# The Zimbabwean Response to RENAMO Incursions: A Conflict Transformation Perspective

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## Abstract

The study analysed the Zimbabwean responses to the RENAMO incursions that have affected communities along the border. The analysis was done through the lens of John Paul Lederach's theory of Conflict Transformation. In particular, the study sought to gauge the effectiveness and sustainability of these methods employed by both the Zimbabwean community and the government. The recurrence of the violent incursions necessitated the study into the Zimbabwean border communities by the RENAMO rebels. It was also necessitated by the recurrence of hostilities between RENAMO and FRELIMO forces in Mozambique. The study was based on the case study of Chipinge in Manicaland, Zimbabwe. The community is located near the Zimbabwe-Mozambique border and is frequently affected by violent incursions whenever conflict breaks out in Mozambique. The research findings made it clear that the Zimbabwean responses to the RENAMO incursions have not been effective. The responses thus far have left the border communities vulnerable to further attacks from the rebels. However, these approaches are unsustainable from a Conflict transformation perspective. The approaches are short-sighted in outlook and have at best achieved a negative peace scenario. The study recommends Zimbabwe devise a conflict transformative approach that is long term in nature to stand against the RENAMO incursions effectively.

**Keywords:** Mozambique; Zimbabwe; Chipinge; RENAMO; Conflict-Transformation

## 1. Introduction

Zimbabwe faces the threat of RENAMO invasions through its eastern border, which it shares with Mozambique. The threat is more pronounced to the Zimbabwean communities located along the border. This assertion is based on the previous episodes of violence endured by Zimbabwean communities along the border. Thus, in an attempt to develop a sustainable peacebuilding model, it is important to analyse the initiatives taken by the Chipinge community and the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ). This model will then help address the violence of the RENAMO rebels and mitigate its effects on the Zimbabwean communities along the border. This model is made more urgent considering how unstable the political situation in Mozambique has proven itself to be over the years. Furthermore, the issues that led to this violence have not yet been fully addressed despite the two peace treaties that have been signed between the RENAMO rebels and the FRELIMO forces in 1992 and 2019, respectively. The flaws of these peace agreements raise the likelihood of further violence occurring between FRELIMO and RENAMO. As long as these tensions linger between the Mozambican parties, the Zimbabwean border communities remain at risk of further attacks hence the need to adopt a sustainable peacebuilding approach to mitigate the violence endured by the communities at the hands of the rebels.

## 2. RENAMO Incursions in Zimbabwe (1977-2016)

The Mozambican civil wars (1977–1992) (2013–2016) affected the Mozambican nationals and the Zimbabwean communities along the Zimbabwe-Mozambique border. Zimbabwean communities from Nyamapanda in the far north to Chiredzi in the south underwent a series of attacks, robberies, and murders from the RENAMO rebels, as illustrated on the map below:

**Figure 1: Hot spots of RENAMO incursions along Zimbabwe-Mozambique border**

RENAMO was initially created by the intelligence arm of the Rhodesian government under Ian Douglas Smith (1964-1979). It was used as an instrument to destabilise the newly independent state of Mozambique in 1975 (Wiegink 2015: 2; Osvaldo et al. 2013: 66; Hultman 2009: 825). However, following the fall of the Smith regime and the independence of Zimbabwe in April 1980, the patronage of RENAMO was undertaken by the South African Apartheid regime

under the BJ Vorster regime (Wiegink 2015: 3). South Africa used RENAMO as an instrument for its Destabilisation policy of newly independent African states such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Lesotho. The rationale behind the policy was that newly independent African states were allegedly harbouring South African nationalists, supporting and inspiring the struggle against Apartheid (Rupiya 1998: 13).

During the Mozambican civil war 1977-1992, the Zimbabwean communities along the border faced multiple incursions from the Mozambican RENAMO rebels. These incursions led to a loss of property and lives on both sides of the border. In Zimbabwe, for instance, RENAMO attacked the Mutare-Beira oil pipeline, Mutare-Beira-Maputo railway line, and road networks (Fearon & Laitin 2005: 9). In 1981 the bridge over the Pungwe river was bombed. Chicualacuala in Mozambique was also attacked, thereby blocking Zimbabwe's gateway to the sea. In November 1987, RENAMO rebels crossed the Zimbabwe-Mozambique boundary and attacked a workers' compound at Nyambuya Forestry Estate located along the border (Chimanikire 1999: 10). They destroyed property, and the workers were attacked with pangas, knives, and bayonets. Radios, watches, and food were stolen. Twenty people, mostly women, were kidnapped and were used as porters. Similar atrocities were committed in Chiredzi's Musumeki village of the Sengwe communal lands. According to Jennifer (1983: 4), four people were murdered, and four caterpillars belonging to the Ministry of Transport were set ablaze. In Ndali town, 71 km east of the Chiredzi town, six people were also murdered, a clinic was burnt down, two grinding mills and five stores were looted (ibid). The oil depot at Beira was blown up with US $12 million worth of oil which could meet Zimbabwe's needs for 21 months (ibid). As a result, Zimbabweans had a bleak Christmas that year as they could not travel, cars were abandoned, factories were closed, and power cuts became the order of the day (ibid).

