaders, women and youths. These peace committees were the first to deal with the post 2000 election violence. They brought together the victims and perpetrators of the violence. Civil society LPCs faces a number of challenges some of which are a result of the lack of a national mandate. ZIMCET formed committees lack moral and financial support from senior politicians. Another challenge is the lack of collaboration with the ONHRI.

Peace councils have proved to be important in a continent that has been bedevilled by conflicts as many countries have experienced violence and war which have resulted in a lot of suffering and deaths. With an expected increase in conflicts across the continent, especially after the North African revolutions, the importance of peace councils cannot be overemphasized.

Many peace practitioners believe that the establishment of peace councils in conflict affected areas is important for peacebuilding. John Paul Lederach, an authority in conflict transformation studies, in *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in divided societies (1997)* underscores the importance of establishing a peace infrastructure that can provide a framework for peacebuilding.

When peacebuilding is viewed as a long term process aimed at reducing the possibility of conflict before, during or after conflict peace councils can no longer be viewed as transitional programmes but as initiatives that should be permanent features of a country's peace infrastructure. South Africa, Ghana and Kenya were among the first counties in Africa to establish infrastructures for peace. In the three countries, National and Local Peace structures have been able to prevent and reduce violent conflict. The infrastructures for peace in these countries are proactive and inclusive and have proved that prevention is less costly than intervention.

Kenyan LPCs were able to facilitate the Garissa Declaration which brought peace between northeast pastoralists and government over the issue of cattle rustling. After the 2007-2008 post election violence in Kenya LPCs contributed to peace in the northern and north eastern parts of the country. According to Odendaal (2010) the South African experience has also shown that LPCs have great potential to reduce violence and foster dialogue and conflict solving processes.

Zimbabwe has experienced a long history of conflict. The conflicts in the country can be traced back to the pre-independence era. The major conflicts experienced by Zimbabweans include the Gukurahundi atrocities which affected Midlands and Matabeleland and post-election violence. The conflicts have had devastating effects on the socio-economic lives of the country's citizens.

Peace initiatives have been established in the country over the years to deal with conflict in the country. High profile examples include the ZANU PF –PF ZAPU Unity Accord of 1987 and recent Global Political Agreement between the two MDC formations and ZANU PF. IT IS however important to note that what has always been lacking is a national framework for peacebuilding such as the one being spearheaded by the ONHRI in cabinet. The challenge for the people of Zimbabwe now is to seize the opportunity offered by the ONHRI to transform the country into a peaceful country. The transformation of the country should be an all inclusive effort which will go beyond party politics. Experience in Zimbabwe has shown that taking a narrow party- politics approach to problem solving can affect progress as there is a tendency to politicize and polarize all programmes of national importance along party lines. The establishment of a National Peace Council will be the first attempt at a comprehensive peace process.

According to research on successful peace processes, benefits of comprehensive peace processes include legitimacy, public support and sustainability. A successful, legitimate and sustainable approach to peace in Zimbabwe requires the inclusion of civil society and their interests. Top down peace building can compromise the foundations of durable peace, resulting in the perpetuation of destructive conflict in the country. Failure to acknowledge the importance of popular participation in peace efforts will culminate in lack of grassroots support and ownership. Without popular support the peace programme will fail.

Zimbabwe needs a peace process that allows for multi stakeholder –participation from all sectors of society. It is up to the ONHRI to come up with an appropriate model of public participation which will result in a sustainable peace process. Given the nature of conflicts in Zimbabwe, there is definitely a need for the establishment of a National Peace Council that will promote a culture of peace and peace education especially at a time when calls for transitional justice are becoming louder by the day.

Since it will be dealing with highly sensitive issues the composition of the NPC should not be based on party affiliation. Instead they should be made up of people of great integrity from various sectors of society who possess conflict transformation skills. Knowledge of both traditional and modern conflict resolution methods will be vital as they will be tasked with the role of building a culture of peace in a politically divided nation.

Zimbabwe cannot afford to postpone the creation of a peace infrastructure which will be pro-active and inclusive. Having the ONHRI as the sole actor responsible for peace initiatives is not adequate. The Ghana and Kenya experience has shown that in addition to government arms, there is need for the establishment of National, District and Local Peace councils.

