

Reconciliation in Zimbabwe: Where, When and How?

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Abstract

The study seeks to interrogate the practicality of transitional justice and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. The study seeks to answer the questions where, when and how should reconciliation take place in Zimbabwe. The research will also interrogate historical events in Zimbabwe where the concept of reconciliation should have been applied. To that effect, the where question seeks to identify areas of economic subjugation, political persecution and other forms of human rights abuse where the policy of reconciliation should be applied. To the question when, the researchers will revisit historical events and not confine themselves to prescribed times reconciliation is recommended to cover. To the question how, the researchers will use desktop review in which there will be extensive use of literature from different scholars who have contributed to the debate on reconciliation. Interviews with politicians, victims of political and electoral violence, war veterans, chiefs, church leaders, civil society officials and the general public were conducted. This was aimed at gathering wider views and perceptions concerning the debate on justice and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. Information gathered from these informants was valuable in the writing of this paper. The sensitivity of the topic under discussion led some of our informants to request anonymity in the writing of the paper. Guided by research ethics, the researchers have granted anonymity to those informants who requested it.

Keywords: Reconciliation, Compensation, Persecution, Human rights, Peace, Conflict, Zimbabwe

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Introduction

Issues to do with reconciliation in Zimbabwe have garnered considerable debate with many scholars and human rights advocates engaging in this ongoing debate. The paper seeks establish the periodisation (when), the areas which need reconciliation (where) and the forms which the concept of reconciliation should take place (how). The paper also seeks to look at the practicality of the whole concept of reconciliation as both victims and perpetrators have different versions of how they want the process of reconciliation to be coordinated. The differences in opinion on this issue have condemned the whole concept of reconciliation into a charade thus validating the view that reconciliation is not a practical concept especially were issues that have to be addressed covers decades, or even centuries back.

Conceptual Framework

The study is informed by the concept of reconciliation. The word "reconciliation" is derived from the Latin word "*conciliatus*" which means to come together. Reconciliation is about restoring human relations separated by conflict.⁴ Reconciliation is also about psychological, emotional and human relation. According to Lederach, reconciliation deals with questions of how surviving victims and perpetrators can cope with the legacies of the violent past providing a locus were people and things come together.⁵ Lederach further explains that besides being an "encounter" on engagement of the parties, reconciliation is future oriented, since it creates social spaces were issues about the past and future meet. Assefa further explains that reconciliation provides a social space for the acknowledgement of the past trauma, expression of grief, loss and anger that is embedded in the memory of injustice.⁶ The concept is applicable to the current research since we are saying the Zimbabwean society has been polarized and traumatized because of the country's history of violence and conflict. For reconciliation to take place the whole nation must "come together" and come up with a reconciliation framework acceptable to all. A Zimbabwean reconciliation framework which ensures the acknowledgement of pain and suffering, where those involved in violence apologize and show contrition for what they did .

⁴ Lederach, J.P. *Building Peace , Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Washington DC, United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997, p.g 27

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Assefa,H. *The Meaning of Reconciliation*, Utrecht, Netherlands, European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation, 2006, p.g 26

A reconciliation framework engages the grassroots, creating social space for dialogue between victims and perpetrators, facilitating the payment of reparations to victims who lost the primary means of support. We argue that only when the concept of reconciliation has been applied to the Zimbabwean case can true peace and democracy be achieved, but how applicable and practicable it is becomes our core concern.

Reconciliation in Zimbabwe: Emerging Perspectives

Interviews carried out prior to the writing of this paper show that the debate on reconciliation in Zimbabwe is a controversial subject. There are differing views on how the process of reconciliation should be implemented. Data gathered also points to the fact that there is disagreement over the issue of time-frame, the starting-off and cut-off period. Again there is controversy as to which provinces, should the policy of reconciliation be applied. Political scientists argue that it is not practical or feasible to compensate or pay reparations for crimes committed during the pre-colonial period. In an interview with one Member of Parliament in Masvingo, he pointed out that compensating victims of violence from the pre-colonial period to the present period is not practical. He asked the researchers if it was really practical and possible for the ZANU PF government to pay for crimes committed by the BSA Co and the Smith regime. He is of the opinion that the policy of reconciliation should be applied few years after a conflict if it is to make sense⁷. Others like inspector Zhenje pointed out that even if people were to agree to start reparations and compensation from the pre-colonial period, compensating all victims would not be possible. This is because too much time has elapsed, and in many cases, fundamental evidence in support of alleged abuses is longer available. He proposed that maybe 2008 can be the starting period because it is a bit recent and there is hope that evidence and witnesses are still around⁸.