Following the Rome peace agreement of 1992, the incursions recurred between 2013 and 2016, and history repeated itself. Zimbabwe's communities along the border once again suffered. Cattle rustling and skirmishes were happening on the Zimbabwean-Mozambican boundary. Chiketo (2017) states that on 10 December 2016, a report from the Zimbabwean Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) confirmed that 15 RENAMO soldiers armed with AK47 rifles carried out the cattle raid of 50 cattle to feed the RENAMO fighters. According

to Jakwa (2017), the Mozambican soldiers had also participated in the raids. In Nyanga, Nyamutenha village, ward 11, also located along the Zimbabwe-Mozambique boundary, RENAMO soldiers were armed with bows and arrows, kidnapped four Zimbabweans, and stole an unspecified number of cattle. In the Nyamapanda area, residents were reported living in fear, and a police officer was shot dead.

Since 2016, the conflict has since subsided when the late former RENAMO leader Afonso Dhlakama declared a truce and engaged the Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi on the peace process. The peace process took almost three years and was eventually signed in August 2019 (Jentzsch 2019). Sadly, the agreement was signed 13 months after the untimely death of RENAMO leader Afonso Dhlakama due to a heart attack (Cowell 2018). Nevertheless, his successor Ossufo Momade stood in for him for the negotiations and eventual signing of the agreement. However, following the agreement, there was a split in the RENAMO party, with one faction led by Ossufo Momade and Mariano Nhongo leading the other faction (Klenfeld 2019). The new faction continues to threaten the resumption of hostilities and has perpetrated a few incidents of violence within Mozambique (ibid).

## 3. Conflict Transformation

It is the latest in the line of peacebuilding models. It encapsulates the strengths of previous models such as conflict prevention, management and resolution. Conflict transformation goes a step further and tries to address the weaknesses of the same models. It is thus vital to note from the beginning that as a concept, conflict transformation is not entirely new; rather, it is a build-up from what has already been discovered by peace researchers and scholars. Ramsbotham et al. (2011: 9) stated that conflict transformation is the deepest level of the conflict resolution model rather than as a separate venture. Lederach (2004: 16), the founder of the conflict transformation model, also stated that conflict transformation's purpose is to add a voice to the ongoing discussion, search for greater understanding, and not minimise or degrade other interventions. Muchemwa (2015: 31–32) concurs with this line of thinking when he states that conflict transformation is not there to denigrate other existing conflict handling mechanisms. It is rather a synthesis; it does not compete but compliments them.

Lederach (2014: 16) defines conflict transformation as a peacebuilding model that views social conflict as a life-giving opportunity to create a constructive change process that reduces violence and increases justice in direct interaction and social structures. Paffenholz (2014: 13–14) adds that conflict transformation understands that conflict is a normal social occurrence. It transforms violent conduct into a peaceful one through a combination of multi-actor and multi-track approaches with short, medium and long-term perspectives. Francis (2002: 8) defines it as a method of peacebuilding that involves ensuring that subjects of domination discover and develop the power to participate in what affects them. Galtung (2007: 14) postulates that conflict transformation goes beyond the antagonists' goals and creates a new reality.

Conflict transformation is more of a long-term approach compared to conflict resolution. This is because conflict transformation aims to change cultures and structural systems, which take time to transform.