The government through the Organ should devote time and resources to the training of personnel and initiate consultations with a broad range of local civil society leaders. Considering the fact that peace comes at a price, the international community could be engaged so that they can support the process by providing financial support, coaching, negotiation training and capacity building. The rationale for the establishment of local peace councils is that during the current transitional phase there is great need to secure peace at the local level. Failure to do this will jeopardise the national peace programmes.

Local peace councils will deal with the deep-rooted nature of conflict at the local level. Although characteristics of conflicts can appear to be similar the approaches to conflict transformation should be context specific for instance the dynamics of election violence are experienced differently in rural and urban areas. NPC initiatives may fail to address all the dynamics of localized conflicts.

A number of fundamental issues have to be considered when setting up LPCs in Zimbabwe. One key issue is the form that the LPC will take that is whether they will receive their mandates from the national structure or whether they will be C.S.O. based initiatives enjoying greater autonomy. Another key issue is the role of external support to the LPCs. Like the NPC, the need for technical and financial support is great. LPCs may need to have access to national peacebuilding resources in situations where local capacity is insufficient especially in terms of training.



Like the NPC the question of the composition of LPCs has to be carefully considered. Although in many instances, especially with nationally mandated LPCs composition is often prescribed from above, it is necessary to encourage the participation of the main protagonists in the conflict. In an area where there is a rift between two political parties, it would be ideal to include leaders from both parties. Research has shown that a mix of hardliners and moderates in LPCs will most likely produce desired outcomes.

It is the conviction of this author that lasting peace in Zimbabwe depends on public the establishment of inclusive peace councils which requires a long term systematic approach. The idea of setting up a National Peace Council is definitely a step in the right direction. The success of peace councils in other countries is testimony to their effectiveness in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

### **Technical, Financial and Material Support**

Research has shown that Local Peace Committees deal with logistical challenges on daily basis. Financial and material support is therefore essential for the success of the peace committees. The provisions will revitalize and enhance the Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution of LPCs. The situation in Nepal stands as a reminder of the importance of logistical support for LPCs. According to Sapkota (2009) LPCs in Nepal featured as one of the country's prominent failures.

According to Sapkota (2009) the Nepalese LPCs were designed to sustain peace by providing a common forum for people to locally implement national peace agreements and would bring together various stakeholders such as political parties and NGOs to prevent and resolve conflict. In The committees never could quite achieve any of the stated objectives. Sapkota suggests the following as reasons for the failure of the Nepalese LPCs:

- The lack of a neutral, national structure to monitor LPCs ( The Ministry Of Peace and Reconciliation ( MOPR) bureaucratized them, which jeopardized their autonomy and effectiveness )
- The LPCs were supposed to be formed only after rounds of local consultations, thus ensuring local ownership and establishing clarity on the LPCs' concepts, functions, and responsibilities. None of these preparatory steps took place before forming the peace committees.
- Political parties were never serious about LPC implementation and never prioritized them.

Although the above challenges greatly affected the work of LPCs efforts by the MOPR have ensured their continued existence. Sapkota argues that if rolled out properly LPCs could become effective fora to maintain local peace and that in order to sustain peace there is no alternative to LPCs.

### **Proposed model for Zimbabwe**

The authors of this paper subscribe to both the key people and more people approaches to peacebuilding. Key people in society will be identified and through them more people will be engaged (CPRP 2010).

The model proposed in this paper is guided by the Conflict transformation theory which maintains that peace is embedded in justice, the building of right relationships and social structures through the respect for human rights and non violence (Lederach 2003)

The model proposed here is a simple one but one that seeks to capture the complexity of conflict. At the top of the peace infrastructure should be the government. All activities of government should be oriented towards peace. This should be done through the establishment of pro-peace policies and provision of the mandate for peace councils.

Below the government will be the Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and integration followed by the National Peace Council. The NPC will be followed by provincial, district, Local Peace Councils which include village or ward councils. (See figure 1) delimitation of districts will be prerogative of the Organ in conjunction with the NPC and Central Government.

The model suggested allows for the participation of civil society at all levels. Civil Society in this instance refers to organized social networks and associations outside the government. According to Lamptey (2007) civil society is a sector which influences the lives of wide sectors of the community. They include voluntary associations, non-governmental organizations and social movements.