District Administrator Mbambo pointed out that most people are ignorant of the legal process, and are afraid of "taking the government on". In addition most victims do not have documentary proof to back up their claims. As such it is unlikely that many people will come up.

⁷ Interview with one M.P, Masvingo, 13 November 2013.

⁸ Interview with police Inspector Zhenje, Masvingo, 13 November, 2013.

Mbambo is of the opinion that this debate on “reconciliation” is not practical but an excuse by academics and some top chefs to squander government money in hotels discussing lies and things which are not practical”⁹ Another councillor from Bikita district explained that reconciliation and compensation dating back as far as the pre-colonial period is not practical because time has now elapsed making it difficult to locate people, documents have been lost, destroyed and thrown away. Dates when actual events took place have been forgotten and even precise details of events. In addition, people involved in these crimes have died or moved away from Zimbabwe. He also pointed out that it is possible that others have managed to overcome memories of violence and abuses they suffered because time heals. He too advocated for the year 2008 as a reasonable period to start from.¹⁰

The above views point to the fact that politicians and others holding positions at local government levels do not see the policy of compensation and reparations as practical. Political scientists are also amongst those who would rather have issues of violence swept under the carpet claiming that going about digging these issues will only “re-open old wounds or canes of worms, plunging the country in further acts of violence and conflict. One Mugadza asked the researchers if they thought President Mugabe was stupid when in 1980 he advised the whole nation, blacks and whites “to draw a line through the past and forgive those whites and others who had persecuted the black majority in the country.”¹¹ Mugadza explained that Mugabe was well aware that digging into the past was counterproductive as it only led to accusations and counter accusations and at times large scale falsification of alleged violations, exaggerations and stage managed human rights violations.¹² In an informal interview with four war veterans from Zhaugwe, the researchers were advised that if reconciliation was what we were after, Zimbabwe could do it the Mozambique way. They explained that after a protracted civil war, Mozambique adopted a policy of reconciliation based on forced amnesia i.e forgetting and forgiving the unexplained events of the past. This was done to suppress memories of violence and “the consequences of digging up unpleasant things”. They pointed out that this method is cheaper since no reparations are paid out by the government.¹³

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Interview with councillor, Bikita, 17 November 2013

¹¹ Interview with Richard Mugadza, Matsai Bikita, 17 November 2013

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Interview with Cdes, Chombo, Hondo, Roparinopfuka and Tafirenyika, war veterans, Zhaugwe 6 December, 2013

Researchers in the field of conflict resolution interviewed pointed out that whilst there was a need for a reconciliation policy they cautioned against “idealistic and impractical models” of individual compensation. As such they urged Zimbabweans to think in a practical manner and look beyond financial reparations.¹⁴ One of the researcher proposed that it would be more practical if a nationwide survey was undertaken first to establish the extent of the damage done by conflict. The survey would also determine the nature and kind of healing required by different people and communities. He advised that one might discover that some individuals or communities require a simple verbal apology whilst others actually require financial compensation.¹⁵ The researches pointed out the need for constitutional safeguards to ensure that Zimbabweans would never resort to the use of violence against each other. They further pointed out that the constitutional safeguards would ensure the institutionalisation of healing, reconciliation and integration frameworks at all levels.¹⁶

On their part, representatives of civil society organisations strongly believed that it was the responsibility of the state to pay restitutions to victims. According to Rudo Mhazo, the government with the help of donors should source out funds for compensation of victims. She further pointed out that compensation was possible, what was lacking was the political will.¹⁷ Zayne Mhute who works for another civil society organisation in Harare is of the opinion that Zimbabwe could draw lessons from South Africa. He explained that South Africa set up a Truth Commission to offer smaller payments to victims of human rights abuse and their families.¹⁸ For Alice Mhute, reparations from the colonial period to the present was quite feasible considering the fact that Zimbabwe is richly endowed with natural resources such as gold, diamonds, platinum to name just a few. Manhanga is of the opinion that revenue from these natural resources can be used to pay victims.¹⁹ Manhanga’s sentiments are also echoed by the UN which contends that integrating natural resources into peace-building is no longer an option but a security. On his part Gumbo pointed out that profits from natural resources are often used to finance political activities .