One key element of the conflict transformation model is that it prioritises the inclusion of the grassroots in the peace process. It seeks to empower the grassroots because imposed solutions to the conflict have a poor record of accomplishment. The subjects of domination have to participate in the process (Francis 2002: 8). Dube (2012: 300) informs that conflict transformation is multi-layered and includes multi-level participation and empowerment of the grassroots. It deals with past conflicts (hurts, injustices, traumas) to prevent future ones. However, conflict transformation does not include the grassroots at the expense of other stakeholders, e.g. traditional, local, national and international actors. It operates at multiple levels; it includes the grassroots and the political decision-makers and even development agencies. Lederach (1997: 39) depicts it as a pyramid with three levels, as shown in Fig 2.
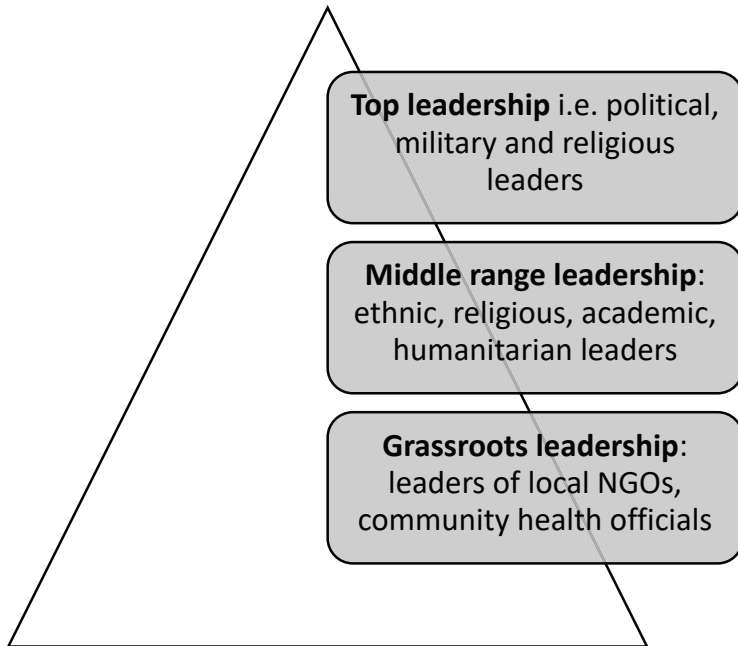
**Figure 2: Lederach's Peacebuilding Pyramid.**
**Source:** Lederach (1997: 39)

The top level consists of the top leadership that is political, military and religious leaders. The middle level consists of local leaders, i.e. religious, academic and ethnic leaders. The third and broader base contains the grassroots leadership, i.e. local NGOs, community and health officials. To Lederach, the middle level of the local leaders is more important as they are the go-between the top and the grassroots leadership. This inclusivity is important because there will be a buy-in factor, ownership of the peace process by all those included in the peace process.

## 4. Findings: Zimbabwe's Responses to RENAMO Incursions

The research was guided by the interpretivism research philosophy, which advocates the researcher to directly engage the research participants and

understand their way of life.

The research design for this study was qualitative. This is because the study intended to collect in-depth information concerning how the Chipinge community has been affected by the RENAMO incursions and how best it can prepare to protect itself from the violence. This was done through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), structured observations and a collection of secondary data from books, journal articles, videos and internet sources. The interviews and discussions were done with local authorities, traditional leaders and community members of Chipinge.

The research focused on 38 participants as it was qualitative research. Eight of them were key informants i.e.

- Provincial Administrator Manicaland
- Chipinge-East Member of Parliament
- Chipinge Central Member of Parliament
- Chipinge District Administrator
- Chief Executive Officer of the Chipinge Rural District Council
- Chief of Gwenzi chieftaincy
- Chief of Mapungwana chieftaincy
- Commander of the army in Chipinge

Thirty of them were ordinary community members of the Chipinge-East community. These were divided into two-focus discussion groups; one for women and one for men purposively selected based on their knowledge and experiences with the RENAMO incursions.

## 4.1. *Community Initiatives*

Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with the Manicaland government officials and Chipinge community members (July 2019-January 2020). The participants stated that the Chipinge community did not take any initiatives to address the RENAMO incursions. The best they did was approach other community members when the RENAMO rebels sent letters demanding food items from the community or simply fled into the nearby bushes. Chief Gwenzi of Gwenzi village (66km east of Chipinge town) stated that they did this at night and would then return to their respective homes during the day to get fresh supplies and check if any valuable items had been stolen or damage is done

to their property.

Furthermore, the community members would also accommodate the refugees who crossed the Chipinge community. Much as the Zimbabwean government set up the Tongogara refugee camp during the first Mozambican Civil War, the Mozambican refugees were reluctant to be accommodated due to the fear of being repatriated back to Mozambique.

Two reasons can be attributed to why the community members accommodated the Mozambican refugees. First, this was due to pre-existing relations between the two communities. Diamon (2016: 464) states that the Zimbabwe-Mozambique boundary imposed at the beginning of the colonial era cut through Shona ethnic communities. Both the Mozambican and Zimbabwean communities used to be one big community prior to colonialism. This has been revealed through pre-colonial research that has been conducted by Zimbabwean historians such as Mudenge (1988: xxv), Bhila (1992: 640) and Dhliwayo (2014: 10). There are chiefs, such as Chief Mapungwana in Chipinge, who are in Zimbabwe, but their subjects are on the Mozambican side of the border. The second reason is that the Mozambicans had also accommodated them during the Zimbabwean Second Chimurenga (liberation struggle) in the 1970s. During this era, the Zimbabwean nationals had gone to seek refuge in Mozambique in the same way that the Mozambicans were now seeking refuge in Zimbabwe (Martin & Johnson 1981: 276).