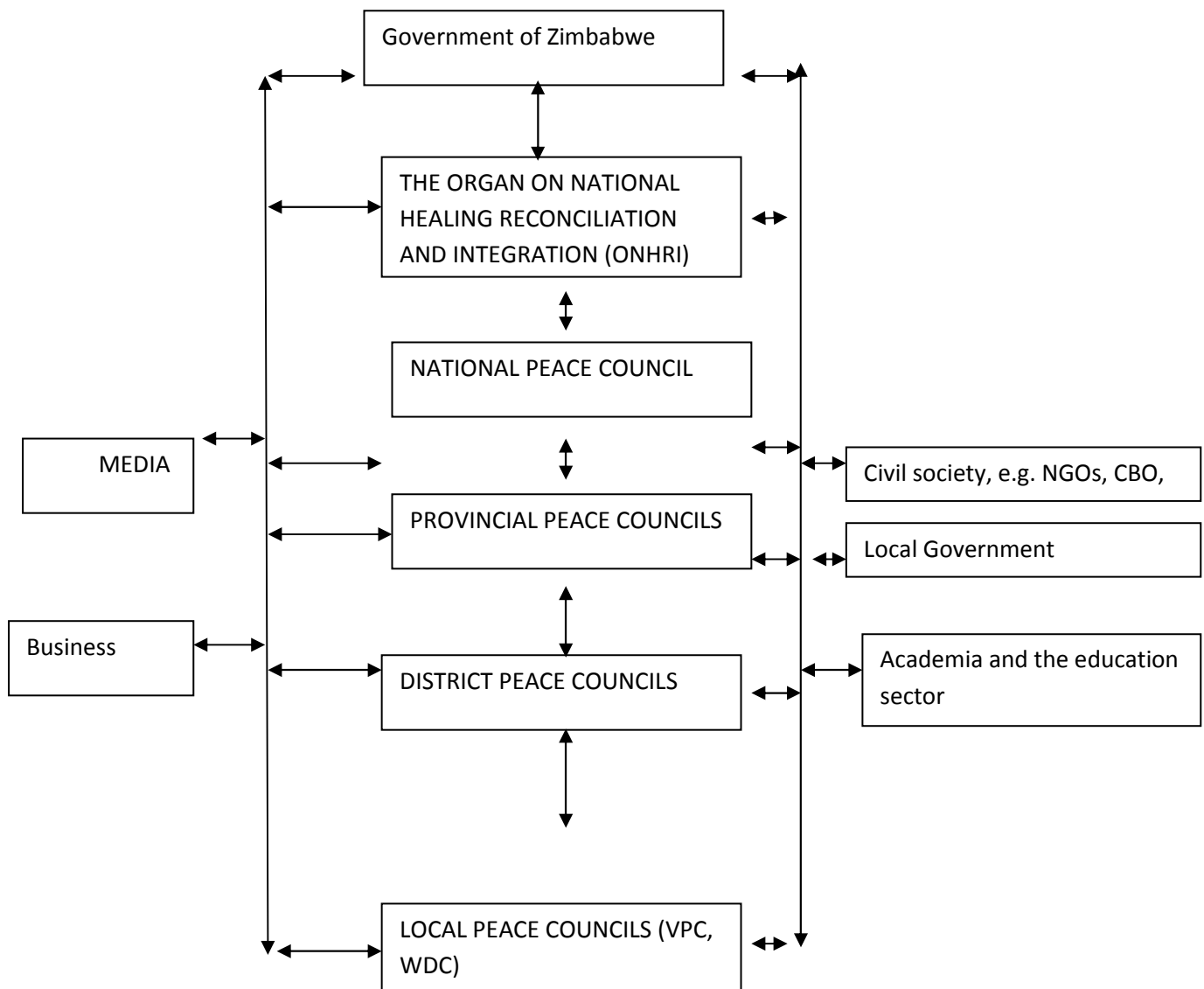


Their contributions will come in various forms for example in technical, logistical and financial support. The role of civil society will be especially critical in capacity building of LPCs and enhancing the intra and inter-committee linkages both vertically and horizontally.

It is important to observe that the Zimbabwean political environment is highly charged and wary of external interference by foreign NGOs. These organizations are usually labelled as imperialist organizations bent on violating the country’s sovereignty. These organizations need to find ways of working within the expectations of the government in order to avoid being expelled.

The composition of the peace councils should be determined by the socio-political context as the experiences of conflict differ from place to place. All committees should as a matter of policy include women, children and other marginalized members of the community. Most communities in Zimbabwe are still patriarchal hence the need to ensure that all voices are heard.