¹⁴ Interview with two researchers, Gweru, 23 November, 2013

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Interview with Rudo Mhazo, Harare, 12 December 2013.

¹⁸ Interview with Zayne Mhute, Harare, 12 December 2013

¹⁹ Interview with Alice Manhanga, Harare, 12 December, 2013

In addition he cited that companies have often donated funds, party regalia and other items for political campaigns. He proposed that the government can still use the same strategies to source out funds for reparations and compensations.²⁰ Paddington Nxele of Luveve explained that reparations were quite practical, citing that in 1998 the government was able to pay in cash the War Victims` Compensation Scheme. He also explained that the government ended up paying thousands of people, some who had falsified injuries whilst others created fictitious stories to receive compensation. He is of the opinion that if it was once done it can still be done.²¹ As such he proposed that the starting point should be 1982 (the Gukurahundi era) to present.

The general consensus among church leaders and pastors interviewed in Bikita, Gweru and Chinhoyi is that churches as bearers of the message of reconciliation, has a God-given mandate not only to reconcile all humanity to God but to reconcile people regardless of race, colour, religious or party affiliation. Almost all the pastors interviewed concurred that the church must assume a leading role in assisting the nation to undergo this physical, emotional sensitive and spiritual process of transformational and bring about reconciliation. Pastor Dube pointed out that the church has been instrumental in maintaining the morale and sanity of the majority of people and has over the years remained the only avenue for personal healing and revival amidst political and economic chaos.²² Pastor Moyo of the Church of Christ also pointed out that politicians should not lead the reconciliation process given the fact that they are the major perpetrators of the violence unleashed in the country. In his opinion, the church, as the instrument of peace should play a key role in the national healing process and should encourage confessions and forgiveness for successful national healing. In addition he pointed out that the reconciliation process should have a clear compensation programme for different categories of victims.²³ For the Christian Alliance, punishments of perpetrators and the compensation of victims will send the correct message to society. According to the Alliance, murderers, rapists and other offenders need to face justice for victims and their relatives to heal.

Emerging perspectives from the church leaders and civil society is reparations and compensation starting from the colonial period is possible.

²⁰ Interview with Duncan Gumbo, Bulawayo 28 November 2013.

²¹ Interview with Paddington Nxele, Bulawayo, 26 November 2013.

²² Interview with pastor Duve, Chinhoyi, 20 December 2013.

²³ Interview with pastor Moyo, Chinhoyi, 20 December 2013.

The general opinion being that Zimbabwe could learn a lesson or two from the South African example. Examples where Truth Commissions have been funded by the donor community were given. Among these countries were South Africa and El Salvador whose Truth Commissions were sponsored voluntarily by the United Nations Members. This group also pointed out that politicians together with traditional leadership should not lead the reconciliation process. They critiqued the "politicisation" of traditional leadership.

On the other hand, historians and lecturers in the History Department at the Midlands State University interviewed expressed the view that even if it is not possible to compensate every victim of violence and conflict dating from the pre-colonial period to the present, there is need to acknowledge the wrongs done to humanity so as to avoid or eliminate any chance of history repeating itself again. They agreed that there was need to draw lessons from the past for future purposes. It was also pointed that regardless of the fact that these crimes were committed a long time ago there is still need to engage with one's past.²⁴ As such they advocated for a policy of reconciliation which covers all the periods from pre-colonial to the present. They explained that there is need to document and record these sad chapters in the history of the country. In their opinions, the younger generation cannot understand the true feelings of the older generations who still carry the burden pain, trauma and suffering. In the same way, Zimbabweans residing outside Matabeleland North and South will not be able to understand and empathise with victims of the Gukurahundi era if they are not made aware of what actually transpired during that period. It was pointed out that until there was acknowledgement of what happened throughout the country, there can never be genuine empathy for those who suffered and without empathy there can never be true reconciliation and nation building.²⁵ History teachers at Chaplin High School explained that the fact that violence and abuse of human rights occurred a long time ago should not deter Zimbabweans from finding out the truth. Mr Nyambuvi and Mr Mututu concurred that the truth has to be revealed examined and documented so that the process of reconciliation can begin.²⁶ Their line of thinking is augmented by CCJP which posits that Zimbabweans have to strive to establish the truth in a manner which is acceptable to all.