I inquired further from the research participants why their respective communities did not take any initiatives regarding the violence from the RENAMO rebels. They attributed this to two issues. The first issue was the dysfunctionality of their community engagement structures. They stated that the community members have become fatigued about these structures due to the lack of implementation of the recommendations or the lack of response to the requests they make at any level of these structures. Some of these committees have not met for months due to this fatigue of empty promises. This is one of the factors that led to the absence of initiatives among community members regarding the RENAMO incursions.

The community members were referring to the structures are the Zimbabwean development committees. These community engagement structures run from the grassroots to the national level, as illustrated below:
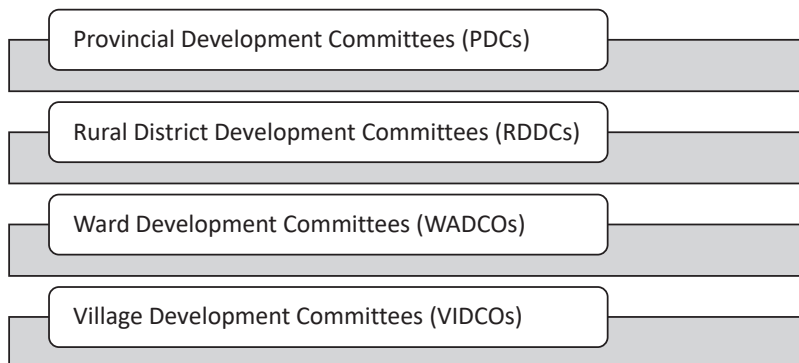
| |
|---|
| Provincial Development Committees (PDCs) |
| Rural District Development Committees (RDDCs) |
| Ward Development Committees (WADCOs) |
| Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) |

**Figure 3: Structure of Zimbabwe Developing Communities**
**Source:** Zimbabwe Prime Minister's Directive 1985

In 1985 through the Prime Minister's Directive, the Zimbabwean government established these structures. They were part of the decentralisation drive, which the government purported to implement at the time. These structures were meant to facilitate democracy and engagement between community members and their local authorities at all levels. However, an earlier study I conducted of these structures (Muchanyuka 2016: 113) proved that these structures were not functional. This was due to a lack of political will in terms of the functionality of these structures. I established that these structures merely appeared on paper only. This was also confirmed by other studies, which reached the same conclusion. Kurebwa (2015: 106) describes the structures as empty shells that do not have any power as all the power is vested in the appointed officials in the central government. Jonga (2014: 75) also attributed the decadence of these local governance structures in Zimbabwe to the abuse of power by the appointed officials in the Ministry of Local Government.

The second reason behind the lack of initiatives is that the political environment in Zimbabwe since independence frowns upon such initiatives. The political environment remains highly sensitive to any form of opposition. They stated that such initiatives could be seen as challenging the authority of the political establishment. One male research participant stated that making suggestions to the local authorities was seen as challenging the government. He stated that such initiatives could be misconstrued as claims of the government

failure, and in the 1980s, one could even be labelled as a *Mutengesi* or sell out of the liberation struggle whilst after 1999, one could be labelled as a member of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) opposition party which was formed around that time. He stated that such labels could put an entire family or community in danger of attacks from the government itself.

I further investigated this notion raised by the community members of whether the fear of political violence was perceived or it was an actual reality. I then established that the Chipinge community had indeed suffered from *political violence* in addition to the violence the RENAMO rebels had already subjected to them. The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO forum's Political Violence Report (2008: 12) states how the police were detaining opposition activists in Chipinge unlawfully. Heal Zimbabwe Trust (2010) reported a Chipinge woman whose hut was burnt to ashes by youth militias. The article further informs that the Chipinge community had been affected by political violence to the extent that some were temporarily displaced (*ibid*). However, when the cases of political violence in Chipinge are juxtaposed with other locations in Zimbabwe, such as Harare, they are found to be relatively low. However, then the political violence from these other locations beyond Chipinge assisted in spreading the fear among its community members. Makumbe (2009: 1) noted that since 2000, Zimbabwe had moved several steps backwards to the realisation of democracy.