**Fig 1**  
**Proposed peace infrastructure model for Zimbabwe**



The model above emphasizes a multi track approach which calls for a multi-stakeholder involvement peacebuilding as advocated for by Lederach (2003). The model suggests that issues are addressed at different levels of society. Taking issues to the ward or village level ensures the engagement of the grassroots without which the whole peace process would lack legitimacy.

According to Muller (2003) grassroots actors are usually involved in reconstruction activities, prayer meetings, cultural activities etc which foster communication and a culture of forgiveness and tolerance. There is a close relationship between business and conflict. According to Killick et al (2005) businesses or individual business leaders often mirror conflict dynamics in their own operations by, for example, employing one ethnic or religious group to the exclusion of another. Some companies will also always benefit from conflict. This might be directly, for example by acting as suppliers to the army or by unfairly winning lucrative government contracts in an environment where transparency and competition are subordinated to the demands of maintaining security and power, or indirectly, by taking advantage of the confusion and chaos to make profits on the black market.

Killick et al (2005) argue that the private sector stands to gain from the peace dividend if a wide and, ideally, diverse range of companies, associations, and private sector are engaged in peacebuilding activities. Business has an important role to play especially in a country where the government is facing a crippling economic crisis. The partnerships between the mining sector and local communities through community trusts have shown that it is possible to involve business in community affairs. Such relationships which exist in many rural areas need to be strengthened. There is much that the private sector can do to support education and health programmes, local enterprise development.

The Business Peace Alliance (BPA) of Sri Lanka provides a good example of business involvement in peace processes. The BPA is a non-partisan, non-hierarchical working group of representatives from 15 regional chambers of commerce representing all provinces in Sri Lanka. The BPA'S mission is to help build peace and reconciliation through generating peace dividends at the local level and persuading policymakers on key issues affecting peace and stability.

Business people can create networks that connect with people from all walks of life. They can connect vertically to the grass roots as well as to the top. They also have horizontal connections with the conflicting parties. Hence they are in a position to work at all levels and also across the lines of division.

Zimbabwe can benefit from borrowing from the Sri Lankan model of engaging business in the activities of the proposed Peace Councils.

According to the model being proposed in this paper academia has a significant role to play in the establishment of peace councils. They have a role in sensitizing and mobilizing the population towards supporting the national peace infrastructure. They can also play an advisory role to office bearers.

In a highly polarized society such as the one obtaining in the Zimbabwe leaving out the media would have disastrous. The Zimbabwean media is polarized between State and private media. The media however has an important role to play in building peace in the country. The media has to be engaged right from the onset across all the levels of society.

The Radio Douentza, in Mali, provides a good example of how the media can contribute positively to peace. When fighting broke out between herders and farmers Radio Douentza staff came up with programmes advising restraint and reporting cases of violence (Adam and Holguin, 2012).

The radio station contributed immensely to peacebuilding. The Zimbabwean media can adopt the same approach by airing positive messages about peace councils and providing fora for discussions of peace and conflict issues. The paper calls for a multi sectoral approach that recognizes the complexity of conflict. The various actors discussed above should operate at micro and macro levels of society for peace councils to work. Communication within the framework should be both vertical and horizontal as suggested by the arrows linking the different actors in fig 1. Communication is one of the lynch pins for the success of the proposed framework.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has argued that LPCs are needed in Zimbabwe if the country is to move forward from a state of peacelessness to one characterised by positive peace. The argument is based on the conviction that in order to respond effectively to the challenges presented by conflicts innovative solutions are required. The model offered for Zimbabwe is cognisant of the complexity of conflict hence the call for a holistic approach to peacebuilding. The establishment of LPCs should be based on a rich Conflict Transformation theoretical framework