²⁴ Interview with D. King, I. Mudeka, G. Tarugarira and J. Chakawa, lecturers, History Department, Midlands State University, Gweru, 25 November 2013.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Interview with Mr Nyambuvi and Mr. Mututu, Teachers in the History Department, Chaplin High School, Gweru, 2 December 2013.

Once this is done, there can be a national acknowledgement of what happened and the resultant national empathy for those who suffered.²⁷

For Chiefs, headmen and traditional healers, lasting reconciliation for Zimbabwe can only be achieved if rituals and ceremonies to thank the ancestors for their guidance in the war were done by the political leadership. According to chief Mabika of Bikita, at independence national leadership failed to inform and present the nation to the ancestors telling them that they had accomplished their mission of liberating the country. He is of the opinion that these rituals and ceremonies should have been done a long time ago. Failure to perform the ceremonies has rekindled the anger of the ancestors who have now turned their back on the nation. As such, he pointed out that the violence, conflicts and the unnecessary shedding of blood should not come as a surprise because the ancestors of the land have turned their backs on the nation. They have removed their hedge of protection and now the country is bent on destroying itself.²⁸

Chief Mazungunye pointed out that Zimbabwe belong to the ancestors. As such, at independence the national leaders should have consulted the ancestors on how to run the country, how communities could cleanse the land, what to do with thousands of children lying buried in caves and shallow graves and ask for the forgiveness and protection of the ancestors and ask for the forgiveness and protection of the ancestors. Failure to consult the ancestors was a serious error which has led to the polarization of the nation²⁹. This line of thinking was buttressed by Alexander an historian who explained that there were no ceremonies to thank the ancestors for their guidance in the war. The leaders failed to report properly to the shrines, to thank the spirits and the High God Mwali for their supportand ask them to lead the way in cleansing the nation of the effects of the war.³⁰

The above perceptions show that Zimbabweans are not agreed on where, when and how the policy of reconciliation should be implemented. We decided to merge the views given to us by our informants to come up with the suggestions we made in the next section. We realised that our informants were coming from different angles and as such their contributions were informed by their backgrounds.

²⁷ CCJP, *Breaking The Silence: Building True Peace, A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands 1980 to 1988*, Harare,, Africa Synod House, 1997, p.g210.

²⁸ Interview with chief Mabika, Bikita, 17 November 2013.

²⁹ Interview with chief Mazungunye, Bikita 18 November, 2013.

³⁰ Alexander, 2006, p.g 111

For example political scientist opted for the policy of amnesia because in their discipline they deal with current issues hence the past is of no importance to them. On the other hand, historians advocated for an all-inclusive reconciliation process because history is about the past, present and future. Church organisations felt that they ought to lead the process because “churches are bearers of the messages of reconciliation, it is their God given mandate to ensure that brethren live in harmony and peace”. For traditional leaders, reconciliation should start with the ancestors first, man should be reconciled with his ancestors if he is to find peace, harmony and protection in the land of the living.

Where, When and How?