Nevertheless, the community's response was ineffective when analysed through a conflict transformation lens. Their response made them a soft target of the RENAMO rebels. Their accommodation of Mozambican refugees heightened the susceptibility of the community. The community needs to participate in formulating a response towards the RENAMO incursions. The grassroots community is one of the key ingredients of conflict transformation (Francis 2002: 8; Dube 2012: 300). This is because the community is more aware of how RENAMO operates and how it affects their community. The community is also aware of the best possible solutions to mitigate the violence unleashed by the RENAMO incursions. Understandably, one can argue that the community stands no chance against armed and dangerous RENAMO. However, through conflict transformation, there are non-violent methods that the community can utilise against an armed actor. These include early warning, early response, violence prevention, advocacy work, civilian peacekeeping, ceasefire agreement, and peace zones. The key to it is not to wait and take action when the attacks

have happened. Rather, the community needs to take action prior to incursions.

## 4.2. *Government Responses*

In response to the RENAMO incursions, the Zimbabwe government employed three approaches: the armed response, the Rome Peace Process of 1992 and the Civil Protection Unit (CPU).

*Armed response*

I tried in vain to interview military officials regarding Zimbabwe's role during the Mozambican Civil Wars. However, I gathered the data required from archival material and other secondary sources. The Zimbabwean government adopted a militaristic approach towards the RENAMO incursions from the data gathered. The government dispatched its defence forces to curb the RENAMO ulcer. The forces included infantry, paratroopers and the air force. The president of Mozambique at the time, the late Samora Machel (1975-1986), formally requested military assistance from the Zimbabwean and Tanzanian governments in 1985. This was when the operations of the RENAMO rebels had become very widespread in Mozambique to the point of overwhelming the FRELIMO government (Robinson 2006: 57-58; CIA 2003: 2358). However, the Zimbabwe Defense Forces (ZDF) had started military operations in Mozambique as far back as 1982. Dzimba (1998: 75) clarifies that this was due to a pre-existing defence pact between the two nations (Zimbabwe and Mozambique) dating back to 1981. Furthermore, he adds that the involvement in the war was for Zimbabwe to return the favour of immense support granted to the Zimbabwean liberation forces by the Mozambican government and other front-line states such as Tanzania, Botswana, and Zambia during its liberation struggle.

The ZDF military operations were initially done to safeguard the Beira corridor, the Zimbabwean lifeline to the Indian Ocean through the port of Beira. Mlambo (1999) states that the corridor is of crucial importance as it contains the Beira-Feruka oil pipeline, a power line, railway and road, all of which connect the city of Mutare in Zimbabwe to Beira in Mozambique.

However, after 1985 the involvement of the ZDF became intensive and extensive. The operations were no longer just limited to the Beira corridor, but rather they covered a wider geographical area. The ZDF operations even reached parts of central and northern Mozambique. The operations now involved

attacking RENAMO bases such as Gorongosa and Muxaba, liberating territories captured by the RENAMO rebels such as Caia, Mutarara and Sena, and even rescuing FRELIMO forces when they came under attack of the RENAMO forces. Mlambo (1999) details how the ZDF embarked on several military operations into Mozambique, as illustrated below:

| Name of Operation | Date | Location | Country |
|---|---|---|---|
| Lemon | December 1984 | Northern Manicaland | Zimbabwe |
| Grape Fruit | August 1985 | Muxaba, Casa Banana | Mozambique |
| Octopus | January 1986 | Southern Zambezi area | Mozambique |
| Zero | February 1986 | Casa Banana | Mozambique |
| Ndonga-Chirenje | June 1990 | Mepunga and Djambe | Mozambique |

**Table 1:  ZDF Military Operations in Mozambique (1980-1990)**

The table above shows how the operations of the ZDF became more extensive and frequent after 1985.

The gesture by the Zimbabwean government through the ZDF to intervene in the Mozambican civil war was noble. However, the ZDF did not effectively deal with the RENAMO threat. Mlambo (1999) states that much as the ZDF managed to win many battles against the RENAMO rebels, it did not manage to incapacitate them. He equates the whole affair to America's ill-fated involvement in the Vietnam War (1956-1975). He states that the killing of RENAMO rebels was very low especially considering the effort put in the operation. For instance, during the attacks on the Muxamba and Gorongosa bases, the ZDF managed to kill only 200 RENAMO rebels out of 1600 rebels who were suspected to be present at both bases. During the recapture of Casa Banana, not a single RENAMO rebel was captured, injured or killed.