## References

- Adam and Holguin (2012) *The media's role in peace-building: asset or liability?* Presented at *Our Media 3* Conference, Barranquilla, Colombia  
[http://www.mediasupport.org%2Fdocuments%2Fpapers\\_and\\_articles%2Fthe%2520media.doc&ei](http://www.mediasupport.org%2Fdocuments%2Fpapers_and_articles%2Fthe%2520media.doc&ei)
- Bishnu Sapkota (2009) Local Peace Committees in Nepal: A Lost Opportunity <http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2009/05/20/local-peace-committees-in-nepal-a-lost-opportunity/> accessed 14-04-2012
- Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (2008) Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe: A Report on the disturbances in Matebeleland and Midlands 1980-1988, Columbia University Press [www.books.google.zw](http://www.books.google.zw)
- Centre for Peacebuilding and Reconciliation Promotion,(2010) Enhancing conflict transformation and peacebuilding Capacity of Local Peace Committees (LPCs) and existing Peace Structures at Local Level [http://cprpnepal.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/working\\_with\\_local\\_peace\\_committees.pdf](http://cprpnepal.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/working_with_local_peace_committees.pdf)-accessed 21-03-2012
- Dress, T.P (2005) Designing a peacebuilding infrastructure: Taking a systems approach to the prevention of deadly conflicts, UN Non-governmental Liaison Service, NY,USA- [www.un-ngls.org](http://www.un-ngls.org)
- Fossati F (2011) *Beyond the End of Violence and Conflict Freezing: Looking for Conflict Resolution*, [www.transend.org](http://www.transend.org)
- Ghali, B.B (1992) An Agenda for Peace, Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping [www.un.org-accessed](http://www.un.org-accessed) 17-02-2012
- International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (2008) Crisis in Zimbabwe <http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/index.php/crises/crisis-in-zimbabwe> -accessed on 17-04-2012
- Killick, N et al (2005) the role of local business in peacebuilding, [www.berghof-handbook.net](http://www.berghof-handbook.net)-accessed 14-02-2012
- Lampthey, C (2007) Engaging Civil Society in Peacekeeping, Strengthening strategic partnerships between United Nations Peacekeeping Missions and Local Civil Society Organisations during post-conflict transition, [www.peacekeepingbestpractices.unlb.org](http://www.peacekeepingbestpractices.unlb.org)-accessed 12-02-2012
- Lederach J.P. (2003) Conflict Transformation [www.beyondintractability.org](http://www.beyondintractability.org)
- Lederach, J.P (1997) Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies Washington DC, USIP Press
- Mashingaidze, T.M (2012) Zimbabwe's elusive National Healing and Reconciliation processes: From Independence to the Inclusive Government 1980 to 2009 in Conflict Trends [www.conflictrends.org](http://www.conflictrends.org) accessed 15-04-2012
- Mitchell, C et al (2002) Beyond Resolution: What does conflict transformation actually transform in the Journal of the Network of Peace and Conflict Studies May 2002 Vol. 9 Number 1
- Muller K (2003) the role of grassroots actors in conflict transformation <http://www.polsis.uq.edu.au/dialogue/vol-1-1-2.pdf>
- Obiekwe, K. (2009) In Search of Appropriate Peacemaking/Peacebuilding Paradigm in Dealing with Africa's Intrastate Violent Conflicts: Considering Lederach's Faith-based Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding Approach Journal of Peace, Conflict and Development, Issue 13, February 2009 [www.peacestudiesjournal.org.uk](http://www.peacestudiesjournal.org.uk) 11-4-2012
- Odendaal, A and Letif, O (no date) Local Peace Committees: Some Reflections and Lessons Learnt, A Study Report Commissioned by The Academy for Educational Development (AED)
- Sabbatical Leave Research Paper submitted by Comfort Lampthey August 2007 *Engaging Civil Society in Peacekeeping Strengthening Strategic Partnerships between United Nations Peacekeeping Missions and Local Civil Society Organisations during Post-conflict Transitions*<http://www.peacekeepingbestpractices.unlb.org/PBPS/Library/Engaging%20Civil%20Society%20in%20Peacekeeping.pdf>
- Sokwanele Article: June 18th, 2005 "Operation Murambatsvina": An Overview and Summary [http://www.sokwanele.com/articles/sokwanele/opmuramb\\_overview\\_18june2005.html](http://www.sokwanele.com/articles/sokwanele/opmuramb_overview_18june2005.html)
- Tongeren, P (2011) Overview on Infrastructures for Peace [www.parliamentariansforconflictprevention.net/](http://www.parliamentariansforconflictprevention.net/)
- Väyrynen, Raimo (ed.), (1991) New Directions in Conflict Theory: Conflict Resolution and Conflict Transformation. London: Sage.
- Wils O et al, (2006) The Systemic Approach to Conflict Transformation Concept and Fields of Application Berghof Foundation for Peace Support 2006 [http://www.berghof-peacesupport.org/publications/SCT\\_Systemic\\_Conflict\\_Transformation\\_Complete.pdf](http://www.berghof-peacesupport.org/publications/SCT_Systemic_Conflict_Transformation_Complete.pdf)