Where

We argue that the policy of reconciliation should be applied nationally. The justification is based on the fact that the whole nation at some point in history has suffered and experienced violence and conflict. In fact, whole communities have suffered human rights violations since time immemorial. In many cases violence was directed towards communities and not individuals as such whilst individuals were singled out for abuse it was in fact the entire community that was targeted. Dating back to the pre-colonial period, communities were affected by ethnic conflicts over access and control of resources and territories. After that the arrival of whites and the subsequent colonial military conquest also ushered in new dimensions of conflict characterised by dispossessions of blacks of their land and other resources leading to the war of independence. Conflict resurfaced in post-independence Zimbabwe in the form of *Gukurahundi*. Little skirmishes has erupted especially in relation to electoral politics. In addition political violence followed the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change. The violent nature with which some government policies were implemented left many people emotionally scarred. A number of reports have appeared in the 21st century, the 2000 farm invasions witnessed the rape, victimization of the white farmers and their workers. This was followed by Operation *Murambatsvina* of 2005 unleashed against urban shack dwellers believed to be supporters of the MDC. This was followed by Operation *Makavhotera papi?* (Where did you place your vote) of 2008. In 2011 there was Operation Chimumumu against Civil Society.

Violence has also been targeted against women believed to be prostitutes. The police clamped down on women under Operation *Chinyavada*. This was followed by Operation *Chipo Chiroorwa* in 2007. In 2011 there was Operation *Chengetedza Hunhu*. In 2012, the police embarked on Operation *Dyira Bonus Kumba* where women were detained in cells and brutalised. It should be pointed out that the country's elections held after every five years from 2000 were characterized by violence which has resulted in the destruction of property and loss of human life. The mere fact of belonging to different political parties was enough to trigger hatred and violence. The point we are trying to make here is that every community in Zimbabwe has at one point experienced human rights abuse and violence and this has all Zimbabweans affected in one way or the other.

This is the reason why we are advocating for an all-inclusive reconciliation policy. The policy of reconciliation should not be limited to urban areas but should also be applied to the rural areas where people experienced the greatest impact of violence and conflict during the pre-colonial period, the colonial period especially in the liberation struggle and during election periods. In addition the policy of reconciliation should be directed to communities where social support networks and communal trust is non-existent or has been corroded or broken down, where cultural values have been replaced by survival ethics. The policy should also be applied where judicial and legal services have been compromised in their fundamental tasks of protecting human rights and upholding justice. The question is therefore who was not affected negatively by the processes of conflict that dates back to pre-colonial period through to colonial period and to present post colonial period. Whose rights stand tall from the rest and from which past? As the Zimbabwean case demonstrates in theory we can reiterate important issues but how can we practically deal with them proves impossibility.

When?

Some of our informants advocated that the starting period should be after 1980 to present. The argument advanced is that the government has already paid war victims compensation under the War Victims Compensation Act and so they point out that there is need to move on and focus on more recent conflict areas.

Others feel that 1980 should actually be the starting point because the War Victims Compensation only compensated the war veterans yet many civilians throughout the country suffered losses of property, life, were abused and traumatised at the hands of both the guerrillas and the Rhodesian forces during the war. Du Plessis suggests that with regard to the periods of history to be investigated there are practical reasons for limiting the mandate to an investigation from 2000 onwards³¹. However we feel that if the reconciliation policy was to go by Du Plessis's line of thinking, the decision runs the risk of reopening and triggering "ethnic" faulty lines thus further dividing the country. It will appear as if the policy makers were down-playing the Matebeleland disturbances. At the same time ignoring the violence unleashed during the farm invasions, or under Operation *Murambatsvina* and *Makavhotera papi* would also send the wrong signals. In addition, ignoring police brutality which took place during several Operations against women would again appear insensitive to women and Women groups. As such, to cater for everyone it would be wise if the policy put in place will allow victims to go back as far as their memories can take them. Any victim of any period should be allowed to come forward. By opening space for victims of all times, the policy will minimise antagonising and alienating certain groups or victims.

Thus the case of the period though open to suggestions in theory in practise it will remain illusory. Whilst the immediate future poses much more possibility it remains stuck in history because the perpetrator in post independent Zimbabwe was a victim in the colonial times or was a victim the pre-colonial times. So the question is who has the right to recourse? Or more so at individual level who has a monopoly of abuse or being abused?

How?

During fieldwork, it came to our attention that the issue of who was going to lead the reconciliation process was another area of controversy. Civil Society and church leaders strongly felt that they should lead the process and not politicians and traditional chiefs. We argue here that it is not appropriate for the church alone to lead the process taking into account the fact that the church too needs healing and reconciliation given conflicts in churches.