Furthermore, the FRELIMO forces were no match against the RENAMO forces. This presented a complication to the ZDF forces in that some of their

victories were quickly reversed. In a matter of days, the RENAMO rebels would recapture the bases or towns captured and handed over by the ZDF to the FRELIMO forces. A 1986 Washington Post article written by Allister Sparks stated that Casa Banana was captured by the ZDF in August 1985 and handed over to the FRELIMO forces; however, the RENAMO rebels managed to recapture it from the FRELIMO forces. The ZDF had to launch a second raid to recapture Casa Banana in February 1986. The combination of the elusive nature of the RENAMO rebels and the incapacity of the FRELIMO forces ended up over-stretching the ZDF as well.

Above all, the intervention of the ZDF did not manage to resolve the RENAMO incursions into Zimbabwe. The incursions became worse due to the ZDF's military intervention. Sheila Rule's Special Report to *The New York Times* in 1987 noted that the RENAMO rebels had stepped up their incursions into Zimbabwe. She stated that two incidents were happening weekly, with the main targets being the Chipinge tea estates. After the ZDF's intervention, most of the RENAMO atrocities were committed. These atrocities involved abductions, killings, looting, and sexual violence. The atrocities were committed to punish the ZDF for their interference in the Mozambican Civil War. This is the message that was spread by the RENAMO forces to the victims of its atrocities. Thus, the ZDF's pursuit of the RENAMO rebels into Mozambique left the communities along the border vulnerable to attacks by the same rebels.

The research participants indicated that there were Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) units patrolling the border; however, they were not effective due to the mountainous and undulating terrain of the border region. This worsened the porous nature of the border and allowed the rebels to attack the communities. Mlambo (1999) offers another explanation and attributes the attacks on the border community to the fact that the ZDF operations in Mozambique had overstretched their capacities. He states that all the other activities of the ZNA ceased even training due to the intervention. Dzimba (1998: 80) concurs with the argument and adds that the Zimbabwean government had to rely on the Zimbabwe People's Militia (ZPM) due to the over-commitment of the ZNA in Mozambique. He further adds that the ZPM failed to cover the gap left by the ZNA as it was paralysed by a lack of financial resources to fund its activities. This proves that the GoZ intervention in the Mozambique Civil War was not only draining the ZDF, but the intervention was also having a similar effect on the

GoZ coffers. The Zimbabwean government did not formally disclose the actual cost of the war; however, some estimates go as high as US $5 million per month. Dzimba (1998: 80) points out that the expenditure for the war became even more than that the budget of education and development planning.

During the resurgence of the RENAMO conflict (2013-2016), the Zimbabwean government's response was a similar approach to that of the first Mozambican Civil War (1977-1992). The government deployed troops to patrol the border area. The troops, in turn, asked the communities along the border to create a buffer zone by moving 500meters from the border with Mozambique (Club of Mozambique 2016). However, this approach did not help much as the communities were robbed and attacked (*ibid*).

These instances prove that armed response does not help repel RENAMO incursions. Zimbabwe's armed response had three main flaws. First, border patrols are not effective considering the mountainous terrain of that area (Diamon 2016: 466). The second flaw is that border patrols are unsustainable due to the vast nature of the border area. The Zimbabwe-Mozambique border is over 1 231km long (Diamon 2016: 465). Thus, it will be difficult to have sufficient troops to patrol the border. The third flaw is that, based on the counter-attacks of the 1980s, the military approach has proven that it will incense the RENAMO rebels more and incite further attacks from the rebels to the Zimbabwean community. The impetus behind the attacks is that the RENAMO rebels accused the Zimbabwean government of interfering in Mozambican affairs.

Moreover, from a conflict transformation perspective, armed responses are not a sustainable solution to resolving conflicts. The armed response does not fully address the root causes of the conflict. In peace studies, armed response fits under the model of conflict management. However, this model is not effective, especially when used in isolation. Harris (2011: 122) labels conflict management as the most basic level of dealing with conflict, as it does not deal with the conflict but just avoids the further continuation of violence. The absence of violence does not automatically equate to peace; rather, it achieves a state of negative peace. In this state, there is always a likelihood of the recurrence of conflict as what transpired in this case. Muchemwa and Harris (2018: 3) define negative peace as the absence of war or direct physical violence without addressing unjust relationships. For any conflict to be resolved effectively, positive peace is required. Positive peace goes beyond addressing physical violence; it deals with structural violence, i.e.

unjust relationships. Galtung and Fischer (2013: 173-74) define positive peace as the absence of unjust, unequal relationships. It promotes social justice, equal relationships and inner peace at the individual level. Conflict transformation is the gateway to achieving positive peace. As mentioned earlier, it seeks to address the quality of relationships, justice, structural and cultural violence.

Despite the ZDF and FRELIMO's armed response to RENAMO, the conflict recurred years later. Armed responses at best manage only to stop the violence. It is a quick fix to conflict; thus, it is best used as a short term measure. It needs to be complemented with other peacebuilding models such as conflict transformation.

*Civil Protection Unit (CPU)*

This was yet another avenue that the Zimbabwean government pursued to deal with the RENAMO incursions and their effects on the Zimbabwean communities along the border. The CPU was particularly active during the resurgence of the Mozambican conflict in 2013.

The unit is housed under the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwean Civil Protection Act Amendment of 2001 enacted it. The 2001 amendment was for the Civil Protection Act of 1989, which replaced the Civil Defense Act of 1982.

In Chipinge, the CPU has been operational during any of the district's crises since the beginning of the 21st century. It was also active during the resurgence of the Mozambican conflict in 2013. During a key informant interview with an official from the District Administrator's office in Chipinge, it was revealed that during the resurgence of the conflict, the District level CPU intervened in the crisis by joining forces with members from various government departments and non-governmental organisations. The unit managed to assess the influx of refugees from Mozambique into Chipinge. The assessment focused on the needs of the refugees, the reasons for leaving their country and their safety, and access to services in their new locations. The official's statement was confirmed by the October 2016 Assessment Report on the Mozambican Influx into Chipinge District, Zimbabwe.

From the course of action taken by the CPU during the resurgence of the conflict, the response left a lot to be desired. Much as the CPU is a multi-sectorial entity, the response was only from the NGO sector of the CPU. The other arms of the unit, i.e. the police, the army, and even the social welfare, appear to have been dormant during the whole period. They were part of the 15 member Chipinge

CPU but did not assist the community.

Following these insights from the key informants, I then had to dig deeper into the CPU's matters and its responses to the various crises that Zimbabwe faces from time to time. From the literature I read, it became evident that the CPU itself had been facing several challenges, which robbed it of the capacity to effectively respond to most of the disasters which had engulfed Zimbabwe in recent times.

On the night of 14-15 March 2019, Cyclone Idai hit the Zimbabwean-Mozambique border region and other countries such as Mozambique and Malawi. The Herald of 22 March 2019 reported that the cyclone's winds reached speeds of up to 170 km/h, and the rainfall was reported to be 6 meters deep in some areas. The humanitarian organisation OXFAM reported that the cyclone-affected 2,6 million individuals in all the affected countries. In Mozambique, the AFP news report of 18 March 2019 stated that 90% of Beira in Mozambique had been destroyed by the cyclone, including communication lines and dams. The report likened Beira to a war zone. Six hundred people are reported to have lost their lives in Mozambique. In Zimbabwe, on the other hand, the cyclone swept away homes and bridges, among other infrastructure. The Zimbabwean Human Rights NGO Forum (2019) stated that the cyclone had killed 162 people in border areas like Chipinge, Chimanimani, Chiredzi, Gutu, Buhera, and Zaka; many others were missing after the cyclone. Al Jazeera News Agency (2019) reported that the deaths reached 185, and 270 000 people were in urgent need of food aid.

Following the disaster, fingers were pointed at the CPU for its lack of preparedness regarding the cyclone. This came after the Director of CPU declared in January 2019, three months before the cyclone, that the CPU was prepared for any disaster in Zimbabwe. Journalists such as Thompson (2019) indicated that preparedness and early response could have reduced the cyclone's destruction. He stated that schools could have been shut down in advance and pupils sent home. The situation at St Charles Lwanga High School in Manicaland in which 200 students were stranded could have been avoided had the CPU's early warning system. People could have been relocated to safety or temporary transit camps in the villages. He further pointed out that the CPU was affected by a lack of financial resources. During the 2019 budget allocation, the CPU was allocated US $2.4 million, and yet it required at least US $10 million. The

Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (2019) stated that the CPU could have learned from previous disasters such as the Tokwe-Mukosi floods in which 1500 homes were swept away or even Cyclone Eline of February 2001. The Sunday Mail article of 17 March 2019 also pointed out that the CPU was inadequately prepared for the cyclone, given that the meteorological department had given a two-week warning in advance regarding the cyclone. It pointed out that the CPU was reactionary in its approach and not proactive. The article also pointed out that the CPU had a weakness in community participation.

Aside from the cyclone Idai disaster, the CPU also demonstrated its inability to effectively respond to disasters in Zimbabwe in the aftermath of the Tokwe-Mukosi floods of February 2014. The floods occurred following heavy rainfall in Masvingo province in Zimbabwe's southeastern region, which led to the partial collapse of the Tokwe-Mukosi dam. The floods affected 1 500 families in the area. The Zimbabwean Independent newspaper of February 2014 reported that the CPU had not been proactive regarding the flooding. The CPU chairperson at the time, in turn, blamed the shoestring budget, which the CPU was operating on. During the 2013-14 budget, the CPU was allocated US $450 000, and yet it required US $5 million. Scholars such as Hove (2016: 135) lamented how the CPU failed to assist the flood victims with access to water, food, education and health facilities.