³¹ Du Plessis, M. Truth and Reconciliation Processes: Lessons From Zimbabwe? Report 44. Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs, 2002, p.g 24

Furthermore the church has to realise that Christianity is not the only religion but one of many religions in Zimbabwe. There is the traditional African religion, the Islamic religion among others, as such, we should guard against dividing the nation on religious lines. Leadership of the process has to be more inclusive. We are of the opinion that credible persons in society such as retired judges, retired reverends, academics, researchers, chiefs, independent church leaders and representatives of civil society organisations should lead the process.

This must be followed by a mapping exercise to be undertaken to identify victims within different settings and context with the view to develop a conflict-sensitive and context-sensitive approaches of dealing with past and present conflicts and their associated impact. In addition, the mapping exercise is also aimed at promoting and encouraging the participation of victims of violence and their relatives. By creating an enabling environment to engage victims a way is paved for the tapping and utilisation of local indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms. We posit that the mapping exercise is relevant to avoid using a single approach (one-size-fit all) for different cases and situations. This should be avoided given the fact that Zimbabwe has experienced different causes and manifestations of conflict in different areas. We are of the opinion that the mapping exercise will create space for the building and consolidation of local capacities to deal with past and arising conflicts in a manner that promote sustainable reconciliation and peace.

Grassroots or bottom –up approaches must be adopted. This can be done or advocated through the engagement of chiefs, traditional healers, church leaders and elders at community level. Chiefs can lead their various communities in performing ceremonial rites, rituals of cleansing the land. Furthermore, chiefs, elders should also be afforded the opportunity to lead their communities in deciding memorialisation programmes effective for them. Chiefs can use their traditional courts to encourage both victims and perpetrators to disclose fully what transpired during the time of the conflict.

The church can also compliment traditional leaders in the reconciliation process by providing individual healing, venues and counsellors. In some cases individuals or their families feel more comfortable going about their healing and cleansing processes the Christian way. In such cases the church can encourage a full disclosure of what really happened during the period of conflict from both victims and perpetrators.

Repentance by those involved in violence, publicly expressing their regret, showing remorse or their preparedness to work for peace and reconciliation should be encouraged. This is necessary because after a public acknowledgement and expression of remorse, victims can then forgive the perpetrators based on the knowledge of who did what to whom, when and why? Reconciliation can then take place. What were saying here is that communities must be empowered to determine their own destiny by coming up with their own home-grown programmes, familiar and effective to them. By engaging and involving local people to participate in the process, the community will have ownership of the reconciliation process; it will not be a process which was imposed upon them. Thus chiefs and their communities will be afforded an opportunity to build, nurture and maintain a just peace. Such collaborative processes would create social space for victims and survivors, offenders and community members to discuss their experiences of violence, its impact on their lives and families. Lastly, participation by community members will ensure and achieve widespread agreement on all aspects of reconciliation process such that no one will feel left out. Thus the outcome of the process will not be blamed on certain individuals but becomes the responsibility of the whole community.

This mapping survey should be followed by reconciliation, peace building and civil education to help communities develop tolerance and respect for one another, thereby upholding basic individual rights and freedom. Civil society will also need to educate communities about experiences of trauma and grief and their impact on individuals, families and whole communities. Sayings, poetry, paintings and writings can be used as mediums to educate the citizenry about violence, conflict and its impact on society.

The government, political parties, women, business community, civil society organisations, traditional leaders and faith based organisations have important roles to play in the reconciliation process. As pointed out by Machakanja, whilst the government should not lead the process, it should create an enabling environment for reconciliation to take place.³² Its role should be that of preserving public order as well as securing the social and political space. The business community, civil society and church should complement the efforts of the state through sourcing of funds for reparations, awareness campaigns and funding of debates.