The CPU's response had two major flaws from a conflict transformation standpoint. The first major flow was that the CPU did not fully involve the grassroots community members in its structures. The grassroots communities were a missing link in their operation. This is one of the major elements of conflict transformation theory (Dube 2012: 300; Lederach 2012: 09). The grassroots communities must be involved in such a structure as they are more knowledgeable of the manners in which the incursions affect them. They are familiar with the direction through which the threats emanate from and the coping mechanisms which work for them. The grassroots members have a better idea of the possible solutions to the incursions affecting them. Involving them also allows their buy-in and ownership of the planned responses against the RENAMO incursions.

The second flaw was that the response was reactive in nature. The CPU took action after the conflict had taken place. It did not develop any proactive actions to safeguard against further effects of the conflict. In doing so, the CPU reneged

on the part of its mandate, i.e. 'any service provided or measure taken to prepare for, guarding against and dealing with any actual or potential disaster' (The Civil Protection Act 1989: 19). Pro-action was vital in this case, especially considering the Chipinge community's experiences during the 1980s at the hands of the RENAMO rebels. Pro-action was also critical, considering how volatile the political situation in Mozambique had proven itself to be. This volatile nature had been proven by the resurgence of the conflict in Mozambique 21 years after the peace treaty, and thus for as long as the conflict is unresolved, the communities along the border remain vulnerable to further incursions.

Furthermore, effective peacebuilding requires actions to be taken after the conflict and even before the conflict. Lederach (2012: 09) affirms that peacebuilding can actually be instrumental in preventing violence and not just post-conflict. Accord (2015: 11) maintains that peacebuilding has evolved from simply the post-peacekeeping or avoiding a relapse into war. It adds that peacebuilding is now doing more than reacting to conflict dynamics and strengthening the development of local social institutions.

In the final analysis, the ineffective nature of the government's response comes as no surprise. When one considers how the Zimbabwean government has addressed conflicts in the past, it is clear that effective conflict resolution is not one of the government's strengths. This is a common thread that one can observe in past Zimbabwean conflicts such as Gukurahundi (1983-1987) and the 2008 and 2018 electoral violence, among others.

## 5. Conclusion

In summary, the Zimbabwean responses to the RENAMO incursions have proven ineffective. The responses are short term in nature, with a likelihood of violence recurring and affecting the border communities. The study recommends that the Zimbabwean government and the community come together and invest time and resources in the adoption and implementation of a conflict transformation approach to the RENAMO incursions. To address this issue, the government and community need to consider employing a revised long-term approach:

*5.1 Zimbabwe Government:* the Zimbabwe government needs to embrace three fundamental realities. The first reality is that the conflict between

RENAMO rebels and FRELIMO forces is yet fully resolved. The second reality is that the military approach to RENAMO is unsustainable. The third reality is that the CPU is not best suited for effectively dealing with the RENAMO incursions. The fourth reality is that the CPU is ill-suited to address the RENAMO issue effectively. This is due to the lack of adequate resources to deal with the violence and that the CPU is reactionary and not proactive.

In light of this, the government needs to provide leeway to the border communities and encourage them to devise community-based methods of mitigating the violence, such as local peace committees and early warning systems. This can be done by reviving these communities' pre-existing development committee structures. The government does not need to be directly involved in the revival of these structures and the devising of the early warning systems. Rather, the government will have to be involved from a distance. Furthermore, the government needs to consider extending the mandate of the NPRC (National Peace and Reconciliation Commission) to proactively address the issue of the RENAMO incursions before it is too late. There is a need for the NPRC to engage the community and facilitate training sessions for local peace communities, early warning systems, peacebuilding methods, among others. They need to guide the community to develop their own response plans against the RENAMO incursions.

*5.2 Zimbabwe Border Communities*: have to embrace the fact that the RENAMO incursions along the border will be a reality as long as the issues between RENAMO and FRELIMO are not yet fully addressed. The community thus has to consider taking the lead into possible measures they could take to foretell or mitigate the violence. This involves forming local peace committees that gather and discuss these issues and develop a comprehensive plan. However, the community will need to corporate with authorities at all levels to avoid unnecessary suspicions. Communities will also need to engage with Non-governmental organisations to facilitate training sessions on how local peace committees and early warning systems can be devised.

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