³² P.Machakanja, *National Healing and Reconciliation in Zimbabwe: Challenges and Opportunities*, Zimbabwe Monograph Series No.1, 2010, p.g

Political parties should see to it that their members do not engage in violence before, during and after elections. Better still, a clause in their manifestos dealing with reconciliation and the building of peace must be included. Besides sourcing for funds, civil society can assist in the process by monitoring the implementation of the reconciliation process. Most important is the fact that their presence can give legitimacy to the whole process. The national broadcaster should assist in the reconciliation process by disseminating messages of reconciliation, jingles and even galas. Reconciliation galas can be held at national and district levels.

Earlier on we indicated that individual compensation and reparations can be problematic because of limited funds on the part of the government, difficulties in quantifying damages and inconveniences suffered by dependents of the victims, there is need by the state to make a national acknowledgement of grave pre- and post independence human rights abuse that took place in the country. Acknowledging individual and community suffering is an important gesture the state could make to victims and their relatives. Our informants pointed out that a public acknowledgement of violence by the state is an important step towards reconciliation. A public acknowledgement of violence by the state can also to serve convinces different communities that the state will never again inflict organised violence on civilians.

Since the state might find it expensive to pay individual reparations we suggest that community reparations should be made in the form of improved infrastructure, education scholarships for impoverished families, irrigation schemes, financial assistance for co-operatives, and other economic projects. Financial assistance should be availed for community ceremonies to appease the deceased and missing persons. As already indicated, the business community, civil society and church can assist the state in the sourcing for funds. Community reparations should, however, be made through a community based reconciliation model to encourage a comprehensive public participation and ownership of the whole process. In addition, there is need to make legal amendments with regard to the duration in which someone can lodge claims against any other party. In terms of the existing legislation, the opportunity to lodge claims against any other party including the government lapses after three years. The law must be amended to extend the duration.

These researchers concur with the recommendation made by CCJP in 1997 that a reconciliation trust should be established.

The major concern of the trust would be to facilitate reconciliation and peace between communities affected by violence and conflict especially in relation to monitoring the future occurrences. This trust should be empowered to raise funds from government and donors to implement reconciliation projects in affected communities.³³ A board of trustees comprising equal numbers of government, non-governmental and community representatives would administer the trust.

Whilst efforts of forgiveness, reparations, compensation and prosecution are the main recommendation worldwide for dealing with issues of reconciliation it has proven a challenge when it comes to Zimbabwe. The abuses in Zimbabwe are not a one of event but that have occurred in historical epochs that covers centuries and several generations. The question is who should be forgiven? Will the individual or group that forgives actually have forgiven as forgiveness is based on remembrance and without a precedence of having been a victim from the past? The question on reparations addresses issues to do with who shall pay the reparations to whom and under what determination in terms of trauma, injury or even death? On the concept of compensation the question to be addressed is who exactly should be compensated as the aggressor today was previously the aggrieved. The question of prosecution is who should be prosecuted by who on which crimes which took place when. The problem with the ideals of forgiveness, reparations, compensation and prosecution is that they cannot be quantified and executed to the satisfaction of everyone involved the dead of the past and the living and dead of present. Thus the scholars are of the notion that application of the concept of reconciliation is in essence not practical, and efforts should be directed towards non occurrence of conflict and abuses and putting mechanism to effectively deal with the perpetrators and the victims in the future as timely as possible to avoid rendering the processes of reconciliation irrelevant.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we emphasise that the reconciliation process is a complex task which requires analytical approaches before one comes up with a strategy. Different strategies are needed to reconcile individuals and communities who suffered different types of violence under different circumstances.

³³ CCJP and LF , *Breaking the Silence*, opcit, p.g210

We are of the opinion that the best way to bring lasting reconciliation is to empower communities to decide approaches and mechanisms most appropriate and effective to them in addressing the future occurrences of abuses. Participation of members of a community in the reconciliation process reinforces ownership of the reconciliation process by communities. At most efforts on reconciliation must spend energies in preventing the future occurrences of abuses and how this should be addressed. Sticking ourselves with the issues of the past will not in long term address the issues except to serve as memory building tools for use in the future.

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- Interview with Nyambuvi, V and Mututu, B. , History teachers, Chaplin High School, Gweru, 2 December 2013.
- Interview with Chief Mabika, Bikita, 17 November 2013
- Interview with chief Mukanganwi, Bikita, 18 November 2013.